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**Pirates own book, or authentic narratives of the lives,  
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robbers**

**ELLS, CHARLES**

**New York [u.a.], 1842**

Life of La Fitte, the Pirate of the Gulf.

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THE LIFE OF

# LAFITTE,

THE FAMOUS PIRATE OF THE GULF OF MEXICO.



*Lafitte boarding the Queen East Indiaman.*

*With a History of the Pirates of Barrataria—and an account of their volunteering for the defence of New Orleans; and their daring intrepidity under General Jackson, during the battle of the 8th of January, 1815. For which important service they were pardoned by President Madison.*

JEAN LAFITTE, was born at St. Maloes in France, in 1781, and went to sea at the age of thirteen; after several voyages in Europe, and to the coast of Africa, he was appointed mate of a French East Indiaman, bound to Madras. On the outward passage they encountered a heavy gale off the Cape of Good Hope, which sprung the main-mast and otherwise injured the ship, which determined the captain to bear up for the Mauritius, where he arrived in safety; a quarrel having taken place on the passage out between Lafitte and the Captain, he abandoned the ship and refused to continue the voyage. Several privateers were at this time fitting out at this island, and Lafitte was appointed captain of one of these vessels; after a cruise during which he robbed the vessels of other nations, besides those of England, and thus committing piracy, he stopped at the Seychelles, and took in a load of slaves for the Mauritius; but being chased by an English Frigate as far north as the equator, he found himself in a very awkward condition; not having provisions enough on board his ship to carry him back to the French Colony. He therefore conceived the bold project of proceeding to the Bay of Bengal, in order to get provisions from on board some English ships. In his ship of two hundred tons, with only two guns and twenty-six men, he attacked and took an English armed schooner with a numerous crew. After putting nineteen of his own crew on board the schooner, he took the command of her and proceeded to cruise upon the coast of Bengal. He there fell in with the Pagoda, a vessel belonging to the English East India Company, armed with twenty-six twelve pounders and manned with one hundred and fifty men. Expecting that the enemy would take him for a pilot of the Ganges, he manœuvered accordingly. The Pagoda manifested no suspicions, whereupon he suddenly darted with his brave followers upon her decks, overturned all who opposed them, and speedily took the ship. After a very successful cruise he arrived safe at the Mauritius, and took the command of *La Confiance* of twenty-six guns and two hundred and fifty men, and sailed for the coast of British India. Off the Sand Heads in October, 1807, Lafitte fell in with the *Queen East Indiaman*, with a crew of near four hundred men, and carrying

forty guns; he conceived the bold project of getting possession of her. Never was there beheld a more unequal conflict; even the height of the vessel compared to the feeble privateer, augmented the chances against Lafitte; but the difficulty and danger far from discouraging this intrepid sailor, acted as an additional spur to his brilliant valor. After electrifying his crew with a few words of hope and ardor, he manœvered and ran on board of the enemy. In this position he received a broadside when close too; but he expected this, and made his men lay flat upon the deck. After the first fire they all rose, and from the yards and tops, threw bombs and grenades into the fore-castle of the Indiaman. This sudden and unforeseen attack caused a great havoc. In an instant, death and terror made them abandon a part of the vessel near the mizen-mast. Lafitte, who observed every thing, seized the decisive moment, beat to arms, and forty of his crew prepared to board, with pistols in their hands and daggers held between their teeth. As soon as they got on deck, they rushed upon the affrighted crowd, who retreated to the steerage, and endeavored to defend themselves there. Lafitte thereupon ordered a second division to board, which he headed himself; the captain of the Indiaman was killed, and all were swept away in a moment. Lafitte caused a gun to be loaded with grape, which he pointed towards the place where the crowd were assembled, threatening to exterminate them. The English deeming resistance fruitless, surrendered, and Lafitte hastened to put a stop to the slaughter. This exploit, hitherto unparalleled, resounded through India, and the name of Lafitte became the terror of English commerce in these latitudes.

As British vessels now traversed the Indian Ocean under strong convoys, game became scarce, and Lafitte determined to visit France; and after doubling the Cape of Good Hope, he coasted up to the Gulf of Guinea, and in the Bight of Benin, took two valuable prizes loaded with gold dust, ivory, and Palm Oil; with this booty he reached St. Maloes in safety. After a short stay at his native place he fitted out a Brigantine, mounting twenty guns and one hundred and fifty men, and sailed for Gaudaloupe; amongst the West India Islands, he made several valua-

ble prizes; but during his absence on a cruise the island having been taken by the British, he proceeded to Carthage, and from thence to Barrataria. After this period, the conduct of Lafitte at Barrataria does not appear to be characterised by the audacity and boldness of his former career; but he had amassed immense sums of booty, and as he was obliged to have dealings with the merchants of the United States, and the West Indies, who frequently owed him large sums, and the cautious dealings necessary to found and conduct a colony of Pirates and Smugglers in the very teeth of a civilized nation, obliged Lafitte to cloak as much as possible his real character.

As we have said before, at the period of the taking of Gaudaloupe by the British, most of the privateers commissioned by the government of that island, and which were then on a cruise, not being able to return to any of the West India Islands, made for Barrataria, there to take in a supply of water and provisions, recruit the health of their crews, and dispose of their prizes, which could not be admitted into any of the ports of the United States, we being at that time in peace with Great Britain. Most of the commissions granted to privateers by the French government at Gaudaloupe, having expired sometime after the declaration of the independence of Carthage, many of the privateers repaired to that port, for the purpose of obtaining from the new government commissions for cruising against Spanish vessels. Having duly obtained their commissions, they in a manner blockaded for a long time all the ports belonging to the royalists, and made numerous captives, which they carried into Barrataria. Under this denomination is comprised part of the coast of Louisiana to the west of the mouths of the Mississippi, comprehended between Bastien bay on the east, and the mouths of the river or bayou la Fourche on the west. Not far from the sea are lakes called the great and little lakes of Barrataria, communicating with one another by several large bayous with a great number of branches. There is also the island of Barrataria, at the extremity of which is a place called the Temple, which denomination it owes to several mounds of shells thrown up there by the Indians. The name of Barrataria is also given to a large basin

which extends the whole length of the cypress swamps, from the Gulf of Mexico to three miles above New Orleans. These waters disembogue into the gulf by two entrances of the bayou Barrataria, between which lies an island called Grand Terre, six miles in length, and from two to three miles in breadth, running parallel with the coast. In the western entrance is the great pass of Barrataria, which has from nine to ten feet of water. Within this pass about two leagues from the open sea, lies the only secure harbor on the coast, and accordingly this was the harbor frequented by the *Pirates*, so well known by the name of Barratarians.

At Grand Jerre, the privateers publicly made sale by auction, of the cargoes of their prizes. From all parts of Lower Louisiana, people resorted to Barrataria, without being at all solicitous to conceal the object of their journey. The most respectable inhabitants of the state, especially those living in the country, were in the habit of purchasing smuggled goods coming from Barrataria.

The government of the United States sent an expedition under Commodore Patterson, to disperse the settlement of marauders at Barrataria; the following is an extract of his letter to the secretary of war.

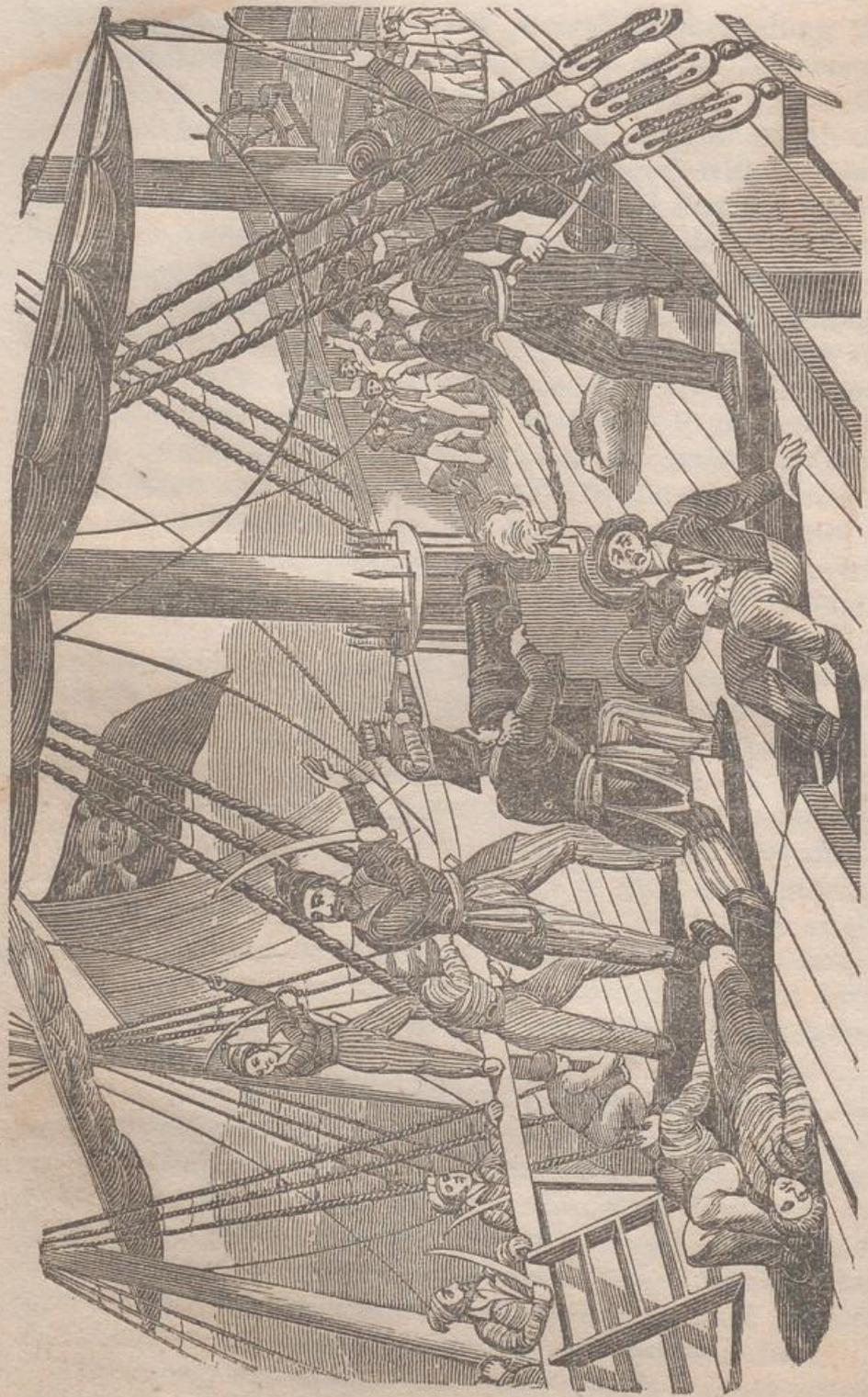
Sir—I have the honor to inform you that I departed from this city on the 11th June, accompanied by Col. Ross, with a detachment of seventy of the 44th regiment of infantry. On the 12th, reached the schooner Carolina, of Plaquemine, and formed a junction with the gun vessels at the Balize on the 13th, sailed from the southwest pass on the evening of the 15th, and at half past 8 o'clock, A. M. on the 16th, made the Island of Barrataria, and discovered a number of vessels in the harbor, some of which shewed Carthaginian colors. At 2 o'clock, perceived the pirates forming their vessels, ten in number, including prizes, into a line of battle near the entrance of the harbor, and making every preparation to offer me battle. At 10 o'clock, wind light and variable, formed the order of battle with six gun boats and the Sea Horse tender, mounting one six pounder and fifteen men, and a launch mounting one twelve pound carr made; the schooner Carolina, drawing too much water to cross the bar. At

half past 10 o'clock, perceived several smokes along the coasts as signals, and at the same time a white flag hoisted on board a schooner at the fort, an American flag at the mainmast head and a Carthagenian flag, (under which the pirates cruise,) at her topping lift; replied with a white flag at my main; at 11 o'clock, discovered that the pirates had fired two of their best schooners; hauled down my white flag and made the *signal for battle*; hoisting with a large white flag bearing the words "Pardon for Deserters;" having heard there was a number on shore from the army and navy. At a quarter past 11 o'clock, two gun boats grounded and were passed agreeably to my previous orders, by the other four which entered the harbor, manned by my barge and the boats belonging to the grounded vessels, and proceeded in to my great disappointment. I perceived that the pirates abandoned their vessels, and were flying in all directions. I immediately sent the launch and two barges with small boats in pursuit of them. At meridian, took possession of all their vessels in the harbor consisting of six schooners and one felucca, cruisers, and prizes of the pirates, one brig a prize, and two armed schooners under the Carthagenian flag, both in the line of battle, with the armed vessels of the pirates, and apparently with an intention to aid them in any resistance they might make against me, as their crews were at quarters, tompons out of their guns, and matches lighted. Col. Ross at the same time landed, and with his command took possession of their establishment on shore, consisting of about forty houses of different sizes, badly constructed, and thatched with palmetto leaves.

When I perceived the enemy forming their vessels into a line of battle I felt confident from their number and very advantageous position, and their number of men, that they would have fought me; their not doing so I regret; for had they, I should have been enabled more effectually to destroy or make prisoners of them and their leaders; but it is a subject of great satisfaction to me, to have effected the object of my enterprise, without the loss of a man.

The enemy had mounted on their vessels twenty pieces of cannon of different calibre: and as I have since learnt, from eight hundred, to one thousand men of all nations and colors.





Lafitte and his crew clearing the decks of the Indiaman. p. 65

Early in the morning of the 20th, the Carolina at anchor, about five miles distant, made the signal of a "strange sail in sight to eastward;" immediately after she weighed anchor, and gave chase the strange sail, standing for Grand Terre, with all sail, at half past 8 o'clock, the chase hauled her wind off shore to escape; sent acting Lieut. Spedding with four boats manned and armed to prevent her passing the harbor; at 9 o'clock, A. M. the chase fired upon the Carolina, which was returned; each vessel continued firing during the chase, when their long guns could reach. At 10 o'clock, the chase grounded outside of the bar, at which time the Carolina was from the shoalness of the water, obliged to haul her wind off shore and give up the chase; opened a fire upon the chase across the island from the gun vessels. At half past 10 o'clock, she hauled down her colors and was taken possession of. She proved to be the armed schooner, Gen. Boliver; by grounding she broke both her rudder pintles and made water; took from her her armament, consisting of one long brass eighteen pounder, one long brass six pounder, two twelve pounders, small arms, &c. and twenty-one packages of dry goods. On the afternoon of the 23d, got underway with the whole squadron, in all seventeen vessels, but during the night one escaped, and the next day arrived at New Orleans with my whole squadron.

At different times the English had sought to attack the pirates at Barrataria, in hopes of taking their prizes, and even their armed vessels. Of these attempts of the British, suffice it to instance that of June 23d 1813, when two privateers being at anchor off Cat Island, a British sloop of war anchored at the entrance of the pass, and sent her boats to endeavour to take the privateers; but they were repulsed with considerable loss.

Such was the state of affairs, when on the 2d Sept. 1814, there appeared an armed brig on the coast opposite the pass. She fired a gun at a vessel about to enter and forced her to run aground; she then tacked and shortly after came to an anchor at the entrance of the pass. It was not easy to understand the intentions of this vessel, who having commenced with hostilities on her first appearance now seemed to announce an amicable disposition.

Mr. Lafitte then went off in a boat to examine her, venturing so far that he could not escape from the pinnace sent from the brig, and making towards the shore, bearing British colors and a flag of truce. In this pinnace were two naval officers. One was Capt. Lockyer, commander of the brig. The first question they asked was, where was Mr. Lafitte? he not choosing to make himself known to them, replied that the person they inquired for was on shore. They then delivered to him a packet directed to Mr. Lafitte, Barrataria, requesting him to take particular care of it, and to deliver it into Mr. Lafitte's hands. He prevailed on them to make for the shore, and as soon as they got near enough to be in his power, he made himself known, recommending to them at the same time to conceal the business on which they had come. Upwards of two hundred persons lined the shore, and it was a general cry amongst the crews of the privateers at Grand Terre, that those British officers should be made prisoners and sent to New Orleans as spies. It was with much difficulty that Lafitte dissuaded the multitude from this intent, and led the officers in safety to his dwelling. He thought very prudently that the papers contained in the packet might be of importance towards the safety of the country and that the officers if well watched could obtain no intelligence that might turn to the detriment of Louisiana. He now examined the contents of the packet, in which he found a proclamation addressed by Col. Edward Nichalls, in the service of his Britannic Majesty, and commander of the land forces on the coast of Florida, to the inhabitants of Louisiana. A letter from the same to Mr. Lafitte, the commandant of Barrataria; an official letter from the honorable W. H. Percy, captain of the sloop of war Hermes, directed to Lafitte. When he had perused these letters, Capt. Lockyer enlarged on the subject of them, and proposed to him to enter into the service of his Britannic Majesty with the rank of post captain and to receive the command of a 44 gun frigate. Also all those under his command, or over whom he had sufficient influence. He was also offered thirty thousand dollars, payable at Pensacola, and urged him not to let slip this opportunity of acquiring fortune and consideration. On Lafitte's requir-

ing a few days to reflect upon these proposals, Capt. Lockyer observed to him that no reflection could be necessary, respecting proposals that obviously precluded hesitation, as he was a Frenchman and proscribed by the American government. But to all his splendid promises and daring insinuations, Lafitte replied, that in a few days he would give a final answer; his object in this procrastination being to gain time to inform the officers of the state government of this nefarious project. Having occasion to go to some distance for a short time, the persons who had proposed to send the British officers prisoners to New Orleans, went and seized them in his absence, and confined both them and the crew of the pinnace, in a secure place, leaving a guard at the door. The British officers sent for Lafitte; but he fearing an insurrection of the crews of the privateers thought it advisable not to see them, until he had first persuaded their captains and officers to desist from the measures on which they seemed bent. With this view he represented to the latter that, besides the infamy that would attach to them, if they treated as prisoners, people who had come with a flag of truce, they would lose the opportunity of discovering the projects of the British against Louisiana.

Early the next morning Lafitte caused them to be released from their confinement and saw them safe on board their pinnace apologizing the detention. He now wrote to Capt. Lockyer the following letter.

TO CAPTAIN LOCKYER.

*Barrataria, 4th Sept. 1814.*

Sir—The confusion which prevailed in our camp yesterday and this morning, and of which you have a complete knowledge, has prevented me from answering in a precise manner to the object of your mission; nor even at this moment can I give you all the satisfaction that you desire; however, if you could grant me a fortnight, I would be entirely at your disposal at the end of that time. This delay is indispensable to enable me to put my affairs in order. You may communicate with me by sending a boat to the eastern point of the pass, where I will be found. You have inspired me with more confidence than the

Admiral, your superior officer, could have done himself; with you alone, I wish to deal, and from you also I will claim, in due time the reward of the services, which I may render to you.

Yours, &c.

J. LAFITTE.

His object in writing that letter was, by appearing disposed to accede to their proposals, to give time to communicate the affair to the officers of the state government, and to receive from them instructions how to act, under circumstances so critical and important to the country. He accordingly wrote on the 4th September to Mr. Blanque, one of the representatives of the state, sending him all the papers delivered to him by the British officers with a letter addressed to his excellency, Gov. Claiborne of the state of Louisiana.

To Gov. CLAIBORNE.

*Barrataria, Sept. 4th, 1814.*

Sir—In the firm persuasion that the choice made of you to fill the office of first magistrate of this state, was dictated by the esteem of your fellow citizens, and was conferred on merit, I confidently address you on an affair on which may depend the safety of this country. I offer to you to restore to this state several citizens, who perhaps in your eyes have lost that sacred title. I offer you them, however, such as you could wish to find them, ready to exert their utmost efforts in defence of the country. This point of Louisiana, which I occupy, is of great importance in the present crisis. I tender my services to defend it; and the only reward I ask is that a stop be put to the proscription against me and my adherents, by an act of oblivion, for all that has been done hitherto. I am the stray sheep wishing to return to the fold. If you are thoroughly acquainted with the nature of my offences, I should appear to you much less guilty, and still worthy to discharge the duties of a good citizen. I have never sailed under any flag but that of the republic of Carthage, and my vessels are perfectly regular in that respect. If I could have brought my lawful prizes into the ports of this state, I should not have employed the illicit means that have

caused me to be proscribed. I decline saying more on the subject, until I have the honor of your excellency's answer, which I am persuaded can be dictated only by wisdom. Should your answer not be favorable to my ardent desires, I declare to you that I will instantly leave the country, to avoid the imputation of having cooperated towards an invasion on this point, which cannot fail to take place, and to rest secure in the acquittal of my conscience

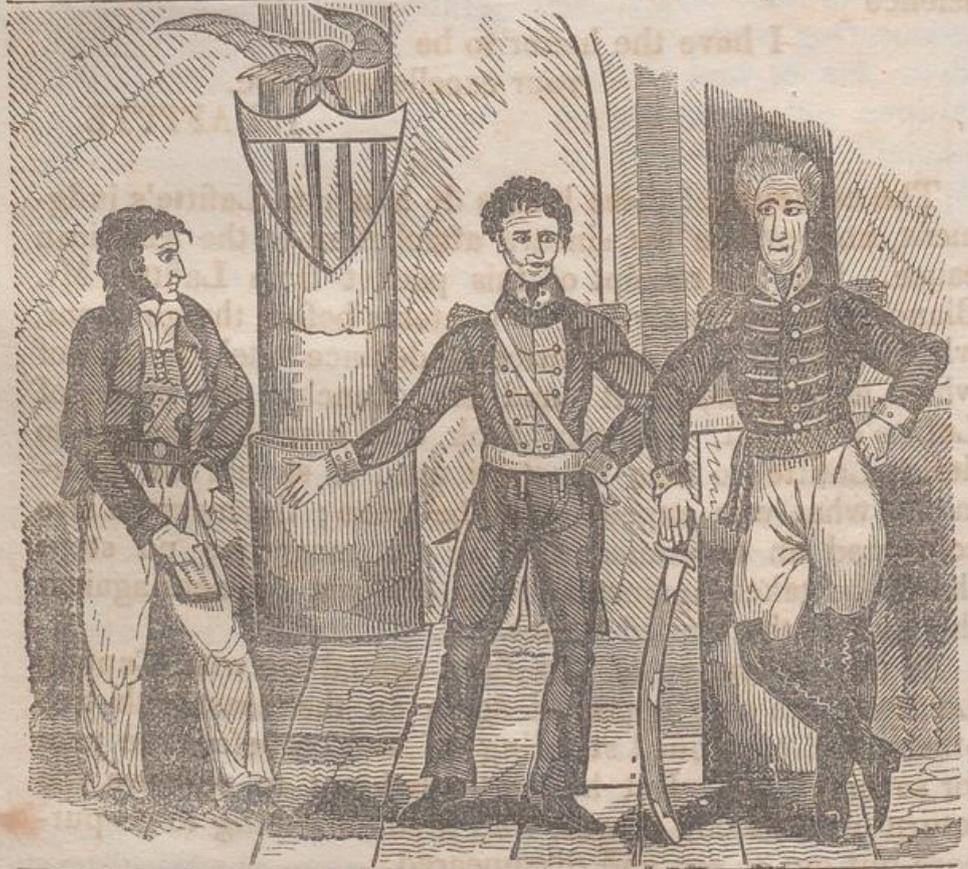
I have the honor to be  
your excellency's, &c.  
J. LAFITTE.

The contents of these letters do honor to Lafitte's judgment, and evince his sincere attachment to the American cause. On the receipt of this packet from Lafitte, Mr. Blanque immediately laid its contents before the governor, who convened the committee of defence lately formed of which he was president; and Mr. Rancher the bearer of Lafitte's packet, was sent back with a verbal answer to desire Lafitte to take no steps until it should be determined what was expedient to be done; the message also contained an assurance that, in the meantime no steps should be taken against him for his past offences against the laws of the United States.

At the expiration of the time agreed on with Captain Lockyer, his ship appeared again on the coast with two others, and continued standing off and on before the pass for several days. But he pretended not to perceive the return of the sloop of war, who tired of waiting to no purpose put out to sea and disappeared.

Lafitte having received a guarantee from General Jackson for his safe passage from Barrataria to New Orleans and back, he proceeded forthwith to the city where he had an interview with Gov. Claiborne and the General. After the usual formalities and courtesies had taken place between these gentlemen, Lafitte addressed the Governor of Louisiana nearly as follows. I have offered to defend for you that part of Louisiana I now hold. But not as an outlaw, would I be its defender. In that confidence, with which you have inspired me, I offer to restore to the state many

citizens, now under my command. As I have remarked before, the point I occupy is of great importance in the present crisis. I tender not only my own services to defend it, but those of all I command; and the only reward I ask, is, that a stop be put to the proscription against me and my adherents, by an act of oblivion for all that has been done hitherto.



*Interview between Lafitte, General Jackson, and Governor Claiborne.*

“My dear sir,” said the Governor, who together with General Jackson, was impressed with admiration of his sentiments, “your praiseworthy wishes shall be laid before the council of the state, and I will confer with my august friend here present, upon this important affair, and send you an answer to-morrow.” As Lafitte withdrew, the General said farewell; when we meet again, I trust it will be in the ranks of the American army. The result of the conference was the issuing the following order.

The Governor of Louisiana, informed that many individuals implicated in the offences heretofore committed against the United States at Barrataria, express a willingness at the present crisis to enrol themselves and march against the enemy.

He does hereby invite them to join the standard of the United States and is authorised to say, should their conduct in the field meet the approbation of the Major General, that that officer will unite with the governor in a request to the president of the United States, to extend to each and every individual, so marching and acting, a free and full pardon. These general orders were placed in the hands of Lafitte, who circulated them among his dispersed followers, most of whom readily embraced the conditions of pardon they held out. In a few days many brave men and skillful artillerists, whose services contributed greatly to the safety of the invaded state, flocked to the standard of the United States, and by their conduct, received the highest approbation of General Jackson.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

### A PROCLAMATION.

“Among the many evils produced by the wars, which, with little intermission, have afflicted Europe, and extended their ravages into other quarters of the globe, for a period exceeding twenty years, the dispersion of a considerable portion of the inhabitants of different countries, in sorrow and in want, has not been the least injurious to human happiness, nor the least severe in the trial of human virtue.

“It had been long ascertained that many foreigners, flying from the dangers of their own home, and that some citizens, forgetful of their duty, had co-operated in forming an establishment on the island of Barrataria, near the mouth of the river Mississippi, for the purpose of a clandestine and lawless trade. The government of the United States caused the establishment to be broken up and destroyed; and, having obtained the means of designating the offenders of every description, it only remained to answer the demands of justice by inflicting an exemplary punishment.

“But it has since been represented that the offenders have manifested a sincere penitence; that they have abandoned the prosecution of the worst cause for the support of the best, and, particularly, that they have exhibited, in the defence of New Orleans, unequivocal traits of courage and fidelity. Offenders, who have refused to become the associates of the enemy in the war, upon the most seducing terms of invitation; and who have aided to repel his hostile invasion of the territory of the United States, can no longer be considered as objects of punishment, but as objects of a generous forgiveness.

“It has therefore been seen, with great satisfaction, that the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana earnestly recommend those offenders to the benefit of a full pardon; And in compliance with that recommendation, as well as in consideration of all the other extraordinary circumstances of the case, I, *James Madison*, President of the United States of America, do issue this proclamation, hereby granting, publishing and declaring, a free and full pardon of all offences committed in violation of any act or acts of the Congress of the said United States, touching the revenue, trade and navigation thereof, or touching the intercourse and commerce of the United States with foreign nations, at any time before the eighth day of January, in the present year one thousand eight hundred and fifteen, by any person or persons whatsoever, being inhabitants of New Orleans and the adjacent country, or being inhabitants of the said island of Barrataria, and the places adjacent; *Provided*, that every person, claiming the benefit of this full pardon, in order to entitle himself thereto, shall produce a certificate in writing from the governor of the State of Louisiana, stating that such person has aided in the defence of New Orleans and the adjacent country, during the invasion thereof as aforesaid.

“And I do hereby further authorize and direct all suits, indictments, and prosecutions, for fines, penalties, and forfeitures, against any person or persons, who shall be entitled to the benefit of this full pardon, forthwith to be stayed, discontinued and released: All civil officers are hereby required, according to the duties of their respective stations, to carry this proclamation into immediate and faithful execution.

"DONE at the City of Washington, the sixth day of February, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifteen, and of the independence of the United States the thirty-ninth.

"By the President,

"JAMES MADISON.

"JAMES MONROE,

*Acting Secretary of State.*"

The morning of the eighth of January, was ushered in with the discharge of rockets, the sound of cannon, and the cheers of the British soldiers advancing to the attack. The Americans, behind the breastwork, awaited in calm intrepidity their approach. The enemy advanced in close column of sixty men in front, shouldering their muskets and carrying fascines and ladders. A storm of rockets preceded them, and an incessant fire opened from the battery, which commanded the advanced column. The musketry and rifles from the Kentuckians and Tennesseans, joined the fire of the artillery, and in a few moments was heard along the line a ceaseless, rolling fire, whose tremendous noise resembled the continued reverberation of thunder. One of these guns, a twenty-four pounder, placed upon the breastwork in the third embrasure from the river, drew, from the fatal skill and activity with which it was managed, even in the heat of battle, the admiration of both Americans and British; and became one of the points most dreaded by the advancing foe.

Here was stationed Lafitte and his lieutenant Dominique and a large band of his men, who during the continuance of the battle, fought with unparalleled bravery. The British already had been twice driven back in the utmost confusion, with the loss of their Commander-in-chief, and two general officers.

Two other batteries were manned by the Barratarians, who served their pieces with the steadiness and precision of veteran gunners. In the first attack of the enemy, a column pushed forward between the levee and river; and so precipitate was their charge that the outposts were forced to retire, closely pressed by the enemy. Before the batteries could meet the charge, clearing the ditch, they

gained the redoubt through the embrasures, leaping over the parapet, and overwhelming by their superior force the small party stationed there.

Lafitte, who was commanding in conjunction with his officers, at one of the guns, no sooner saw the bold movement of the enemy, than calling a few of his best men by his side, he sprung forward to the point of danger, and clearing the breastwork of the entrenchments, leaped, cutlass in hand, into the midst of the enemy, followed by a score of his men, who in many a hard fought battle upon his own deck, had been well tried.

Astonished at the intrepidity which could lead men to leave their entrenchments and meet them hand to hand, and pressed by the suddenness of the charge, which was made with the recklessness, skill and rapidity of practised boarders bounding upon the deck of an enemy's vessel, they began to give way, while one after another, two British officers fell before the cutlass of the pirate, as they were bravely encouraging their men. All the energies of the British were now concentrated to scale the breastwork, which one daring officer had already mounted. While Lafitte and his followers, seconding a gallant band of volunteer riflemen, formed a phalanx which they in vain assayed to penetrate.

The British finding it impossible to take the city and the havock in their ranks being dreadful, made a precipitate retreat, leaving the field covered with their dead and wounded.

General Jackson, in his correspondence with the secretary of war did not fail to notice the conduct of the "Corsairs of Barrataria," who were, as we have already seen, employed in the artillery service. In the course of the campaign they proved, in an unequivocal manner, that they had been misjudged by the enemy, who a short time previous to the invasion of Louisiana, had hoped to enlist them in his cause. Many of them were killed or wounded in the defence of the country. Their zeal, their courage, and their skill, were remarked by the whole army, who could no longer consider such brave men as criminals. In a few days peace was declared between Great Britain and the United States.

The piratical establishment of Barrataria having been broken up and Lafitte not being content with leading an honest, peaceful life, procured some fast sailing vessels, and with a great number of his followers, proceeded to Galvezton Bay, in Texas, during the year 1819; where he received a commission from General Long; and had five vessels generally cruising and about 300 men. Two open boats bearing commissions from General Humbert, of Galvezton, having robbed a plantation on the Marmonto river, of negroes, money, &c. were captured in the Sabine river, by the boats of the United States schooner Lynx. One of the men was hung by Lafitte, who dreaded the vengeance of the American government. The Lynx also captured one of his schooners, and her prize that had been for a length of time smuggling in the Carmento. One of his cruisers, named the Jupiter, returned safe to Galvezton after a short cruise with a valuable cargo, principally specie; she was the first vessel that sailed under the authority of Texas. The American government well knowing that where Lafitte was, piracy and smuggling would be the order of the day, sent a vessel of war to cruise in the Gulf of Mexico, and scour the coasts of Texas. Lafitte having been appointed governor of Galvezton and one of the cruisers being stationed off the port to watch his motions, it so annoyed him that he wrote the following letter to her commander, Lieutenant Madison.

*To the commandant of the American cruiser, off the port of Galvezton.*

Sir—I am convinced that you are a cruiser of the navy, ordered by your government. I have therefore deemed it proper to inquire into the cause of your lying before this port without communicating your intention. I shall by this message inform you, that the port of Galvezton belongs to and is in the possession of the republic of Texas, and was made a port of entry the 9th October last. And whereas the supreme congress of said republic have thought proper to appoint me as governor of this place, in consequence of which, if you have any demands on said government, or persons belonging to or residing in the same, you

will please to send an officer with such demands, whom you may be assured will be treated with the greatest politeness, and receive every satisfaction required. But if you are ordered, or should attempt to enter this port in a hostile manner, my oath and duty to the government compels me to rebut your intentions at the expense of my life.

To prove to you my intentions towards the welfare and harmony of your government, I send enclosed the declaration of several prisoners, who were taken in custody yesterday, and by a court of inquiry appointed for that purpose, were found guilty of robbing the inhabitants of the United States of a number of slaves and specie. The gentleman bearing this message will give you any reasonable information relating to this place, that may be required.

Yours, &c.

J. LAFITTE.

About this time one Mitchell, who had formerly belonged to Lafitte's gang, collected upwards of one hundred and fifty desperadoes and fortified himself on an island near Barrataria, with several pieces of cannon; and swore that he and all his comrades would perish within their trenches before they would surrender to any man. Four of this gang having gone to New Orleans on a frolic, information was given to the city watch, and the house surrounded, when the whole four with cocked pistols in both hands sallied out and marched through the crowd which made way for them and no person dared to make an attempt to arrest them.

The United States cutter, Alabama, on her way to the station off the mouth of the Mississippi, captured a piratical schooner belonging to Lafitte; she carried two guns and twenty-five men, and was fitted out at New Orleans, and commanded by one of Lafitte's lieutenants, named Le Fage; the schooner had a prize in company and being hailed by the cutter, poured into her a volley of musketry. The cutter then opened upon the privateer and a smart action ensued which terminated in favor of the cutter, which had four men wounded and two of them dangerously; but the pirate had six men killed; both vessels were captured and brought into the Bayou St. John. An

expedition was now sent to dislodge Mitchell and his comrades from the island he had taken possession of; after coming to anchor, a summons was sent for him to surrender, which was answered by a brisk cannonade from his breastwork. The vessels were warped close in shore; and the boats manned and sent on shore whilst the vessels opened upon the pirates; the boat's crews landed under a galling fire of grape shot and formed in the most undaunted manner; and although a severe loss was sustained they entered the breastwork at the point of the bayonet; after a desperate fight the pirates gave way, many were taken prisoners, but Mitchell and the greatest part escaped to the Cypress swamps where it was impossible to arrest them. A large quantity of dry goods and specie together with other booty was taken. Twenty of the pirates were taken and brought to New Orleans, and tried before Judge Hall, of the Circuit Court of the United States, sixteen were brought in guilty; and after the Judge had finished pronouncing sentence of death upon the hardened wretches, several of them cried out in open court, *Murder—by God.*

Accounts of these transactions having reached Lafitte, he plainly perceived there was a determination to sweep all his cruisers from the sea; and a war of extermination appeared to be waged against him.

In a fit of desperation he procured a large and fast sailing brigantine mounting sixteen guns and having selected a crew of one hundred and sixty men he started without any commission as a regular pirate determined to rob all nations and neither to give or receive quarter. A British sloop of war which was cruising in the Gulf of Mexico, having heard that Lafitte himself was at sea, kept a sharp look out from the mast head; when one morning as an officer was sweeping the horizon with his glass he discovered a long dark looking vessel low in the water, but having very tall masts, with sails white as the driven snow. As the sloop of war had the weather gage of the pirate and could outsail her before the wind, she set her studding sails and crowded every inch of canvass in chase; as soon as Lafitte ascertained the character of his opponent, he ordered the awnings to be furled and set his big square-sail and shot rapidly through the water; but as the breeze

freshened the sloop of war came up rapidly with the pirate, who finding no chance of escaping, determined to sell his life as dearly as possible; the guns were cast loose and the shot handed up; and a fire opened upon the ship which killed a number of men and carried away her foretopmast, but she reserved her fire until within cable's distance of the pirate; when she fired a general discharge from her broadside, and a volley of small arms; the broadside was too much elevated to hit the low hull of the brigantine, but was not without effect; the foretopmast fell, the jaws of the main gaff were severed and a large proportion of the rigging came rattling down on deck; ten of the pirates were killed, but Lafitte remained unhurt. The sloop of war entered her men over the starboard bow and a terrific contest with pistols and cutlasses ensued; Lafitte received two wounds at this time which disabled him, a grape shot broke the bone of his right leg and he received a cut in the abdomen, but his crew fought like tigers and the deck was ankle deep with blood and gore; the captain of the boarders received such a tremendous blow on the head from the butt end of a musket, as stretched him senseless on the deck near Lafitte, who raised his dagger to stab him to the heart. But the tide of his existence was ebbing like a torrent, his brain was giddy, his aim faltered and the point descended in the Captain's right thigh; dragging away the blade with the last convulsive energy of a death struggle, he lacerated the wound. Again the reeking steel was upheld, and Lafitte placed his left hand near the Captain's heart, to make his aim more sure; again the dizziness of dissolution spread over his sight, down came the dagger into the captain's left thigh and Lafitte was a corpse.

The upper deck was cleared, and the boarders rushed below on the main deck to complete their conquest. Here the slaughter was dreadful, till the pirates called out for quarter, and the carnage ceased; all the pirates that surrendered were taken to Jamaica and tried before the Admiralty court where sixteen were condemned to die, six were subsequently pardoned and ten executed.

Thus perished Lafitte, a man superior in talent, in knowledge of his profession, in courage, and moreover in physi-

cal strength; but unfortunately his reckless career was marked with crimes of the darkest dye.

——— “He was the mildest manner’d man,  
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat;  
With such true breeding of a gentleman,  
You never could discern his real thought.  
Pity he loved an adventurous life’s variety,  
He was so great a loss to good society.”

