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**Pirates own book, or authentic narratives of the lives,
exploits, and executions of the most celebrated sea
robbers**

ELLS, CHARLES

New York [u.a.], 1842

La Fitte proceeds to Texas.

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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