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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

Gibbs a Grocer in Ann street, near the Tin Pot, Boston.

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captured the British sloop-of-War, Peacock, off the coast of Pernambuco. Upon the return of the Hornet to the United States, her brave commander, Capt. Lawrence, was promoted for his gallantry to the command of the unfortunate Chesapeake, and to which he was followed by young Gibbs, who took a very distinguished part in the engagement with the Shannon, which resulted in the death of Lawrence and the capture of the Chesapeake. Gibbs states that while on board the Chesapeake the crew previous to the action, were almost in a state of mutiny, growing out of the non payment of the prize money, and that the address of Capt. Lawrence was received by them with coldness and murmurs.

After the engagement, Gibbs became with the survivors of the crew a prisoner of war, and as such was confined in Dartmoor prison until exchanged.

After his exchange, he returned to Boston, where having determined to abandon the sea, he applied to his friends in Rhode Island, to assist him in commencing business; they accordingly lent him one thousand dollars as a capital to begin with. He opened a grocery in Ann Street, near what was then called the *Tin Pot*, a place full of abandoned women and dissolute fellows. As he dealt chiefly in liquor, and had a "*License to retail Spirits*," his drunkery was thronged with customers. But he sold his groceries chiefly to loose girls who paid him in their coin, which, although it answered his purpose, would neither buy him goods or pay his rent, and he found his stock rapidly dwindling away without his receiving any cash to replenish it. By dissipation and inattention his new business proved unsuccessful to him. He resolved to abandon it and again try the sea for a subsistence. With a hundred dollars in his pocket, the remnant of his property, he embarked in the ship John, for Buenos Ayres, and his means being exhausted soon after his arrival there, he entered on board a Buenos Ayrean privateer and sailed on a cruise. A quarrel between the officers and crew in regard to the division of prize money, led eventually to a mutiny; and the mutineers gained the ascendancy, took possession of the vessel, landed the crew on the coast of Florida, and steered for the West Indies, with hearts resolved to make

their fortunes at all hazards, and where in a short time, more than twenty vessels were captured by them and nearly *Four Hundred Human Beings Murdered!*

Havanna was the resort of these pirates, to dispose of their plunder; and Gibbs sauntered about this place with impunity and was acquainted in all the out of the way and bye places of that hot bed of pirates, the Regla. He and his comrades even lodged in the very houses with many of the American officers who were sent out to take them. He was acquainted with many of the officers, and was apprised of all their intended movements before they left the harbor. On one occasion, the American ship *Caroline*, was captured by two of their piratical vessels off Cape Antonio. They were busily engaged in landing the cargo, when the British sloop of war, *Jearus*, hove in sight and sent her barges to attack them. The pirates defended themselves for some time behind a small four gun battery which they had erected, but in the end were forced to abandon their own vessel and the prize and fly to the mountains for safety. The *Jearus* found here twelve vessels burnt to the water's edge, and it was satisfactorily ascertained that their crews, amounting to *one hundred and fifty persons had been murdered*. The crews, if it was thought not necessary otherwise to dispose of them were sent adrift in their boats, and frequently without any thing on which they could subsist a single day; nor were all so fortunate thus to escape. "Dead men can tell no tales," was a common saying among them; and as soon as a ship's crew were taken, a short consultation was held; and if it was the opinion of a majority that it would be better to take life than to spare it, a single nod or wink from the captain was sufficient; regardless of age or sex, all entreaties for mercy were then made in vain; they possessed not the tender feelings, to be operated upon by the shrieks and expiring groans of the devoted victims! there was a strife among them, who with his own hands could despatch the greatest number, and in the shortest period of time.

Without any other motives than to gratify their hellish propensities, (in their intoxicated moments,) blood was not unfrequently and unnecessarily shed, and many widows and orphans probably made, when the lives of the unfortu-

nate victims might have been spared, and without the most distant prospect of any evil consequences, (as regarded themselves,) resulting therefrom.

Gibbs states that sometime in the course of the year 1819, he left Havanna and came to the United States, bringing with him about \$30,000. He passed several weeks in the city of New York, and then went to Boston, whence he took passage for Liverpool in the ship Emerald. Before he sailed, however, he had squandered a large part of his money by dissipation and gambling. He remained in Liverpool a few months, and then returned to Boston. His residence in Liverpool at that time is satisfactorily ascertained from another source besides his own confession. A female now in New York was well acquainted with him there, where, she says, he lived like a gentleman, with apparently abundant means of support. In speaking of his acquaintance with this female, he says, "I fell in with a woman, who I thought was all virtue, but she deceived me, and I am sorry to say that a heart that never felt abashed at scenes of carnage and blood, was made a child of for a time by her, and I gave way to dissipation to drown the torment. How often when the fumes of liquor have subsided, have I thought of my good and affectionate parents, and of their Godlike advice! But when the little monitor began to move within me, I immediately seized the cup to hide myself from myself, and drank until the sense of intoxication was renewed. My friends advised me to behave myself like a man, and promised me their assistance, but the demon still haunted me, and I spurned their advice."

In 1826, he revisited the United States, and hearing of the war between Brazil and the Republic of Buenos Ayres, sailed from Boston in the brig Hitty, of Portsmouth, with a determination, as he states, of trying his fortune in defence of a republican government. Upon his arrival he made himself known to Admiral Brown, and communicated his desire to join their navy. The admiral accompanied him to the Governor, and a Lieutenant's commission being given him, he joined a ship of 34 guns, called the 'Twenty Fifth of May.' "Here," says Gibbs, "I found Lieutenant Dodge, an old acquaintance, and a num-

ber of other persons with whom I had sailed. When the Governor gave me the commission, he told me they wanted no cowards in their navy, to which I replied that I thought he would have no apprehension of my cowardice or skill when he became acquainted with me. He thanked me, and said he hoped he should not be deceived; upon which we drank to his health and to the success of the Republic. He then presented me with a sword, and told me to wear that as my companion through the doubtful struggle in which the republic was engaged. I told him I never would disgrace it, so long as I had a nerve in my arm. I remained on board the ship in the capacity of 5th Lieutenant, for about four months, during which time we had a number of skirmishes with the enemy. Having succeeded in gaining the confidence of Admiral Brown, he put me in command of a privateer schooner, mounting two long 24 pounders and 46 men. I sailed from Buenos Ayres, made two good cruises, and returned safely to port. I then bought one half of a new Baltimore schooner, and sailed again, but was captured seven days out, and carried into Rio Janeiro, where the Brazilians paid me my change. I remained there until peace took place, then returned to Buenos Ayres, and thence to New York.

After the lapse of about a year, which I passed in travelling from place to place, the war between France and Algiers attracted my attention. Knowing that the French commerce presented a fine opportunity for plunder, I determined to embark for Algiers and offer my services to the Dey. I accordingly took passage from New York, in the Sally Ann, belonging to Bath, landed at Barcelona, crossed to Port Mahon, and endeavored to make my way to Algiers. The vigilance of the French fleet prevented the accomplishment of my design, and I proceeded to Tunis. There finding it unsafe to attempt a journey to Algiers across the desert, I amused myself with contemplating the ruins of Carthage, and reviving my recollections of her war with the Romans. I afterwards took passage to Marseilles, and thence to Boston.

An instance of the most barbarous and cold blooded murder of which the wretched Gibbs gives an account in the course of his confessions, is that of an innocent and

beautiful female of about 17 or 18 years of age! she was with her parents a passenger on board a Dutch ship, bound from Curracoa to Holland; there were a number of other passengers, male and female, on board, all of whom except the young lady above-mentioned were put to death; her unfortunate parents were inhumanly butchered before her eyes, and she was doomed to witness the agonies and to hear the expiring, heart-piercing groans of those whom she held most dear, and on whom she depended for protection! The life of their wretched daughter was spared for the most nefarious purposes—she was taken by the pirates to the west end of Cuba, where they had a rendezvous, with a small fort that mounted four guns—here she was confined about two months, and where, as has been said by the murderer Gibbs, “she received such treatment, the bare recollection of which causes me to shudder!” At the



Gibbs carrying the Dutch Girl on board his Vessel.

expiration of the two months she was taken by the pirates on board of one of their vessels, and among whom a consultation was soon after held, which resulted in the conclu-