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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**

Brutal treatment of a Dutch Girl.

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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

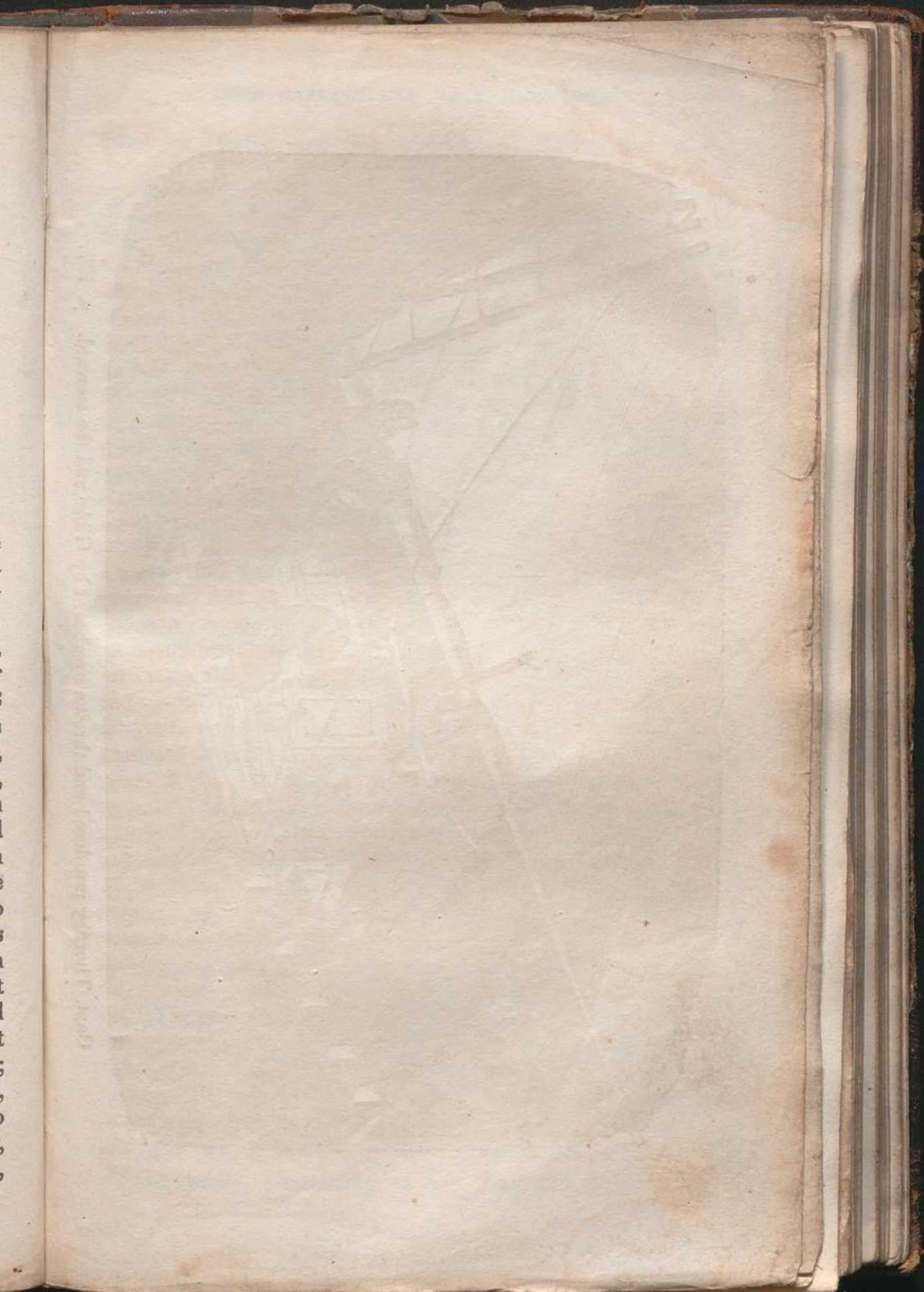


*Gibbs carrying the Dutch Girl on board his Vessel.*

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-

sion that it would be necessary for their own personal safety, to put her to death! and to her a fatal dose of poison was accordingly administered, which soon proved fatal! when her pure and immortal spirit took its flight to that God, whom, we believe, will avenge her wrongs! her lifeless body was then committed to the deep by two of the merciless wretches with as much unconcern, as if it had been that of the meanest brute! Gibbs persists in the declaration that in this horrid transaction he took no part, that such was his pity for this poor ill-fated female, that he interceded for her life so long as he could do it with safety to his own!

Gibbs in his last visit to Boston remained there but a few days, when he took passage to New Orleans, and there entered as one of the crew on board the brig *Vineyard*; and for assisting in the murder of the unfortunate captain and mate of which, he was justly condemned, and the awful sentence of death passed upon him! The particulars of the bloody transaction (agreeable to the testimony of Dawes and Brownrigg, the two principal witnesses,) are as follows: The brig *Vineyard*, Capt. William Thornby, sailed from New Orleans about the 9th of November, for Philadelphia, with a cargo of 112 bales of cotton, 113 hhds. sugar, 54 casks of molasses and 54,000 dollars in specie. Besides the captain there were on board the brig, William Roberts, mate, six seamen shipped at New Orleans, and the cook. Robert Dawes, one of the crew, states on examination, that when, about five days out, he was told that there was money on board, Charles Gibbs, E. Church and the steward then determined to take possession of the brig. They asked James Talbot, another of the crew, to join them. He said no, as he did not believe there was money in the vessel. They concluded to kill the captain and mate, and if Talbot and John Brownrigg would not join them, to kill them also. The next night they talked of doing it, and got their clubs ready. Dawes dared not say a word, as they declared they would kill him if he did; as they did not agree about killing Talbot and Brownrigg, two shipmates, it was put off. They next concluded to kill the captain and mate on the night of November 22, but did not get ready; but, on the night of the 23d,





Capt. Thornby murdered and thrown overboard by Gibbs and the steward. p. 107.

between twelve and one o'clock, as Dawes was at the helm, saw the steward come up with a light and a knife in his hand; he dropt the light and seizing the pump break, struck the captain with it over the head or back of the neck; the captain was sent forward by the blow, and halloed, oh! and murder! once; he was then seized by Gibbs and the cook, one by the head and the other by the heels, and thrown overboard. Atwell and Church stood at the companion way, to strike down the mate when he should come up. As he came up and enquired what was the matter, they struck him over the head—he ran back into the cabin, and Charles Gibbs followed him down; but as it was dark, he could not find him—Gibbs came on deck for the light, with which he returned. Dawes' light being taken from him, he could not see to steer, and he in consequence left the helm, to see what was going on below. Gibbs found the mate and seized him, while Atwell and Church came down and struck him with a pump break and a club; he was then dragged upon deck; they called for Dawes to come to them, and as he came up the mate seized his hand, and gave him a death gripe! three of them then hove him overboard, but which three Dawes does not know; the mate when cast overboard was not dead, but called after them twice while in the water! Dawes says he was so frightened that he hardly knew what to do. They then requested him to call Talbot, who was in the forecastle, saying his prayers; he came up and said it would be his turn next! but they gave him some grog, and told him not to be afraid, as they would not hurt him; if he was true to them, he should fare as well as they did. One of those who had been engaged in the bloody deed got drunk, and another became crazy!

After killing the captain and mate, they set about overhauling the vessel, and got up one keg of Mexican dollars. They then divided the captain's clothes, and money—about 40 dollars, and a gold watch. Dawes, Talbot and Brownrigg, (who were all innocent of the murder,) were obliged to do as they were commanded—the former, who was placed at the helm, was ordered to steer for Long Island. On the day following, they divided several kegs of the specie, amounting to five thousand dollars each—

they made bags and sewed the money up. After this division, they divided the remainder of the money without counting it. On Sunday, when about 15 miles S. S. E. of Southampton Light, they got the boats out and put half the money in each—they then scuttled the vessel and set fire to it in the cabin, and took to the boats. Gibbs, after the murder, took charge of the vessel as captain. From the papers they learnt that the money belonged to Stepher Girard. With the boats they made the land about daylight. Dawes and his three companions were in the long



*Gibbs and Wansley burying the Money.*

boat; the others, with Atwell, were in the jolly boat—on coming to the bar the boats struck—in the long boat, they threw overboard a trunk of clothes and a great deal of money, in all about 5000 dollars—the jolly boat foundered; they saw the boat fill, and heard them cry out, and saw them clinging to the masts—they went ashore on Barron Island, and buried the money in the sand, but very lightly. Soon after they met with a gunner, whom they requested

to conduct them where they could get some refreshments. They were by him conducted to Johnson's (the only man living on the island,) where they staid all night—Dawes went to bed at about 10 o'clock—Jack Brownrigg set up with Johnson, and in the morning told Dawes that he had told Johnson all about the murder. Johnson went in the morning with the steward for the clothes, which were left on the top of the place where they buried the money, but does not believe they took away the money.

The prisoners, (Gibbs and Wansley,) were brought to trial at the February term of the United States Court, holden in the city of New York; when the foregoing facts being satisfactorily proved, they were pronounced guilty, and on the 11th March last, the awful sentence of the law was passed upon them in the following affecting and impressive manner:—The Court opened at 11 o'clock, Judge Betts presiding. A few minutes after that hour, Mr. Hamilton, District Attorney, rose and said—May it please the Court, Thomas J. Wansley, the prisoner at the bar, having been tried by a jury of his country, and found guilty of the murder of captain Thornby, I now move that the sentence of the Court be pronounced upon that verdict.

*By the Court.* Thomas J. Wansley, you have heard what has been said by the District Attorney—by the Grand Jury of the South District of New York, you have been arraigned for the wilful murder of captain Thornby, of the brig Vineyard; you have been put upon your trial, and after a patient and impartial hearing, you have been found Guilty. The public prosecutor now moves for judgment on that verdict; have you any thing to say, why the sentence of the law should not be passed upon you?

*Thomas J. Wansley.* I will say a few words, but it is perhaps of no use. I have often understood that there is a great deal of difference in respect of color, and I have seen it in this Court. Dawes and Brownrigg were as guilty as I am, and these witnesses have tried to fasten upon me greater guilt than is just, for their life has been given to them. You have taken the blacks from their own country, to bring them here to treat them ill. I have seen this. The witnesses, the jury, and the prosecuting Attor-