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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

Stratagem of Davis in capturing a French Vessel.

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They, however, had no small difficulty in cleaning their vessel, as there was no carpenter among them. They performed that laborious task in the best manner they could, and then made to the north side of Hispaniola. The first sail they met with was a French ship of twelve guns, which they captured; and while they were plundering her, another appeared in view. Enquiring of the Frenchmen, they learned that she was a ship of twenty-four guns and sixty men. Davis proposed to his crew to attack her, assuring them that she would prove a rich prize. This appeared to the crew such a hazardous enterprise, that they were rather adverse to the measure. But he acquainted them that he had conceived a stratagem that he was confident would succeed; they might, therefore, safely leave the matter to his management. He then commenced chase, and ordered his prize to do the same. Being a better sailer, he soon came up with the enemy, and showed his black colors. With no small surprise at his insolence in coming so near them, they commanded him to strike. He replied, that he was disposed to give them employment until his companion came up, who was able to contend with them; meanwhile assuring them that, if they did not strike to him, it would most certainly fare the worse with them: then giving them a broadside, he received the same in return.

When the other pirate ship drew near, they, according to the directions of Davis, appeared upon deck in white shirts, which making an appearance of numbers, the Frenchman was intimidated, and struck. Davis ordered the captain with twenty of his men to come on board, and they were all put in irons except the captain. He then despatched four of his men to the other ship, and calling aloud to them, desired that his compliments should be given to the captain, with a request to send a sufficient number of hands to go on board their new prize, to see what they had got in her. At the same time, he gave them a written paper with their proper instructions, even to nail up the small guns, to take out all the arms and powder, and to go every man on board the new prize. When his men were on board her, he ordered the greater part of the prisoners to be removed into the empty vessels, and by this means secured himself from any attempt to recover their ship.

During three days, these three vessels sailed in company, but finding that his late prize was a heavy sailer, he emptied her of everything that he stood in need of, and then restored her to the captain with all his men. The French captain was so much enraged at being thus miserably deceived, that, upon the discovery of the stratagem, he would have thrown himself overboard, had not his men prevented him.

Captain Davis then formed the resolution of parting with the other prize-ship also, and soon afterwards steered northward, and took a Spanish sloop. He next directed his course towards the western islands, and from Cape de Verd islands cast anchor at St. Nicholas, and hoisted English colors. The Portuguese supposed that he was a privateer, and Davis going on shore was hospitably received, and they traded with him for such articles as they found most advantageous. He remained here five weeks, and he and half of his crew visited the principal town of the island. Davis, from his appearing in the dress of a gentleman, was greatly caressed by the Portuguese, and nothing was spared to entertain and render him and his men happy. Having amused themselves during a week, they returned to the ship, and allowed the other half of the crew to visit the capital, and enjoy themselves in like manner. Upon their return, they cleaned their ship and put to sea, but four of the men were so captivated with the ladies and the luxuries of the place, that they remained in the island, and one of them married and settled there.

Davis now sailed for Bonavista, and perceiving nothing in that harbor steered for the Isle of May. Arrived there, he found several vessels in the harbor, and plundered them of whatever he found necessary. He also received a considerable reinforcement of men, the greater part of whom entered willingly into the piratical service. He likewise made free with one of the ships, equipped her for his own purpose, and called her the King James. Davis next proceeded to St. Jago to take in water. Davis, with some others going on shore to seek water, the governor came to inquire who they were, and expressed his suspicion of their being pirates. Upon this, Davis seemed highly affronted, and expressed his displeasure in the most polite but deter-

mined manner. He, however, hastened on board, informed his men, and suggested the possibility of surprising the fort during the night. Accordingly, all his men being well armed, they advanced to the assault; and, from the carelessness of the guards, they were in the garrison before the inhabitants were alarmed. Upon the discovery of their danger, they took shelter in the governor's house, and fortified it against the pirates: but the latter throwing in some grando shells, ruined the furniture, and killed several people.

The alarm was circulated in the morning, and the country assembled to attack them; but, unwilling to stand a siege, the pirates dismounted the guns, pillaged the fort, and fled to their ships.

When at sea, they mustered their hands, and found that they were seventy strong. They then consulted among themselves what course they should steer, and were divided in opinion; but by a majority it was carried to sail for Gambia, on the coast of Guinea. Of this opinion was the captain, who having been employed in that trade, was acquainted with the coast; and informed his companions, that there was always a large quantity of money deposited in that castle, and he was confident, if the matter was entrusted to him, he should successfully storm that fort. From their experience of his former prudence and courage, they cheerfully submitted to his direction, in the full assurance of success.

Arrived at Gambia, he ordered all his men below, except just so many as were necessary to work the vessel, that those from the fort, seeing so few hands, might have no suspicion that she was any other than a trading vessel. He then ran under the fort and cast anchor, and having ordered out the boat, manned with six men indifferently dressed, he, with the master and doctor, dressed themselves like gentlemen, in order that the one party might look like foremastmen, and the other like merchants. In rowing ashore, he instructed his men what to say if any questions were put to them by the garrison.

On reaching land, the party was conducted by a file of musqueteers into the fort, and kindly received by the governor, who enquired what they were, and whence they