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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

Exploits, Arrest, and Execution of Capt. Charles Vane.

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THE
EXPLOITS, ARREST, AND EXECUTION
OF
CAPTAIN CHARLES VANE.

CHARLES VANE was one of those who stole away the silver which the Spaniards had fished up from the wrecks of the galleons in the Gulf of Florida, and was at Providence when governor Rodgers arrived there with two men-of-war, as the reader has been informed.

All the pirates who were then found at this colony of rogues, submitted and received certificates of their pardon, except Captain Vane and his crew; who, as soon as they saw the men-of-war enter, slipped their cable, set fire to a prize they had in the harbour, sailed out with their piratical colors flying, and fired at one of the men-of-war, as they went off from the coast.

Two days after, they met with a sloop belonging to Barbadoes, which they took, and kept the vessel for their own use, putting aboard five and twenty hands, with one Yeates the commander. In a day or two they fell in with a small interloping trader, with a quantity of Spanish pieces of eight aboard, bound for Providence, which they also took along with them. With these two sloops, Vane went to a small island and cleaned; where he shared the booty, and spent some time in a riotous manner.

About the latter end of May 1718, Vane and his crew sailed, and being in want of provisions, they beat up for the Windward Islands. In the way they met with a Spanish sloop, bound from Porto Rico to the Havana, which they burnt, stowed the Spaniards into a boat, and left them to get to the island by the blaze of their vessel. Steering between St. Christopher's and Anguilla, they fell in with a

brigantine and a sloop, freighted with such cargo as they wanted; from whom they got provisions for sea-store.

Sometime after this, standing to the northward, in the track the old English ships take in their voyage to the American colonies, they took several ships and vessels, which they plundered of what they thought fit, and then let them pass.

About the latter end of August, with his consort Yeates, came off South Carolina, and took a ship belonging to Ipswich, laden with logwood. This was thought convenient enough for their own business, and therefore they ordered their prisoners to work, and threw all the lading overboard; but when they had more than half cleared the ship, the whim changed, and they would not have her; so Coggershall, the captain of the captured vessel, had his ship again, and he was suffered to pursue his voyage home. In this voyage the pirates took several ships and vessels, particularly a sloop from Barbadoes, a small ship from Antigua, a sloop belonging to Curagoa, and a large brigantine from Guinea, with upwards of ninety negroes aboard. The pirates plundered them all and let them go, putting the negroes out of the brigantine aboard Yeates' vessel.

Captain Vane always treated his consort with very little respect, and assumed a superiority over him and his crew, regarding the vessel but as a tender to his own: this gave them disgust; for they thought themselves as good pirates, and as great rogues as the best of them; so they caballed together, and resolved, the first opportunity, to leave the company, and accept of his majesty's pardon, or set up for themselves; either of which they thought more honorable than to be the servants to Vane: the putting aboard so many negroes, where there were so few hands to take care of them, aggravated the matter, though they thought fit to conceal or stifle their resentment at that time.

In a day or two, the pirates lying off at anchor, Yeates in the evening slipped his cable, and put his vessel under sail, standing into the shore; which when Vane saw, he was highly provoked, and got his sloop under sail to chase his consort. Vane's brigantine sailing best, he gained ground of Yeates, and would certainly have come up with them, had he had a little longer run; but just as he got

over the bar, when Vane came within gun-shot of him, he fired a broadside at his old friend, and so took his leave.

Yeates came into North Eddisto river, about ten leagues to the southward of Charleston, and sent an express to the governor, to know if he and his comrades might have the benefit of his majesty's pardon; promising that, if they might, they would surrender themselves to his mercy, with the sloops and negroes. Their request being granted, they all came up, and received certificates; and Captain Thompson, from whom the negroes were taken, had them all restored to him, for the use of his owners.

Vane cruised some time off the bar, in hopes to catch Yeates at his coming out again, but therein he was disappointed; however, he there took two ships from Charleston, which were bound home to England. It happened just at this time, that two sloops well manned and armed, were equipped to go after a pirate, which the governor of South Carolina was informed lay then in Cape Fear river cleaning: but Colonel Rhet, who commanded the sloops, meeting with one of the ships that Vane had plundered, going back over the bar for such necessaries as had been taken from her, and she giving the Colonel an account of being taken by the pirate Vane, and also, that some of her men, while they were prisoners on board of him, had heard the pirates say they should clean in one of the rivers to the southward, he altered his first design, and instead of standing to the northward, in pursuit of the pirate in Cape Fear river, turned to the southward after Vane, who had ordered such reports to be given out, on purpose to put any force that should come after him upon a wrong scent; for he stood away to the northward, so that the pursuit proved to be of no effect. Colonel Rhet's speaking with this ship was the most unlucky thing that could have happened, because it turned him out of the road which, in all probability, would have brought him into the company of Vane, as well as of the pirate he went after, and so they might have been both destroyed; whereas, by the Colonel's going a different way, he not only lost the opportunity of meeting with one, but if the other had not been infatuated, and lain six weeks together at Cape Fear, he would have missed him likewise; however, the Colonel having searched the rivers

and inlets, as directed, for several days without success, at length sailed in prosecution of his first design, and met with the pirate accordingly, whom he fought and took.

Captain Vane went into an inlet to the northward, where he met with Captain Teach, otherwise Black Beard, whom he saluted (when he found who he was) with his great guns loaded with shot: it being the custom among pirates when they meet, to do so, though they are wide of one another: Black Beard answered the salute in the same manner, and mutual civilities passed between them some days, when, about the beginning of October, Vane took leave, and sailed farther to the northward.

On the 23d of October, off Long Island, he took a small brigantine bound from Jamaica to Salem in New England, besides a little sloop: they rifled the brigantine, and sent her away. From thence they resolved on a cruise between Cape Meise and Cape Nicholas, where they spent some time without seeing or speaking with any vessel, till the latter end of November; they then fell in with a ship, which it was expected would have struck as soon as their black colors were hoisted; but instead of this she discharged a broadside upon the pirate, and hoisted French colors, which showed her to be a French man-of-war. Vane desired to have nothing more to say to her, but trimmed his sails, and stood away from the Frenchman; however, Monsieur having a mind to be better informed who he was, set all his sails and crowded after him. During this chase the pirates were divided in their resolution what to do: Vane, the captain, was for making off as fast as he could, alleging that the man-of-war was too strong for them to cope with; but one John Rackam, their quarter-master, and who was a kind of check upon the captain, rose up in defence of a contrary opinion, saying, "that though she had more guns, and a greater weight of metal, they might board her, and then the best boys would carry the day." Rackam was well seconded, and the majority was for boarding; but Vane urged, "that it was too rash and desperate an enterprise, the man-of-war appearing to be twice their force, and that their brigantine might be sunk by her before they could reach to board her. The mate, one Robert Deal, was of Vane's opinion, as were about fifteen more, and all

the rest joined with Rackam the quarter-master. At length the captain made use of his power to determine this dispute, which in these cases is absolute and uncontrollable, by their own laws, viz. the captain's absolute right of determining in all questions concerning fighting, chasing, or being chased; in all other matters whatsoever the captain being governed by a majority; so the brigantine having the heels, as they term it, of the Frenchman, she came clear off.

But the next day, the captain's conduct was obliged to stand the test of a vote, and a resolution passed against his honor and dignity, which branded him with the name of coward, deposed him from the command, and turned him out of the company with marks of infamy; and with him went all those who did not vote for boarding the French man-of-war. They had with them a small sloop that had been taken by them some time before, which they gave to Vane and the discarded members; and that they might be in a condition to provide for themselves by their own honest endeavors, they let them have a sufficient quantity of provisions and ammunition.

John Rackam was voted captain of the brigantine in Vane's room, and he proceeded towards the Carribbee Islands, where we must leave him, till we have finished our history of Charles Vane.

The sloop sailed for the bay of Honduras, and Vane and his crew put her in as good a condition as they could by the way, that they might follow their old trade. They cruised two or three days off the north-west part of Jamaica, and took a sloop and two perriaguas, all the men of which entered with them: the sloop they kept, and Robert Deal was appointed captain.

On the 16th of December, the two sloops came into the bay, where they found only one vessel at anchor. She was called the Pearl of Jamaica, and got under sail at the sight of them; but the pirate sloops coming near Rowland, and showing no colors, he gave them a gun or two, whereupon they hoisted the black flag, and fired three guns each at the Pearl. She struck, and the pirates took possession, and carried her away to a small island called Barnacho, where they cleaned. By the way they met with a sloop

from Jamaica, as she was going down to the bay, which they also took.

In February, Vane sailed from Barnacho, for a cruise; but, some days after he was out, a violent tornado overtook him, which separated him from his consort, and, after two days' distress, threw his sloop upon a small uninhabited island, near the bay of Honduras, where she staved to pieces, and most of her men were drowned: Vane himself was saved, but reduced to great straits for want of necessaries, having no opportunity to get any thing from the wreck. He lived here some weeks, and was supported chiefly by fishermen, who frequented the island with small crafts from the main, to catch turtles and other fish.



Vane arrested by Captain Holford.

While Vane was upon this island, a ship put in there from Jamaica for water, the captain of which, one Holford, an old buccaneer, happened to be Vane's acquaintance.

He thought this a good opportunity to get off, and accordingly applied to his old friend: but Holford absolutely refused him, saying to him, "Charles, I shan't trust you aboard my ship, unless I carry you as a prisoner, for I shall have you caballing with my men, knocking me on the head, and running away with my ship pirating." Vane made all the protestations of honor in the world to him; but, it seems, captain Holford was too intimately acquainted with him, to repose any confidence at all in his words or oaths. He told him, "He might easily find a way to get off, if he had a mind to it:—I am going down the bay," said he, "and shall return hither in about a month, and if I find you upon the island when I come back, I'll carry you to Jamaica, and there hang you." "How can I get away?" answered Vane. "Are there not fishermen's dories upon the beach? Can't you take one of them?" replied Holford. "What!" said Vane, "would you have me steal a dory then?" "Do you make it a matter of conscience," replied Holford, "to steal a dory, when you have been a common robber and pirate, stealing ships and cargoes, and plundering all mankind that fell in your way! Stay here if you are so squeamish?" and he left him to consider of the matter.

After Captain Holford's departure, another ship put into the same island, in her way home, for water; none of the company knowing Vane, he easily passed for another man, and so was shipped for the voyage. One would be apt to think that Vane was now pretty safe, and likely to escape the fate which his crimes had merited; but here a cross accident happened that ruined all. Holford returning from the bay, was met by this ship, and the captains being very well acquainted with each other, Holford was invited to dine aboard, which he did. As he passed along to the cabin, he chanced to cast his eye down into the hold, and there saw Charles Vane at work: he immediately spoke to the captain, saying, "Do you know whom you have got aboard there?" "Why," said he, "I have shipped a man at such an island, who was cast away in a trading sloop, and he seems to be a brisk hand." "I tell you," replied Captain Holford, "it is Vane the notorious pirate." "If it be he," cried the other, "I won't keep him." "Why

then," said Holford, "I'll send and take him aboard, and surrender him at Jamaica." This being agreed upon, Captain Holford, as soon as he returned to his ship, sent his boat with his mate, armed, who coming to Vane, showed him a pistol, and told him he was his prisoner. No man daring to make opposition, he was brought aboard and put into irons; and when Captain Holford arrived at Jamaica, he delivered up his old acquaintance to justice, at which place he was tried, convicted, and executed, as was some time before, Vane's consort, Robert Deal, who was brought thither by one of the men-of-war. It is clear from this how little ancient friendship will avail a great villain, when he is deprived of the power that had before supported and rendered him formidable.