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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

Mistress Ching, a female Pirate.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-61163](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-61163)

of restoring the ancient Chinese dynasty. But unfortunately for the ambitious pirate, he perished in a heavy gale, and instead of placing a sovereign on the Chinese throne, he and his lofty aspirations were buried in the yellow sea. And now comes the most remarkable passage in the history of these pirates—remarkable with any class of men, but doubly so among the Chinese, who entertain more than the general oriental opinion of the inferiority of the fair sex. On the death of *Ching-yih*, his legitimate wife had sufficient influence over the freebooters to induce them to recognize her authority in the place of her deceased husband's, and she appointed one *Paou* as her lieutenant and prime minister, and provided that she should be considered the mistress or commander-in-chief of the united squadrons.

This *Paou* had been a poor fisher-boy, picked up with his father at sea, while fishing, by *Ching-yih*, whose good will and favor he had the fortune to captivate, and by whom, before that pirate's death, he had been made a captain. Instead of declining under the rule of a woman, the pirates became more enterprising than ever. Ching's widow was clever as well as brave, and so was her lieutenant *Paou*. Between them they drew up a code of law for the better regulation of the freebooters.

In this it was decreed, that if any man went privately on shore, or did what they called "transgressing the bars," he should have his ears slit in the presence of the whole fleet; a repetition of the same unlawful act, was death! No one article, however trifling in value, was to be privately subtracted from the booty or plundered goods. Every thing they took was regularly entered on the register of their stores. The following clause of *Mistress Ching's* code is still more delicate. No person shall debauch at his pleasure captive women, taken in the villages and open places, and brought on board a ship; he must first request the ship's purser for permission, and then go aside in the ship's hold. To use violence, against any woman, or to wed her, without permission, shall be punished with death.

By these means an admirable discipline was maintained on board the ships, and the peasantry on shore never let the pirates want for gunpowder, provisions, or any other

necessary. On a piratical expedition, either to advance or retreat without orders, was a capital offence. Under these philosophical institutions, and the guidance of a woman, the robbers continued to scour the China sea, plundering every vessel they came near. The Great War Mandarin, Kwolang-lin sailed from the Bocca Tigris into the sea to fight the pirates. Paou gave him a tremendous drubbing, and gained a splendid victory. In this battle which lasted from morning to night, the Mandarin Kwolang-lin, a desperate fellow himself, levelled a gun at Paou, who fell on the deck as the piece went off; his disheartened crew concluded it was all over with him. But Paou was quick eyed. He had seen the unfriendly intention of the mandarin, and thrown himself down. The Great Mandarin was soon after taken with fifteen junks; three were sunk. The pirate lieutenant would have dealt mercifully with him, but the fierce old man suddenly seized him by the hair on the crown of his head, and grinned at him, so that he might provoke him to slay him. But even then Paou spoke kindly to him. Upon this he committed suicide, being seventy years of age.

After several victories and reverses, the Chinese historian says our men-of-war escorting some merchant ships, happened to meet the pirate chief nicknamed "The Jewel of the Crew" cruising at sea. The traders became exceedingly frightened, but our commander said,—This not being the flag of the widow Ching-yih, we are a match for them, therefore we will attack and conquer them. Then ensued a battle; they attacked each other with guns and stones, and many people were killed and wounded. The fighting ceased towards evening, and began again next morning. The pirates and the men-of-war were very close to each other, and they boasted mutually about their strength and valor. The traders remained at some distance; they saw the pirates mixing gunpowder in their beverage,—they looked instantly red about the face and the eyes, and then fought desperately. This fighting continued three days and nights incessantly; at last, becoming tired on both sides, they separated.

To understand this inglorious bulletin, the reader must remember that many of the combatants only handled

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bows and arrows, and pelted stones, and that Chinese powder and guns are both exceedingly bad. The pathos of the conclusion does somewhat remind one of the Irishman's despatch during the American war,—“It was a bloody battle while it lasted; and the serjant of marines lost his cartouche box.”

The Admiral Ting River was sent to sea against them. This man was surprised at anchor by the ever vigilant Paou, to whom many fishermen and other people on the coast, must have acted as friendly spies. Seeing escape impossible, and that his officers stood pale and inactive by the flag-staff, the Admiral conjured them, by their fathers and mothers, their wives and children, and by the hopes of brilliant reward if they succeeded, and of vengeance if they perished, to do their duty, and the combat began. The Admiral had the good fortune, at the onset, of killing with one of his great guns the pirate captain, “The Jewel of the Crew.” But the robbers swarmed thicker and thicker around him, and when the dreaded Paou lay him by the board, without help or hope, the Mandarin killed himself. An immense number of his men perished in the sea, and twenty-five vessels were lost. After his defeat, it was resolved by the Chinese Government to cut off all their supplies of food, and starve them out. All vessels that were in port were ordered to remain there, and those at sea, or on the coast ordered to return with all speed. But the pirates, full of confidence, now resolved to attack the harbors themselves, and to ascend the rivers, which are navigable for many miles up the country, and rob the villages. The consternation was great when the Chinese saw them venturing above the government forts.

The pirates separated: Mistress Ching plundering in one place, Paou in another, and O-po-tae in another, &c.

It was at this time that Mr. Glasspoole had the ill fortune to fall into their power. This gentleman, then an officer in the East India Company's ship the Marquis of Ely, which was anchored under an island about twelve miles from Macao, was ordered to proceed to the latter place with a boat to procure a pilot. He left the ship in one of the cutters, with seven British seamen well armed, on the 17th September, 1809. He reached Macao in safety, and