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**Pirates own book, or authentic narratives of the lives,
exploits, and executions of the most celebrated sea
robbers**

ELLS, CHARLES

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A quantity of Gold thrown into the Sea.

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(a one masted vessel) of about 200 tons, which was made a prize. They found nothing on board but bale goods, most of which they threw overboard in search of gold, and to make room in the vessel; but as they learned afterwards, they threw over, in their search, what they so greedily hunted after, for there was a considerable quantity of gold concealed in one of the bales they tossed into the sea!

In this cruise Capt Read fell ill and died, and was succeeded by one James. The brigantine being small, crazy and worm-eaten, they shaped their course for the island of Mayotta, where they took out the masts of the brigantine, fitted up the grab, and made a ship of her. Here they took in a quantity of fresh provisions, which are in this island very plentiful and very cheap, and found a twelve-oared boat, which formerly belonged to the Ruby East Indiaman, which had been lost there.

They stayed here all the monsoon time, which is about six months; after which they resolved for Madagascar. As they came in with the land, they spied a sail coming round from the east side of the island. They gave chase on both sides, so that they soon met. They hailed each other, and receiving the same answer from each vessel, viz. *from the seas*, they joined company.

This vessel was a small French ship, laden with liquors from Martinico, first commanded by one Fourgette, to trade with the pirates for slaves, at Ambonawoula, on the east side of the island, in the latitude of 17 deg. 30 min. and was by them taken after the following manner.

The pirates, who were headed by George Booth, now commander of the ship, went on board, (as they had often done,) to the number of ten, and carried money with them under pretence of purchasing what they wanted. This Booth had formerly been gunner of a pirate ship, called the Dolphin. Capt. Fourgette was pretty much upon his guard, and searched every man as he came over the side, and a pair of pocket pistols were found upon a Dutchman, who was the first that entered. The captain told him that *he was a rogue, and had a design upon his ship*, and the pirates pretended to be so angry with this fellow's offering to come on board with arms, that they threatened to knock him on the head, and tossing him roughly into the boat,

ordered him ashore, though they had before taken an oath on the Bible, either to carry the ship, or die in the undertaking.

They were all searched, but they however contrived to get on board four pistols, which were all the arms they had for the enterprise, though Fourgette had 20 hands on board, and his small arms on the awning, to be in readiness.

The captain invited them into the cabin to dinner, but Booth chose to dine with the petty officer, though one Johnson, Isaac and another, went down. Booth was to give the watchword, which was *hurrah*. Standing near the awning, and being a nimble fellow, at one spring he threw himself upon it, drew the arms to him, fired his pistol among the men, one of whom he wounded, (who jumping overboard was lost) and gave the signal.

Three, I said, were in the cabin, and seven upon deck, who with handspikes and the arms seized, secured the ship's crew. The captain and his two mates, who were at dinner in the cabin, hearing the pistol, fell upon Johnson, and stabbed him in several places with their forks, but they being silver, did him no great damage. Fourgette snatched his piece, which he snapped at Isaac's breast several times, but it would not go off. At last, finding his resistance vain, he submitted, and the pirates set him, and those of his men who would not join them, on shore, allowing him to take his books, papers, and whatever else he claimed as belonging to himself; and besides treating him very humanely, gave him several casks of liquor, with arms and powder, to purchase provisions in the country.

I hope this digression, as it was in a manner needful, will be excused. I shall now proceed.

After they had taken in the Dolphin's company, which were on the island, and increased their crew, by that means, to the number of 80 hands, they sailed to St. Mary's, where Capt. Mosson's ship lay at anchor, between the island and the main. This gentleman and his whole ship's company had been cut off, at the instigation of Ort-Vantyle, a Dutchman of New-York.

Out of her they took water casks and other necessaries; which having done, they designed for the river Methelage, on the west side of Madagascar, in the lat. of 16 degrees

or thereabouts, to salt up provisions and to proceed to the East Indies, cruise off the islands of St. John, and lie in wait for the Moor ships from Mocha.

In their way to Methélagé they fell in (as I have said) with the pirate, on board of which was Capt. White. They joined company, came to an anchor together in the above named river, where they had cleaned, salted and took in their provisions, and were ready to go to sea, when a large ship appeared in sight, and stood into the same river.

The pirates knew not whether she was a merchantman or man-of-war. She had been the latter, belonging to the French king, and could mount 50 guns; but being taken by the English, she was bought by some London merchants, and fitted out from that port to slave at Madagascar, and go to Jamaica. The captain was a young, inexperienced man, who was put in with a nurse.

The pirates sent their boats to speak with them, but the ship firing at them, they concluded it a man of war, and rowed ashore; the grab standing in, and not keeping her wind so well as the French built ship, run among a parcel of mangroves, and a stump piercing her bottom, she sunk: the other run aground, let go her anchor, and came to no damage, for the tide of flood fetched her off.

The captain of the *Speaker*, for that was the name of the ship which frightened the pirates, was not a little vain of having forced these two vessels ashore, though he did not know whether they were pirates or merchantmen, and could not help expressing himself in these words: "How will my name ring on the exchange, when it is known I have run two pirates aground;" which gave handle to a satirical return from one of his men after he was taken, who said, "Lord! how our captain's name will ring on the exchange, when it is heard, he frightened two pirate ships ashore, and was taken by their two boats afterwards."

When the *Speaker* came within shot, she fired several times at the two vessels; and when she came to anchor, several more into the country, which alarmed the negroes, who, acquainting their king, he would allow him no trade, till the pirates living ashore, and who had a design on his ship, interceded for them, telling the king, they were their countrymen, and what had happened was through a mis-

take, it being a custom among them to fire their guns by way of respect, and it was owing to the gunner of the ship's negligence that they fired shot.

The captain of the *Speaker* sent his purser ashore, to go up the country to the king, who lived about 24 miles from the coast, to carry a couple of small arms inlaid with gold, a couple of brass blunderbusses, and a pair of pistols, as presents, and to require trade. As soon as the purser was ashore, he was taken prisoner, by one Tom Collins, a Welshman, born in Pembroke, who lived on shore, and had belonged to the *Charming Mary*, of Barbadoes, which went out with a commission but was converted to a pirate. He told the purser he was his prisoner, and must answer the damage done to two merchants who were slaving. The purser answered, that he was not commander; that the captain was a hot rash youth, put into business by his friends, which he did not understand; but however, satisfaction should be made. He was carried by Collins on board Booth's ship, where, at first, he was talked to in pretty strong terms; but after a while very civilly used, and the next morning sent up to the king with a guide, and peace made for him.

The king allowed them trade, and sent down the usual presents, a couple of oxen between twenty and thirty people laden with rice, and as many more with the country liquor, called *toke*.

The captain then settled the factory on the shore side, and began to buy slaves and provisions. The pirates were among them, and had opportunities of sounding the men, and knowing in what posture the ship lay. They found by one Hugh Man, belonging to the *Speaker*, that there were not above 40 men on board, and that they had lost the second mate and 20 hands in the long boat, on the coast, before they came into this harbor, but that they kept a good look out, and had their guns ready primed. However, he, for a hundred pounds, undertook to wet all the priming, and assist in taking the ship.

After some days the captain of the *Speaker* came on shore, and was received with great civility by the heads of the pirates, having agreed before to make satisfaction. In a day or two after, he was invited by them to eat a barba-

cued shoat, which invitation he accepted. After dinner, Capt. Bowen, who was, I have already said, a prisoner on board the French pirate, but now become one of the fraternity, and master of the grab, went out, and returned with a case of pistols in his hand, and told the Captain of the Speaker, whose name I won't mention, that he was his prisoner. He asked, upon what account? Bowen answered, "they wanted his ship, his was a good one, and they were resolved to have her, to make amends for the damage he had done them."

In the mean while his boat's crew, and the rest of his men ashore, were told by others of the pirates, who were drinking with them, that they were also prisoners: some of them answered, *Zounds, we don't trouble our heads what we are, let's have t'other bowl of punch.*



Hugh Man wetting the Priming of the Guns.

A watchword was given, and no boat to be admitted on board the ship. This word, which was for that night, *Coven-try*, was known to them. At 8 o'clock they manned the twelve-oared boat, and the one they found at Mayotta, with 24 men, and set out for the ship. When they were

put off, the captain of the *Speaker* desired them to come back, as he wanted to speak with them. Capt. Booth asked what he wanted! He said, "they could never take his ship." "Then," said Booth, "we'll die in or alongside of her."—"But," replied the captain, "if you will go with safety, don't board on the larboard side, for there is a gun out of the steerage loaded with partridge, which will clear the decks." They thanked him, and proceeded.

When they were near the ship they were hailed, and the answer was, *the Coventry*. "All well," said the mate, "get the lights over the side;" but spying the second boat, he asked what boat that was? One answered it was a raft of water, another that it was a boat of beef; this disagreement in the answers made the mate suspicious, who cried out—*Pirates, take to your arms my lads*, and immediately clapped a match to a gun, which, as the priming was before wet by the treachery of Hugh Man, only fizzed. They boarded in the instant, and made themselves masters of her, without the loss of a man on either side.

The next day they put necessary provisions on board the French built ship, and gave her to the captain of the *Speaker*, and those men who would go off with him, among whom was Man, who had betrayed his ship; for the pirates had both paid him the 100*l* agreed, and kept his secret. The captain having thus lost his ship, sailed in that which the pirates gave him, for *Johanna*, where he fell ill and died with grief.

The pirates having here victualled, they sailed for the Bay of St. Augustine, where they took in between 70 and 80 men, who had belonged to the ship *Alexander*, commanded by Capt. James, a pirate. They also took up her guns, and mounted the *Speaker* with 54, which made up their number, and 240 men, besides slaves, of which they had about 20.

From hence they sailed for the East Indies, but stopped at Zanguebar for fresh provisions, where the Portuguese had once a settlement, but now inhabited by Arabians. Some of them went ashore with the captain to buy provisions. The captain was sent for by the governor, who went with about 14 in company. They passed through the guard, and when they had entered the governor's house,

they were all cut off; and, at the same time, others who were in different houses of the town were set upon, which made them fly to the shore. The long-boat, which lay off a grappling, was immediately put in by those who looked after her. There were not above half a dozen of the pirates who brought their arms ashore, but they plied them so well, for they were in the boat, that most of the men got into her. The quarter-master ran down sword in hand, and though he was attacked by many, he behaved himself so well, that he got into a little canoe, put off, and reached the long-boat.

In the interim, the little fort the Arabians had, played upon the ship, which returned the salute very warmly. Thus they got on board, with the loss of Captain Booth and 20 men, and set sail for the East Indies. When they were under sail, they went to voting for a new captain, and the quarter-master, who had behaved so well in the last affair with the Arabians, was chosen; but he declining all command the crew made choice of Bowen for captain, Pickering to succeed him as master, Samuel Hercul, a Frenchman, for quarter-master, and Nathaniel North for captain quarter-master.

Things being thus settled, they came to the mouth of the Red Sea, and fell in with 13 sail of Moor ships, which they kept company with the greater part of the day, but afraid to venture on them, as they took them for Portuguese men-of-war. At length part were for boarding, and advised it. The captain though he said little, did not seem inclined, for he was but a young pirate, though an old commander of a merchantman. Those who pushed for boarding, then desired Captain Boremen, already mentioned, to take the command; but he said he would not be a usurper; that nobody was more fit for it than he who had it; that for his part he would stand by his fuzil, and went forward to the fore-castle with such as would have him take the command, to be ready to board; on which the captain's quarter-master said, if they were resolved to engage, their captain, (whose representative he was) did not want resolution; therefore ordered them to get their tacks on board (for they had already made a clear ship) and get ready for boarding; which they accordingly did, and com-

ing up with the sternmost ship, they fired a broadside into her, which killed two Moors, clapped her on board and carried her; but night coming on, they made only this prize, which yielded them £500 per man. From hence they sailed to the coast of Malabar. The adventures of these pirates on this coast are already set down in Captain Bowen's life, to which I refer the reader, and shall only observe, that Captain White was all this time before the mast, being a forced man from the beginning.

Bowen's crew dispersing, Captain White went to Methelge, where he lived ashore with the king, not having an opportunity of getting off the island, till another pirate ship, called the Prosperous, commanded by one Howard, who had been bred a lighterman on the river Thames, came in. This ship was taken at Augustin, by some pirates from shore, and the crew of their long-boat, which joined them, at the instigation of one Ranten, boatswain's mate, who sent for water. They came on board in the night and surprised her, though not without resistance, in which the captain and chief mate were killed, and several others wounded.

Those who were ashore with Captain White, resolving to enter in this ship, determined him to go also, rather than be left alone with the natives, hoping, by some accident or other, to have an opportunity of returning home. He continued on board this ship, in which he was made quarter-master, till they met with, and all went on board of Bowen, as is set down in his life, in which ship he continued after Bowen left them. At Port Dolphin he went off in the boats to fetch some of the crew left ashore, the ship being blown to sea the night before. The ship not being able to get in, and he supposing her gone to the west side of the island, as they had formerly proposed, he steered that course in his boat with 26 men. They touched at Augustin, expecting the ship, but she not appearing in a week, the time they waited, the king ordered them to be gone, telling them they imposed on him with lies, for he did not believe they had any ship: however he gave them fresh provision: they took in water, and made for Methelge. Here as Captain White was known to the king, they were kindly received, and staid about a fortnight in

expectation of the ship, but she not appearing, they raised their boat a streak, salted the provision the king gave them, put water aboard, and stood for the north end of the island, designing to go round, believing their ship might be at the island of St. Mary. When they came to the north end, the current, which sets to the N. W. for eight months in the year, was so strong they found it impossible to get round. Wherefore they got into a harbor, of which there are many for small vessels. Here they stayed about three weeks or a month, when part of the crew were for burning the boat, and travelling over land to a black king of their acquaintance, whose name was Reberimbo, who lived at a place called Manangaromasigh, in lat. 15 deg. or thereabouts. As this king had been several times assisted by the whites in his wars, he was a great friend to them. Captain White dissuaded them from this undertaking, and with much ado, saved the boat; but one half of the men being resolved to go by land, they took what provisions they thought necessary, and set out. Captain White, and those who staid with him, conveyed them a day's journey, and then returning, he got into the boat with his companions, and went back to Methelge, fearing these men might return, prevail with the rest, and burn the boat.

Here he built a deck on his boat, and lay by three months, in which time there came in three pirates with a boat, who had formerly been trepanned on board the Severn and Scarborough men-of-war, which had been looking for pirates on the east side; from which ships they made their escape at Mohila, in a small canoe to Johanna, and from Johanna to Mayotta, where the king built them the boat which brought them to Methelge. The time of the current's setting with violence to the N. W. being over, they proceeded together in White's boat (burning that of Mayotta) to the north end, where the current running yet too strong to get round, they went into a harbour and staid there a month, maintaining themselves with fish and wild hogs, of which there was a great plenty. At length, having fine weather, and the strength of the current abating, they got round; and after sailing about 40 miles on the east side, they went into a harbour, where they found a

piece of a jacket, which they knew belonged to one of those men who had left them to go over land. He had been a forced man, and a ship carpenter. This they supposed he had torn to wrap round his feet; that part of the country being barren and rocky. As they sailed along this coast, they came to anchor in convenient harbors every night, till they got as far as Manangaromasigh, where king Reberimbo resided, where they went in to inquire for their men, who left them at the north end, and to recruit with provisions. The latter was given them, but they could get no information of their companions.

From hence they went to the island of St. Mary, where a canoe came off to them with a letter directed to any white man. They knew it to be the hand of one of their former shipmates. The contents of this letter was to advise them to be on their guard, and not trust too much to the blacks of this place, they having been formerly treacherous. They inquired after their ship, and were informed, that the company had given her to the Moors, who were gone away with her, and that they themselves were settled at Amboynavoula, about 20 leagues to the southward of St. Mary, where they lived among the negroes as so many sovereign princes.

One of the blacks, who brought off the letter went on board their boat, carried them to the place called Olumbah, a point of land made by a river on one side, and the sea on the other, where twelve of them lived together in a large house they had built, and fortified with about twenty pieces of cannon.

The rest of them were settled in small companies of about 12 or 14 together, more or less, up the said river, and along the coast, every nation by itself, as the English, French, Dutch, &c. They made inquiry of their consorts after the different prizes which belonged to them, and they found all very justly laid by to be given them, if ever they returned, as were what belonged to the men who went over land. Captain White, hankering after home, proposed going out again in the boat; for he was adverse to settling with them; and many others agreed to go under his command; and if they could meet with a ship to carry them to Europe, to follow their old vocation.

But the others did not think it reasonable he should have the boat, but that it should be set to sale for the benefit of the company. Accordingly it was set up, and Captain White bought it for 400 pieces of eight, and with some of his old consorts, whose number was increased by others of the ship's crew, he went back the way he had come to Methelge. Here he met with a French ship of about 50 tons, and 6 guns, which had been taken by some pirates who lived at Maratan, on the east side of the island, and some of the Degrave East-Indiaman's crew, to whom the master of her refused a passage to Europe; for as he had himself been a pirate, and quarter-master to Bowen, in the Speaker, he apprehended their taking away his ship. War then existing between England and France, he thought they might do it without being called in question as pirates. The pirates who had been concerned in taking Hercul's ship, for that was his name, had gone up the country, and left her to the men belonging to the Degrave, who had fitted her up, cleaned and tallowed her, and got in some provision, with a design to go to the East-Indies, that they might light on some ship to return to their own country.

Captain White, finding these men proposed joining him, and going round to Ambonavoula, to make up a company, it was agreed upon, and they unanimously chose him commander. They accordingly put to sea, and stood away round the south end of the island, and touched at Don Mascarenhas, where he took in a surgeon, and stretching over again to Madagascar, fell in with Ambonavoula, and made up his complement of 60 men. From hence he shaped his course for the island of Mayotta, where he cleaned his ship, and waited for the season to go into the Red Sea. His provisions being taken in the time proper, and the ship well fitted, he steered for Babelmandel, and running into a harbor, waited for the Mocha ships.

He here took two grabs laden with provisions, and having some small money and drugs aboard. These he plundered of what was for his turn, kept them a fortnight by him, and let them go. Soon after they espied a lofty ship, upon which they put to sea; but finding her European built, and too strong to attempt, for it was a Dutchman, they gave over the chase, and were glad to shake him off,

and return to their station. Fancying they were here discovered, from the coast of Arabia, or that the grabs had given information of them they stood over for the Ethiopian shore, keeping a good look out for the Mocha ships. A few days after, they met with a large ship of about 1000 tons and 600 men, called the Malabar, which they chased, kept company with her all night, and took in the morning, with the loss of only their boatswain, and two or three men wounded. In taking this ship, they damaged their own so much, by springing their foremast, carrying away their bowsprit, and beating in part of their upper works, that they did not think her longer fit for their use. They therefore filled her away with prisoners, gave them provision and sent them away.

Some days after this, they espied a Portuguese man-of-war of 44 guns, which they chased, but gave it over by carrying away their main-top-mast, so that they did not speak with her, for the Portuguese took no notice of them. Four days after they had left this man-of-war, they fell in with a Portuguese merchantman, which they chased with English colors flying. The chase, taking White for an English man-of-war or East-Indiaman, made no sail to get from him, but on his coming up, brought to, and sent his boat on board with a present of sweet-meats for the English captain. His boat's crew was detained, and the pirates getting into his boat with their arms, went on board, and fired on the Portuguese, who being surprised, asked if war was broke out between England and Portugal? They answered in the affirmative, but the captain could not believe them. However they took what they liked, and kept him with them.

After two days they met with the Dorothy, an English ship, Captain Penruddock, commander, coming from Mocha. They exchanged several shots in the chase, but when they came along side of her, they entered their men, and found no resistance, she being navigated by Moors, no Europeans, except the officers being on board. On a vote, they gave Captain Penruddock (from whom they took a considerable quantity of money) the Portuguese ship and cargo, with what bale he pleased to take out of his own, bid him go about his business, and make what he could

of her. As to the English ship, they kept her for their own use.

Soon after they plundered the Malabar ship, out of which they took as much money as came to £200 sterling a man, but missed 50,000 sequins, which were hid in a jar under a cow's stall, kept for the giving milk to the Moor supercargo, an ancient man. They then put the Portuguese and Moor prisoners on board the Malabar, and sent them about their business. The day after they had sent them away, one Captain Benjamin Stacy, in a ketch of 6 guns fell into their hands. They took what money he had, and what goods and provisions they wanted. Among the money were 500 dollars, a silver mug, and two spoons belonging to a couple of children on board, who were under the care of Stacy. The children took on for their loss, and the captain asked the reason of their tears, was answered by Stacy, that the above sum and plate was all the children had to bring them up. Captain White made a speech to his men, and told them it was cruel to rob the innocent children; upon which, by unanimous consent, all was restored to them again. Besides, they made a gathering among themselves, and made a present to Stacy's mate, and other of his inferior officers, and about 120 dollars to the children. They then discharged Stacy and his crew, and made the best of their way out of the Red Sea.

They came into the bay of Defarr, where they found a ketch at anchor, which the people had made prize of, by seizing the master and boat's crew ashore. They found a French gentleman, one Monsieur Berger, on board, whom they carried with them, took out about 2000 dollars, and sold the ketch to the chief ashore for provision.

Hence they sailed for Madagascar, but touched at Mascarenhas, where several of them went ashore with their booty, about £1200 a man. Here taking in fresh provisions, White steered for Madagascar, and fell in with Hopeful Point where they shared their goods, and took up settlements ashore, where White built a house, bought cattle, took off the upper deck of his ship, and was fitting her up for the next season. When she was near ready for sea, Captain John Halsey, who had made a broken

voyage, came in with a brigantine, which being a more proper vessel for their turn, they desisted from working on the ship, and those who had a mind for fresh adventures, went on board Halsey, among whom Captain White entered before the mast.

At his return to Madagascar, White was taken ill of a flux, which in about five or six months ended his days. Finding his time was drawing nigh, he made his will, left several legacies, and named three men of different nations, guardian to a son he had by a woman in the country, requiring he might be sent to England with the money he left him, by the first English ship, to be brought up in the Christian religion, in hopes that he might live a better man than his father. He was buried with the same ceremony they used at the funerals of their companions, which is mentioned in the account of Halsey. Some years after, an English ship touching there, the guardians faithfully discharged their trust, and put him on board with the captain, who brought up the boy with care, acting by him as became a man of probity and honor.