



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

**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

The Adventures, and Executions of Capt. John Rackam.

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

THE
ADVENTURES AND EXECUTION
OF
CAPTAIN JOHN RACKAM.

THIS John Rackam, as has been reported in the foregoing pages, was quarter-master to Vane's company, till the crew were divided, and Vane turned out of it for refusing to board a French man-of-war, Rackam being voted captain of the division that remained in the brigantine. The 24th of November 1718, was the first day of his command; his first cruise was among the Carribbee Islands, where he took and plundered several vessels.

We have already taken notice, that when Captain Woods Rogers went to the island of Providence with the king's pardon to such of the pirates as should surrender, this brigantine, which Rackam commanded, made its escape through another passage, bidding defiance to the mercy that was offered.

To the windward of Jamaica, a Madeira-man fell into the pirate's way, which they detained two or three days, till they had their market out of her, and then they gave her back to the master, and permitted one Hosea Tidsel, a tavern keeper at Jamaica, who had been picked up in one of their prizes, to depart in her, she being bound for that island.

After this cruise they went into a small island, and cleaned, and spent their Christmas ashore, drinking and carousing as long as they had any liquor left, and then went to sea again for more. They succeeded but too well, though they took no extraordinary prize for above two months, except a ship laden with convicts from Newgate, bound for the plantations, which in a few days was retaken;

with all her cargo, by an English man-of-war that was stationed in those seas.

Rackam stood towards the island of Bermuda, and took a ship bound to England from Carolina, and a small pink from New England, both of which he brought to the Bahama Islands, where, with the pitch, tar and stores they cleaned again, and refitted their own vessel; but staying too long in that neighborhood, Captain Rodgers, who was Governor of Providence, hearing of these ships being taken, sent out a sloop well manned and armed, which retook both the prizes, though in the mean while the pirate had the good fortune to escape.

From hence they sailed to the back of Cuba, where Rackam kept a little kind of a family; at which place they stayed a considerable time, living ashore with their Delilahs, till their money and provisions were expended, and they concluded it time to look out for more. They repaired their vessel, and were making ready to put to sea, when a guarda de costa came in with a small English sloop, which she had taken as an interloper on the coast. The Spanish guard-ship attacked the pirate, but Rackam being close in behind a little island, she could do but little execution where she lay; the Dons therefore warped into the channel that evening, in order to make sure of her the next morning. Rackam finding his case desperate, and that there was hardly any possibility of escaping, resolved to attempt the following enterprize. The Spanish prize lying for better security close into the land, between the little island and the Main, our desperado took his crew into the boat with their cutlasses, rounded the little island, and fell aboard their prize silently in the dead of the night without being discovered, telling the Spaniards that were aboard her, that if they spoke a word, or made the least noise, they were all dead men; and so they became masters of her. When this was done he slipped her cable, and drove out to sea. The Spanish man-of-war was so intent upon their expected prize, that they minded nothing else, and as soon as day broke, they made a furious fire upon the empty sloop; but it was not long before they were rightly apprised of the matter, when they cursed themselves sufficiently for a company of fools, to be bit out of a good rich prize, as

she proved to be, and to have nothing but an old crazy hull in the room of her.

Rackam and his crew had no occasion to be displeased at the exchange, as it enabled them to continue some time longer in a way of life that suited their depraved minds. In August 1720, we find him at sea again, scouring the harbours and inlets of the north and west parts of Jamaica, where he took several small craft, which proved no great booty to the rovers; but they had but few men, and therefore were obliged to run at low game till they could increase their company and their strength.

In the beginning of September, they took seven or eight fishing boats in Harbour Island, stole their nets and other tackle, and then went off to the French part of Hispaniola, where they landed, and took the cattle away, with two or three Frenchmen whom they found near the water-side, hunting wild hogs in the evening. The Frenchmen came on board, whether by consent or compulsion is not certainly known. They afterwards plundered two sloops, and returned to Jamaica, on the north coast of which island, near Porto Maria Bay, they took a schooner, Thomas Spenlow, master, it being then the 19th of October. The next day Rackam seeing a sloop in Dry Harbour Bay, stood in and fired a gun; the men all ran ashore, and he took the sloop and lading; but when those ashore found that they were pirates, they hailed the sloop, and let them know they were all willing to come on board of them.

Rackam's coasting the island in this manner proved fatal to him; for intelligence of his expedition came to the governor by a canoe which he had surprised ashore in Ocho Bay: upon this a sloop was immediately fitted out, and sent round the island in quest of him, commanded by Captain Barnet, and manned with a good number of hands. Rackam, rounding the island, and drawing round the western point, called Point Negril, saw a small pettiaga, which, at the sight of the sloop, ran ashore and landed her men, when one of them hailed her. Answer was made that they were Englishmen, and begged the pettiaga's men to come on board and drink a bowl of punch, which they prevailed upon them to do. Accordingly, the company, in an evil hour, came all aboard of the pirate, consisting of nine per-

sons; they were armed with muskets and cutlasses, but what was their real design in so doing we will not pretend to say. They had no sooner laid down their arms and taken up their pipes, than Barnet's sloop, which was in pursuit of Rackam's, came in sight.

The pirates, finding she stood directly towards them, feared the event, and weighed their anchor, which they had but lately let go, and stood off. Captain Barnet gave them chase, and, having advantage of little breezes of wind which blew off the land, came up with her, and brought her into Port Royal, in Jamaica.

About a fortnight after the prisoners were brought ashore, viz. November 16, 1720, Captain Rackam and eight of his men were condemned and executed. Captain Rackam and two others were hung in chains.

But what was very surprising, was the conviction of the nine men that came aboard the sloop on the same day she was taken. They were tried at an adjournment of the court on the 24th of January, the magistracy waiting all that time, it is supposed, for evidence to prove the piratical intention of going aboard the said sloop; for it seems there was no act of piracy committed by them, as appeared by the witnesses against them, two Frenchmen, taken by Rackam off the island of Hispaniola, who merely deposed that the prisoners came on board without any compulsion.

The court considered the prisoners' cases, and the majority of the commissioners being of opinion that they were all guilty of the piracy and felony they were charged with, viz. the going over with a piratical intent to John Rackam, &c. then notorious pirates, and by them known to be so, they all received sentence of death, and were executed on the 17th of February at Gallows Point at Port Royal.