



CAPTAIN BARTHOLOMEW ROBERTS,

AKA BLACK BART





BLACK BART

BARTHOLOMEW ROBERTS

1682

[Bartholomew Roberts](#) was born in Wales. He would begin as an honest merchantman.

When the ship on which he had sailed was ambushed by pirates, he would be taken hostage. A new career would begin for him when the pirate leader and several of the crew would get themselves killed in an ambush. Having led the pirates to safety, this former hostage would find himself elected to replace the dead captain. As "[Black Bart](#)" (he was one tall, dark, and handsome dude), he would plunder the coastlines of North and South America. For instance, a few weeks after taking command he would come upon, anchored unsuspectingly off the coast of Brazil, a fleet of 42 Portuguese treasure galleons accompanied by a couple of warships. The pirates would sail alongside the vessel that wallowed deepest in the water, fire off a broadside, and board (I think actually it is not possible to hold a full-size naval cutlass between your teeth). Capturing the prize, they would set sail and head for the open sea, where they would be able to outrun the pursuing warships, taking with them a rich load of furs, hogsheads of sugar and of tobacco, jewels, and 40,000 gold moidores. Roberts would discover aboard the vessel something that had been intended as a gift to the king of Portugal, a diamond-studded cross and heavy golden chain fit for a king — which, nifty dresser that he was, he would wear from then on. He would adorn himself in a rich waistcoat and breeches of red silk, and stick a red feather in his tricorne, tra-la. During battle, he would carry his two braces of pistols (that's four shots without reloading) in a red silk sling across his shoulder. Although his fellow pirates thought him something of a dandy, obviously none of them ever thought to attempt any subtle jests about his valor. It is said that at one point he sailed into the harbor at Trepassey, Newfoundland while there were 22 ships at anchor, in a sloop that carried only 10 guns and 60 men, with "colors flying, drums beating and trumpets sounding," and his reputation was such that all these seamen abandoned their vessels and fled to safety on shore. His reputation became so immense that guard ships stationed in the West Indies would noticeably sail away rather than risk any confrontation.

PIRACY

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1719

Captain Benjamin Norton sailed from Providence to the West Indies. John Menzies, then New England's Royal Secretary of the Admiralty, wrote that "Norton's vessel by observation is more suited for piracy than trade." Norton joined notorious pirate chief Bartholomew Roberts AKA "Black Bart" in the West Indies, and together they raided shipping.¹



The owner of Norton's ship, Joseph Whipple, would later become Deputy Governor of Rhode Island. Both Whipple and Norton, wrote Admiral Menzies, "carried off rich cargo, with other traders of Newport, in sloops to Providence ... yet when I went to the Governor of Rhode Island, he would not give up the goods."

1. This Welsh pirate from Pembrokeshire, ranging in a 2-year freebooting career from the African coast to South America and from the West Indies to Newfoundland, had seized more than 400 ships. "Black Bart" had been a teetotaler, drinking nothing but tea, had ordered his musicians to play hymns on a Sunday, and had sported a great diamond cross he had looted from a Portuguese man-of-war. His personal pennant had him attired in his fighting costume made entirely of red silk, holding in his right hand a flaming sword and in his left an hourglass, standing atop the severed heads of residents of the islands of Barbados (ABH="A Barbadian's Head") and Martinique (AMH="A Marinican's Head"):



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1721

January: Captain Benjamin Norton encountered [pirates](#) at St. Lucia and surrendered his brigantine to Captain [Bartholomew Roberts](#).



He evidently cut some sort of deal with this [pirate](#), known as "[Black Bart](#)", for he was given in exchange a Dutch prize loaded with sugar, cocoa, and slaves "of very considerable value." He was able to get this large vessel and its valued cargo safely back to [Rhode Island](#).



THE ARTICLES OF BARTHOLOMEW ROBERTS

- Every man has a vote in affairs of moment; has equal title to the fresh provisions, or strong liquors at any time seized, and may use them at pleasure, unless a scarcity, makes it necessary, for the good of all, to vote a retrenchment.
- Every man to be called fairly in turn, by list, on board of prizes, because, (over and above their proper share) they were on these occasions allowed a shift of clothes but if they defrauded the company to the value of a dollar in plate, jewels or money, marooning was the punishment. If the robbery was only betwixt one another, they contented themselves with slitting the ears and nose of him that was guilty, and set him on shore, not in an uninhabited place, but somewhere, where he was sure to encounter hardships.
- No person to game at cards or dice for money.
- The lights and candles to be put out at eight o'clock at night: if any of the crew; after that hour still remained inclined for drinking, they were to do it on the open deck.
- To keep their piece, pistols, and cutlass clean and fit for service.
- No boy or woman to be allowed amongst them. If any man were to be found seducing any of the latter sex, and carried her to sea disguised, he was to suffer death.
- To desert the ship or their quarters in battle, was punished with death or marooning.
- No striking one another on board, but every man's quarrels to be ended on shore, at sword and pistol.
- No man to talk of breaking up their way of living until each had Shared. If in order to this, any man should lose a limb, or become a cripple in their service, he was to have 800 dollars, out of the public stock, and for lesser hurts proportionately.
- The captain and the quartermaster to receive two shares of a prize: the master, boatswain, and gunner, one share and a half, and other officers one and a quarter.
- The musicians to have rest on the Sabbath Day, but the other six days and nights, none without special favor.

BLACK BART**BARTHOLOMEW ROBERTS****1722**

February 5, Monday (1721, Old Style): Captain Chaloner Ogle of the *Swallow* found three of the ships of [Bartholomew Roberts](#) at anchor at Cape Lopez, West Africa. Supposing the *Swallow* to be a merchantman, ["Black Bart"](#) sent the *Ranger* out after her. The warship fled toward the open seas and then, once they were out of sight of the harbor, turned and went on the attack. Ten pirates were killed and twenty wounded before the survivors surrendered. Captain Ogle then sailed back to Cape Lopez to attack the remaining two pirate vessels.



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February 10, Saturday (1721, Old Style): [Bartholomew Roberts](#), finally recognizing that the *Swallow* was a warship rather than a merchantman, made a break in the *Royal Fortune* for the open seas. In his cabin, [“Black Bart”](#) prepared himself for battle, donning his red damask suit with a black tricorne and red feather, slipping the heavy gold chain with diamond-studded cross around his neck, and slinging his pistols over his shoulders. As he came on deck, the *Swallow* was closing on them. A broadside toppled his *Royal Fortune*’s mizzenmast and when the smoke cleared, the pirates found their intrepid leader was slumped dead over a cannon.² Their motto had been “I have dipped my hands in muddy water and I must be a pirate and a short one will be my motto,” yada yada yada, “we’ll all go merrily down together” — the plan was that if they were overpowered, these jolly Rogers would simply blow themselves up with their kegs of gunpowder. What actually happened was that they threw the body of their leader overboard attired in its finery (presumably someone had the wit to retrieve that diamond-studded cross and heavy gold chain), and then surrendered. More than 50 of the mixed bag of [pirates](#) and escaped slaves who had once known themselves as the proud “House of Lords” would be [hanged](#) all in the same ceremony, on the Guinea coast.³



2. This Welsh [pirate](#) from Pembrokeshire, ranging in a 2-year freebooting career from the African coast to South America and from the West Indies to Newfoundland, had seized more than 400 ships. [“Black Bart”](#) had been a teetotalter, drinking nothing but tea, had ordered his musicians to play hymns on a Sunday, and had sported a great diamond cross he had looted from a Portuguese man-of-war. His personal pennant had him attired in his fighting costume made entirely of red silk, holding in his right hand a flaming sword and in his left an hourglass, standing atop the severed heads of residents of the islands of Barbados (ABH=“A Barbadian’s Head”) and Martinique (AMH=“A Marincan’s Head”):



3. Their nemesis, Captain Chaloner Ogle, would become an admiral and be knighted.

THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN ROBERTS⁴



Bartholomew Roberts was trained to a sea-faring life. Among other voyages which he made during the time that he lawfully procured his maintenance, he sailed for the Guinea coast, in November, 1719, where he was taken by the pirate Davis. He was at first very averse to that mode of life, and would certainly have deserted, had an opportunity occurred. It happened to him, however, as to many upon another element, that preferment calmed his conscience, and reconciled him to that which he formerly hated.

Davis having fallen in the manner related, those who had assumed the title of Lords assembled to deliberate concerning the choice of a new commander. There were several candidates, who, by their services, had risen to eminence among their brethren, and each of them thought themselves qualified to bear rule. One addressed the assembled lords, saying, "that the good of the whole, and the maintenance of order, demanded a head, but that the proper authority was deposited in the community at large; so that if

4. THE PIRATES OWN BOOK, OR AUTHENTIC NARRATIVES OF THE LIVES, EXPLOITS, AND EXECUTIONS OF THE MOST CELEBRATED SEA ROBBERS, by Charles Ellms (Portland: Published by Sanborn & Carter; Philadelphia: Thomas, Comperthwait, & Co., 1837. This would be republished in 1842 by A. and C.B. Edwards of New-York & Philadelphia, and in 1844 in Portland by Sanborn & Carter, and in 1855 by A. and C.B. Edwards of New-York, and in 1924 by Marine res. of Massachusetts, and in 1996 by Random House of New York.)



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one should be elected who did not act and govern for the general good, he could be deposed, and another be substituted in his place."

"We are the original," said he, "of this claim, and should a captain be so saucy as to exceed prescription at any time, why, down with him! It will be a caution, after he is dead, to his successors, to what fatal results any undue assumption may lead; however, it is my advice, while he are sober, to pitch upon a man of courage, and one skilled in navigation, – one who, by his prudence and bravery, seems best able to defend this commonwealth, and ward us from the dangers and tempests of an unstable element, and the fatal consequences of anarchy; and such a one I take Roberts to be: a fellow in all respects worthy of your esteem and favor."

This speech was applauded by all but Lord Simpson, who had himself strong expectations of obtaining the highest command. He at last, in a surly tone, said, he did not regard whom they chose as a commander, provided he was not a papist, for he had conceived a mortal hatred to papists, because his father had been a sufferer in Monmouth's rebellion.

Thus, though Roberts had only been a few weeks among them, his election was confirmed by the Lords and Commons. He, with the best face he could, accepted of the dignity, saying, "that since he had dipped his hands in muddy water, and must be a pirate, it was better being a commander than a private man."

The governor being settled, and other officers chosen in the room of those who had fallen with Davis, it was resolved not to leave this place without revenging his death. Accordingly, thirty men, under the command of one Kennedy, a bold and profligate fellow, landed, and under cover of the fire of the ship, ascended the hill upon which the fort stood. They were no sooner discovered by the Portuguese, than they abandoned the fort, and took shelter in the town. The pirates then entered without opposition, set fire to the fort, and tumbled the guns into the sea.

Not satisfied with this injury, some proposed to land and set the town in flames. Roberts however, reminded them of the great danger to which this would inevitably expose them; that there was a thick wood at the back of the town, where the inhabitants could hide themselves, and that, when their all was at stake, they would make a bolder resistance: and that the burning or destroying of a few houses, would be a small return for their labor, and the loss that they might sustain. This prudent advice had the desired effect, and they contented themselves with lightening the French vessel, and battering down several houses of the town, to show their high displeasure.

Roberts sailed southward, captured a Dutch Guineaman, and, having emptied her of everything they thought proper, returned her to the commander. Two days after, he captured an English ship, and, as the men joined in pirating, emptied and burned the vessel, and then sailed for St. Thomas. Meeting with no prize, he sailed for Anamaboa, and there watered and repaired. Having again put to sea, a vote was taken whether they should sail for the East Indies or for Brazil. The latter place was decided upon, and they arrived there in twenty-eight days.

Upon this coast our rovers cruised for about nine weeks, keeping



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generally out of sight of land, but without seeing a sail; which discouraged them so, that they determined to leave the station, and steer for the West Indies; and, in order thereto, they stood in to make the land for the taking of their departure, by which means they fell in, unexpectedly, with a fleet of forty-two sail of Portuguese ships, off the Bay of Los Todos Santos, with all their lading in for Lisbon; several of them of good force, who lay there waiting for two men of war of seventy guns each for their convoy. However, Roberts thought it should go hard with him but he would make up his market among them, and thereupon he mixed with the fleet, and kept his men concealed till proper resolutions could be formed; that done, they came close up to one of the deepest, and ordered her to send the master on board quietly, threatening to give them no quarter, if any resistance or signal of distress was made. The Portuguese, being surprised at these threats, and the sudden flourish of cutlasses from the pirates, submitted without a word, and the captain came on board. Roberts saluted him in a friendly manner, telling him that they were gentlemen of fortune, and that their business with him was only to be informed which was the richest ship in that fleet; and if he directed them right, he should be restored to his ship without molestation, otherwise he must expect instant death.

He then pointed to a vessel of forty guns, and a hundred and fifty men; and though her strength was greatly superior to Roberts', yet he made towards her, taking the master of the captured vessel along with him. Coming alongside of her, Roberts ordered the prisoner to ask, "How Seignior Captain did?" and to invite him on board, as he had a matter of importance to impart to him. He was answered, "That he would wait upon him presently." Roberts, however, observing more than ordinary bustle on board, at once concluded they were discovered, and pouring a broadside into her, they immediately boarded, grappled, and took her. She was a very rich prize, laden with sugar, skins, and tobacco, with four thousand moidores of gold, besides other valuable articles.

In possession of so much riches, they now became solicitous to find a safe retreat in which to spend their time in mirth and wantonness. They determined upon a place called the Devil's Island upon the river Surinam, where they arrived in safety, and met with a kind reception from the governor and the inhabitants. In this river they seized a sloop, which informed them that she had sailed in company with a brigantine loaded with provisions. This was welcome intelligence, as their provisions were nearly exhausted. Deeming this too important a business to trust to foreign hands, Roberts, with forty men in the sloop, gave chase to that sail. In the keenness of the moment, and trusting in his usual good fortune, Roberts supposed that he had only to take a short sail in order to bring in the vessel with her cargo; but to his sad disappointment, he pursued her during eight days, and instead of gaining, was losing way. Under these circumstances, he came to anchor, and sent off the boat to give intelligence of their distress to their companions.

In their extremity of want, they took up part of the floor of the cabin, and patched up a sort of tray with rope-yarns, to paddle on shore to get a little water to preserve their lives.



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When their patience was almost exhausted, the boat returned, but instead of provisions, brought the unpleasing information, that the lieutenant, one Kennedy, had run off with both the ships. The misfortune and misery of Roberts were greatly aggravated by reflecting upon his own imprudence and want of foresight, as well as from the baseness of Kennedy and his crew. Impelled by the necessity of his situation, he now began to reflect upon the means he should employ for future support. Under the foolish supposition that any laws, oaths or regulations, could bind those who had bidden open defiance to all divine and human laws, he proceeded to form a code of regulations for the maintenance of order and unity in his little commonwealth.

But present necessity compelled them to action, and with their small sloop they sailed for the West Indies. They were not long before they captured two sloops, which supplied them with provisions, and a few days after, a brigantine, and then proceeded to Barbadoes. When off that island they met a vessel of ten guns, richly laden from Bristol; after plundering, and detaining her three days, they allowed her to prosecute her voyage. This vessel, however, informed the governor of what had befallen them, who sent a vessel of twenty guns and eighty men in quest of the pirates.

That vessel was commanded by one Rogers, who, on the second day of his cruise, discovered Roberts. Ignorant of any vessel being sent after them, they made towards each other. Roberts gave him a gun but instead of striking, the other returned a broadside, with three huzzas. A severe engagement ensued, and Roberts being hard put to it, lightened his vessel and ran off.

Roberts then sailed for the Island of Dominica, where he watered, and was supplied by the inhabitants with provisions, for which he gave them goods in return. Here he met with fifteen Englishmen left upon the island by a Frenchman who had made a prize of their vessel; and they, entering into his service, proved a seasonable addition to his strength.

Though he did not think this a proper place for cleaning, yet as it was absolutely necessary that it should be done, he directed his course to the Granada islands for that purpose. This, however, had well nigh proved fatal to him; for the Governor of Martinique fitted out two sloops to go in quest of the pirates. They, however, sailed to the above-mentioned place, cleaned with unusual despatch, and just left that place the night before the sloops in pursuit of them arrived.

They next sailed for Newfoundland, arriving upon the banks in June, 1720, and entered the harbor of Trepassi, with their black colors flying, drums beating, and trumpets sounding. In that harbor there were no less than twenty-two ships, which the men abandoned upon the sight of the pirates. It is impossible to describe the injury which they did at this place, by burning or sinking the ships, destroying the plantations, and pillaging the houses. Power in the hands of mean and ignorant men renders them wanton, insolent and cruel. They are literally like madmen, who cast firebrands, arrows and death, and say, "Are not we in sport?"

Roberts reserved a Bristol galley from his depredations in the harbor, which he fitted and manned for his own service. Upon the banks he met ten sail of French ships, and destroyed them all,



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except one of twenty-six guns, which he seized and carried off, and called her the Fortune. Then giving the Bristol galley to the Frenchman, they sailed in quest of new adventures, and soon took several prizes, and out of them increased the number of their own hands. The Samuel, one of these, was a very rich vessel, having some respectable passengers on board, who were roughly used, and threatened with death if they did not deliver up their money and their goods. They stripped the vessel of every article, either necessary for their vessel or themselves, to the amount of eight or nine thousand pounds. They then deliberated whether to sink or burn the Samuel, but in the mean time they discovered a sail, so they left the empty Samuel, and gave the other chase. At midnight they overtook her, and she proved to be the Snow from Bristol; and, because he was an Englishman, they used the master in a cruel and barbarous manner. Two days after, they took the Little York of Virginia, and the Love of Liverpool, both of which they plundered and sent off. In three days they captured three other vessels, removing the goods out of them, sinking one, and sending off the other two.

They next sailed for the West Indies, but provisions growing short, proceeded to St. Christopher's, where, being denied provisions by the governor, they fired on the town, and burnt two ships in the roads. They then repaired to the island of St. Bartholomew, where the governor supplied them with every necessary, and caressed them in the kindest manner. Satiated with indulgence, and having taken in a large stock of everything necessary, they unanimously voted to hasten to the coast of Guinea. In their way they took a Frenchman, and as she was fitter for the pirate service than their own, they informed the captain, that, as "a fair exchange was no robbery," they would exchange sloops with him; accordingly, having shifted their men, they set sail. However, going by mistake out of the track of the trade winds, they were under the necessity of returning to the West Indies.

They now directed their course to Surinam but not having sufficient water for the voyage they were soon reduced to a mouthful of water in the day; their numbers daily diminished by thirst and famine and the few who survived were reduced to the greatest weakness. They at last had not one drop of water or any other liquid, when, to their inexpressible joy, they anchored in seven fathoms of water. This tended to revive exhausted nature and inspire them with new vigour, though as yet they had received no relief. In the morning they discovered land, but at such a distance that their hopes were greatly dampened. The boat was however sent off, and at night returned with plenty of that necessary element. But this remarkable deliverance produced no reformation in the manners of these unfeeling and obdurate men. Steering their course from that place to Barbadoes, in their way they met with a vessel which supplied them with all necessaries. Not long after, they captured a brigantine, the mate of which joined their association. Having from these two obtained a large supply, they changed their course and watered at Tobago. Informed, however, that there were two vessels sent in pursuit of them, they went to return their compliments to the Governor of Martinique for this kindness.

It was the custom of the Dutch interlopers, when they approached



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this island to trade with the inhabitants, to hoist their jacks. Roberts knew the signal, and did so likewise. They, supposing that a good market was near, strove who could first reach Roberts. Determined to do them all possible mischief he destroyed them one by one as they came into his power. He only reserved one ship to send the men on shore, and burnt the remainder, to the number of twenty.

Roberts and his crew were so fortunate as to capture several vessels and to render their liquor so plentiful, that it was esteemed a crime against Providence not to be continually drunk. One man, remarkable for his sobriety, along with two others, found an opportunity to set off without taking leave of their friends. But a despatch being sent after them, they were brought back, and in a formal manner tried and sentenced, but one of them was saved by the humorous interference of one of the judges, whose speech was truly worthy of a pirate – while the other two suffered the punishment of death.

When necessity again compelled them, they renewed their cruising; and, dissatisfied with capturing vessels which only afforded them a temporary supply, directed their course to the Guinea coast to forage for gold. Intoxication rendered them unruly, and the brigantine at last embraced the cover of night to abandon the commodore. Unconcerned at the loss of his companion, Roberts pursued his voyage. He fell in with two French ships, the one of ten guns and sixty-five men, and the other of sixteen guns and seventy-five men. These dastards no sooner beheld the black flag than they surrendered. With these they went to Sierra Leone, constituting one of them a consort, by the name of the Ranger, and the other a store-ship. This port being frequented by the greater part of the traders to that quarter, they remained here six weeks, enjoying themselves in all the splendor and luxury of a piratical life.

After this they renewed their voyage, and having captured a vessel, the greater part of the men united their fortunes with the pirates. On board of one of the ships was a clergyman, whom some of them proposed taking along with them, for no other reason than that they had not a chaplain on board. They endeavored to gain his consent, and assured him that he should want for nothing, and his only work would be, to make punch and say prayers. Depraved, however, as these men were, they did not choose to constrain him to go, but displayed their civility further, by permitting him to carry along with him whatever he called his own. After several cruises, they now went into a convenient harbor at Old Calabar, where they cleaned, refitted, divided their booty, and for a considerable time caroused, to banish care and sober reflection.

According to their usual custom, the time of festivity and mirth was prolonged until the want of means recalled them to reason and exertion. Leaving this port, they cruised from place to place with varied success; but in all their captures, either burning, sinking, or devoting their prizes to their own use, according to the whim of the moment. The Swallow and another man-of-war being sent out expressly to pursue and take Roberts and his fleet, he had frequent and certain intelligence of their destination; but having so often escaped their vigilance, he became rather too secure and fearless. It happened, however,



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that while he lay off Cape Lopez, the Swallow had information of his being in that place, and made towards him. Upon the appearance of a sail, one of Roberts' ships was sent to chase and take her. The pilot of the Swallow seeing her coming, manoeuvred his vessel so well, that though he fled at her approach, in order to draw her out of the reach of her associates, yet he at his own time allowed her to overtake the man-of-war.

Upon her coming up to the Swallow, the pirate hoisted the black flag, and fired upon her; but how greatly were her crew astonished, when they saw that they had to contend with a man-of-war, and seeing that all resistance was vain, they cried out for quarter, which was granted, and they were made prisoners, having ten men killed and twenty wounded, without the loss or hurt of one of the king's men.

On the 10th, in the morning, the man-of-war bore away to round the cape. Roberts' crew, discerning their masts over the land, went down into the cabin to acquaint him of it, he being then at breakfast with his new guest, captain Hill, on a savoury dish of salmagundy and some of his own beer. He took no notice of it, and his men almost as little, some saying she was a Portuguese ship, others a French slave ship, but the major part swore it was the French Ranger returning; and they were merrily debating for some time on the manner of reception, whether they should salute her or not; but as the Swallow approached nearer, things appeared plainer; and though they who showed any apprehension of danger were stigmatized with the name of cowards, yet some of them, now undeceived, declared it to Roberts, especially one Armstrong, who had deserted from that ship, and knew her well. These Roberts swore at as cowards, who meant to dishearten the men, asking them, if it were so, whether they were afraid to fight or not? In short, he hardly refrained from blows. What his own apprehensions were, till she hauled up her ports and hoisted her proper colors, is uncertain; but then, being perfectly convinced, he slipped his cable, got under sail, ordered his men to arms without any show of timidity, dropping a first-rate oath, that it was a bite, but at the same time resolved, like a gallant rogue, to get clear or die.

There was one Armstrong, as was just mentioned, a deserter from the Swallow, of whom they enquired concerning the trim and sailing of that ship; he told them she sailed best upon the wind, and therefore, if they designed to leave her, they should go before it.

The danger was imminent, and the time very short, to consult about means to extricate himself; his resolution in this strait was as follows: to pass close to the Swallow with all their sails, and receive her broadside before they returned a shot; if disabled by this, or if they could not depend on sailing, then to run on shore at the point, and every one to shift for himself among the negroes; or failing these, to board, and blow up together, for he saw that the greatest part of his men were drunk, passively courageous, and unfit for service.

Roberts, himself, made a gallant figure at the time of the engagement, being dressed in a rich crimson damask waistcoat and breeches, a red feather in his hat, a gold chain round his neck, with a diamond cross hanging to it, a sword in his hand, and two



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pair of pistols hanging at the end of a silk sling flung over his shoulders, according to the custom of the pirates. He is said to have given his orders with boldness and spirit. Coming, according to what he had purposed, close to the man-of-war, he received her fire, and then hoisted his black flag and returned it, shooting away from her with all the sail he could pack; and had he taken Armstrong's advice to have gone before the wind, he had probably escaped; but keeping his tacks down, either by the wind's shifting, or ill steerage, or both, he was taken aback with his sails, and the Swallow came a second time very nigh to him. He had now, perhaps, finished the fight very desperately, if death, who took a swift passage in a grape shot, had not interposed, and struck him directly on the throat. He settled himself on the tackles of a gun; which one Stephenson, from the helm, observing, ran to his assistance, and not perceiving him wounded, swore at him, and bade him stand up and fight like a man; but when he found his mistake, and that his captain was certainly dead, he burst into tears, and wished the next shot might be his portion. They presently threw him overboard, with his arms and ornaments on, according to his repeated request in his life-time.

This extraordinary man and daring pirate was tall, of a dark

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complexion, about 40 years of age, and born in Pembrokeshire.



His parents were honest and respectable, and his natural activity, courage, and invention, were superior to his education. At a very early period, he, in drinking, would imprecate vengeance upon "the head of him who ever lived to wear a halter." He went willingly into the pirate service, and served three years as a second man. It was not for want of employment, but from a roving, wild, and boisterous turn of mind. It was his usual declaration, that, "In an honest service, there are commonly low wages and hard labor; in this, - plenty, satiety, pleasure and ease, liberty, and power; and who would not balance creditor on this side, when all the hazard that is run for it at worst, is only a sour look or two at choking? No, - a merry life and a short one, shall be my motto!" But it was one favorable trait in his character, that he never forced any man into the pirate service.

The prisoners were strictly guarded while on board, and being conveyed to Cape Coast castle, they underwent a long and solemn trial. The generality of them remained daring and impenitent for



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some time, but when they found themselves confined within a castle, and their fate drawing near, they changed their course, and became serious, penitent, and fervent in their devotions. Though the judges found no small difficulty in explaining the law, and different acts of parliament, yet the facts were so numerous and flagrant which were proved against them, that there was no difficulty in bringing in a verdict of guilty.

1739

The description that follows, *A NEW ACCOUNT OF SOME PARTS OF GUINEA, AND THE SLAVE TRADE*, is by Captain William Snelgrave of [Bristol, Rhode Island](#), who considered himself a humanitarian and supposed he was transporting his cargo of [slaves](#) to a better life through imposing the civilizing influence of white Christians over their savage and unenlightened existences. That is, Captain Snelgrave supposed himself to be doing good while doing well (the punishments he instances actually are more moderate than those instanced in some other accounts):

I come now to give an Account of the Mutinies that have happened on board the Ships where I have been.

These Mutinies are generally occasioned by the Sailors ill usage of these poor People, when on board the Ship wherein they are transported to our Plantations. Wherever therefore I have commanded, it has been my principal Care, to have the Negroes on board my Ship kindly used; and I have always strictly charged my white People to treat them with Humanity and Tenderness; In which I have usually found my Account, both in keeping them from mutinying, and preserving them in health.

And whereas it may seem strange to those that are unacquainted with the method of managing them, how we can carry so many hundreds together in a small Ship, and keep them in order, I shall just mention what is generally practiced. When we purchase grown People, I acquaint them by the Interpreter, "That, now they are become my Property, I think fit to let them know what they are bought for, that they may be easy in their Minds: (For these poor People are generally under terrible Apprehensions upon their being bought by white Men, many being afraid that we design to eat them; which, I have been told, is a story much credited by the inland Negroes;) So after informing them, That they are bought to till the Ground in our Country, with several other Matters; I then acquaint them, how they are to behave themselves on board towards the white Men; that if any one abuses them, they are to complain to the Linguist, who is to inform me of it, and I will do them Justice; But if they make a Disturbance, or offer to strike a white Man, they must expect to be severely punished."

When we purchase the Negroes, we couple the sturdy Men together with Irons; but we suffer the Women and Children to go freely about: And soon after we have sail'd from the Coast, we undo all the Mens Irons.

They are fed twice a day, and are allowed in fair Weather to come on Deck at seven a Clock in the Morning, and to remain there, if they think proper, till Sun setting. Every Monday

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Morning they are served with [Pipes](#) and [Tobacco](#), which they are very fond of. The Men Negroes lodge separate from the Women and Children: and the places where they all lye are cleaned every day, some white Men being appointed to see them do it.

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* * *

I have been several Voyages, when there has been no Attempt made by our Negroes to mutiny; which, I believe, was owing chiefly, to their being kindly used, and to my Officers Care in keeping a good Watch. But sometimes we meet with stout stubborn People amongst them, who are never to be made easy; and these are generally some of the Cormantines, a Nation of the Gold Coast. I went in the year 1721, in the *Henry* of London, a Voyage to that part of the Coast, and bought a good many of these People. We were obliged to secure them very well in Irons, and watch them narrowly: Yet they nevertheless mutinied, tho' they had little prospect of succeeding. I lay at that time near a place called Mumfort on the Gold-Coast, having near five hundred Negroes on board, three hundred of which were Men. Our Ship's Company consisted of fifty white People, all in health: And I had very good Officers; so that I was very easy in all respects.

5. For this and other such maps: <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/search.html>



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After we had secured these People, I called the Linguists, and ordered them to bid the Men-Negroes between Decks be quiet; (for there was a great noise amongst them.) On their being silent, I asked, "What had induced them to mutiny?" They answered, "I was a great Rogue to buy them, in order to carry them away from their own Country, and that they were resolved to regain their Liberty if possible." I replied, "That they had forfeited their Freedom before I bought them, either by Crimes or by being taken in War, according to the Custom of their Country; and they being now my Property, I was resolved to let them feel my Resentment, if they abused my Kindness: Asking at the same time, Whether they had been ill used by the white Men, or had wanted for any thing the Ship afforded?" To this they replied, "They had nothing to complain of." Then I observed to them, "That if they should gain their Point and escape to the Shore, it would be no Advantage to them, because their Countrymen would catch them, and sell them to other Ships." This served my purpose, and they seemed to be convinced of their Fault, begging, "I would forgive them, and promising for the future to be obedient, and never mutiny again, if I would not punish them this time." This I readily granted, and so they went to sleep. When Daylight came we called the Men Negroes up on Deck, and examining their Irons, found them all secure. So this Affair happily ended, which I was very glad of; for these People are the stoutest and most sensible Negroes on the Coast: Neither are they so weak as to imagine as others do, that we buy them to eat them; being satisfied we carry them to work in our Plantations, as they do in their own Country. However, a few days after this, we discovered they were plotting again, and preparing to mutiny. For some of the Ringleaders proposed to one of our Linguists, If he could procure them an Ax, they would cut the Cables the Ship rid by in the night; and so on her driving (as they imagined) ashore, they should get out of our hands, and then would become his Servants as long as they lived.

For the better understanding of this I must observe here, that these Linguists are Natives and Freemen of the Country, whom we hire on account of their speaking good English, during the time we remain trading on the Coast; and they are likewise Brokers between us and the black Merchants.

This Linguist was so honest as to acquaint me with what had been proposed to him; and advised me to keep a strict Watch over the Slaves: For tho' he had represented to them the same as I had done on their mutinying before, That they would all be catch'd again, and sold to other Ships, in case they could carry their Point, and get on Shore, yet it had no effect upon them.

This gave me a good deal of Uneasiness. For I knew several Voyages had proved unsuccessful by Mutinies; as they occasioned either the total loss of the Ships and the white Mens Lives; or at least by rendring it absolutely necessary to kill or wound a great number of the Slaves, in order to prevent a total Destruction. Moreover, I knew many of these Cormantine Negroes despised Punishment, and even Death it self: It having often happened at Barbadoes and other Islands, that on their being any ways hardly dealt with, to break them of their Stubbornness in refusing to work, twenty or more have hang'd themselves at a time in a Plantation. However, about a Month after this, a sad



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Accident happened, that brought our Slaves to be more orderly, and put them in a better Temper: And it was this. On our going from Mumfort to Anna-maboe, which is the principal part on the Gold Coast, I met there with another of my Owner's Ships, called the *Elizabeth*. One Captain Thompson that commanded her was dead; as also his chief Mate: Moreover the Ship had afterwards been taken to Cape Lahoe on the windward Coast, by Roberts the Pirate [[Bartholomew Roberts](#) AKA "[Black Bart](#)"] with whom several of the Sailors belonging to her had entered. However, some of the Pirates had hindered the Cargoe's being plundered, and obtained that the Ship should be restored to the second Mate: Telling him, "They did it out of respect to the generous Character his Owner bore, in doing good to poor Sailors."

When I met with this Vessel I had almost disposed of my Ship's Cargoe; and the *Elizabeth* being under my Direction, I acquainted the second Mate, who then commanded her, That I thought it for our Owner's Interest, to take the Slaves from on board him, being about 120, into my Ship; and then go off the Coast; and that I would deliver him at the same time the Remains of my Cargoe, for him to dispose of with his own after I was sailed. This he readily complied with, but told me, "He feared his Ship's Company would mutiny, and oppose my taking the Slaves from him!" And indeed, they came at that instant in a Body on the Quarter-deck; where one spoke for the rest, telling me plainly, "they would not allow the Slaves to be taken out by me." I found by this they had lost all respect for their present Commander, who indeed was a weak Man. However, I calmly asked the reason, "Why they offered to oppose my taking the Slaves?" To which they answered, "I had no business with them." On this I desired the Captain to send to his Scrutore, for the Book of Instructions Captain Thompson had received from our Owner; and he read to them, at my request, that Part, in which their former Captain, or his Successor (in case of Death) was to follow my Orders. Hereupon they all cried out, "they should remain a great while longer on the Coast to purchase more Slaves, if I took these from them, which they were resolved to oppose." I answered, "That such of the Ship's Company as desired it, I would receive on board my own; where they should have the same Wages they had at present on board the *Elizabeth*, and I would send some of my own People to supply their Places." This so reasonable an Offer was refused, one of the Men who was the Ship's Cooper telling me, that the Slaves had been on board a long time, and they had great Friendship with them: therefore they would keep them. I asked him, "Whether he had ever been on the Coast of Guinea before? He replied no. Then I told him, "I supposed he had not by his way of talking, and advised him not to rely on the Friendship of the Slaves, which he might have reason to repent of when too late." And 'tis remarkable this very person was killed by them the next Night, as shall be presently related. So finding that reasoning with these Men was to no Purpose, I told them, "When I came with my Boats to fetch the Slaves, they should find me as resolute to chastise such of them as should dare to oppose me, as I had been condescending to convince them by arguing calmly." So I took my leave of their Captain, telling him, "I would come the next Morning to finish the Affair." But that very Night, which was near a month after the Mutiny on



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board of us at Mumfort, the Moon shining now very bright, as it did then, we heard, about ten a Clock, two or three Musquets fired on board the *Elizabeth*. Upon that I ordered all our Boats to be manned, and having secured every thing in our Ship, to prevent our Slaves from mutinying, I went my self in our Pinnace, (the other Boats following me) on board the *Elizabeth*. In our way we saw two Negroes swimming from her, but before we could reach them with our Boats, some Sharks rose from the bottom, and tore them in Pieces. We came presently along the side of the Ship, where we found two Men-Negroes holding by a Rope, with their heads just above water; they were afraid, it seems, to swim from the Ship's side, having seen their Companions devoured just before by the Sharks. These two Slaves we took into our Boat, and then went into the Ship, where we found the Negroes very quiet, and all under Deck; but the Ship's Company was on the Quarter-deck, in a great Confusion, saying, "The Cooper, who had been placed centry at the Fore-hatch way, over the Men-Negroes, was, they believed, kill'd by them." I was surprized to hear this, wondring that these cowardly fellows, who had so vigorously opposed my taking the Slaves out, a few hours before, had not Courage enough to venture forward, to save their Shipmate; but had secured themselves by shutting the Quarter-deck door, where they all stood with Arms in their Hands. So I went to the fore-part of the Ship with some of my People, and there we found the Cooper lying on his back quite dead, his Scull being cleft asunder with a Hatchet that lay by him. At the sight of this I called for the Linguist, and bid him ask the Negroes between Decks, "Who had killed the white Man?" They answered, "They knew nothing of the matter; for there had been no design of mutinying among them:" Which upon Examination we found true; for above one hundred of the Negroes then on board, being bought to the Windward, did not understand a word of the Gold-Coast Language, and so had not been in the Plot. But this Mutiny was contrived by a few Cormantee-Negroes, who had been purchased about two or three days before. At last, one of the two Men-Negroes we had taken up along the Ship side, impeached his Companion, and he readily confessed he had kill'd the Cooper, with no other View, but that he and his Countrymen might escape undiscovered by swimming on Shore. For on their coming upon Deck, they observed, that all the white Men set to watch were asleep; and having found the Cook's Hatchet by the Fire-place, he took it up, not designing then to do any Mischief with it; but passing by the Cooper, who was centry, and he beginning to awake, the Negroe rashly struck him on the head with it, and then jump'd overboard. Upon this frank Confession, the white Men would have cut him to Pieces; but I prevented it, and carried him to my own Ship. Early the next morning, I went on board the *Elizabeth* with my Boats, and sent away all the Negroes then in her, into my own Ship: not one of the other Ship's Company offering to oppose it. Two of them, the Carpenter and Steward, desired to go with me, which I readily granted; and by way of Security for the future success of the Voyage, I put my chief Mate, and four of my under Officers (with their own Consent,) on board the *Elizabeth*; and they arrived, about five Months after this, at Jamaica, having disposed of most part of the Cargoe.



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After having sent the Slaves out of the *Elizabeth*, as I have just now mentioned, I went on board my own Ship; and there being then in the Road of Anamaboe, eight sail of Ships besides us, I sent an Officer in my Boat to the Commanders of them, "To desire their Company on board my Ship, because I had an Affair of great Consequence to communicate to them." Soon after, most of them were pleased to come; and I having acquainted them with the whole Matter, and they having also heard the Negroe's Confession, "That he had killed the white Man;" They unanimously advised me to put him to death; arguing, "That Blood required Blood, by all Laws both divine and human; especially as there was in this Case the clearest Proof, namely the Murderer's Confession: Moreover this would in all probability prevent future Mischiefs; for by publickly executing this Person at the Ship's Fore-yard Arm, the Negroes on board their Ships would see it; and as they were very much disposed to mutiny, it might prevent them from attempting it." These Reasons, with my being in the same Circumstances, made me comply.

Accordingly we acquainted the Negroe, that he was to die in an hour's time for murdering the white Man. He answered, "He must confess it was a rash Action in him to kill him; but he desired me to consider, that if I put him to death, I should lose all the Money I had paid for him." To this I bid the Interpreter reply, "That tho' I knew it was customary in his Country to commute for Murder by a Sum of Money, yet it was not so with us; and he should find that I had no regard to my Profit in this respect: For as soon as an Hour-Glass, just then turned, was run out, he should be put to death;" At which I observed he shewed no Concern.

Hereupon the other Commanders went on board their respective Ships, in order to have all their Negroes upon Deck at the time of Execution, and to inform them of the occasion of it. The Hour-Glass being run out, the Murderer was carried on the Ship's Forecastle, where he had a Rope fastened under his Arms, in order to be hoisted up to the Fore-yard Arm, to be shot to death. This some of his Countrymen observing, told him, (as the Linguist informed me afterwards) "That they would not have him to be frightened; for it was plain I did not design to put him to death, otherwise the Rope would have been put about his neck, to hang him." For it seems they had no thought of his being shot; judging he was only to be hoisted up to the Yard-arm, in order to scare him: But they immediately saw the contrary; for as soon as he was hoisted up, ten white Men who were placed behind the Barricado on the Quarter-deck fired their Musquets, and instantly killed him. This struck a sudden Damp upon our Negroe-Men, who thought, that, on account of my Profit, I would not have executed him.

The Body being cut down upon the Deck, the Head was cut off, and thrown overboard. This last part was done, to let our Negroes see, that all who offended thus, should be served in the same manner. For many of the Blacks believe, that if they are put to death and not dismembred, they shall return again to their own Country, after they are thrown overboard. But neither the Person that was executed, nor his Countrymen of Cormantee (as I understood afterwards,) were so weak as to believe any such thing; tho' many I had on board from other Countries had that



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Opinion.

When the Execution was over, I ordered the Linguist to acquaint the Men-Negroes, "That now they might judge, no one that killed a white Man should be spared:" And I thought proper now to acquaint them once for all, "That if they attempted to mutiny again, I should be obliged to punish the Ringleaders with death, in order to prevent further Mischief." Upon this they all promised to be obedient, and I assured them they should be kindly used, if they kept their Promise: which they faithfully did. For we sailed, two days after, from Anamaboe for Jamaica; and tho' they were on board near four Months, from our going off the Coast, till they were sold at that Island, they never gave us the least reason to be jealous of them; which doubtless was owing to the execution of the white Man's Murderer.

After the Captain [Messervy, of *Ferrers* galley] had told me this story, he desired me to spare him some Rice, having heard, I had purchased a great many Tuns to the Windward; where he had bought little, not expecting to meet with so many Slaves. This request I could not comply with, having provided no more than was necessary for my self, and for another of my Owner's Ships, which I quickly expected. And understanding from him, that he had never been on the Coast of Guinea before, I took the liberty to observe to him, "That as he had on board so many Negroes of one Town and Language, it required the utmost Care and Management to keep them from mutinying; and that I was sorry he had so little Rice for them: For I had experienced that the Windward Slaves are always very fond of it, it being their usual Food in their own Country; and he might certainly expect dissatisfactions and Uneasiness amongst them for want of a sufficient quantity."

This he took kindly, and having asked my Advice about other Matters, took his leave, inviting me to come next day to see him. I went accordingly on board his Ship, about three a clock in the afternoon. At four a clock the Negroes went to Supper, and Captain Messervy desired me to excuse him for a quarter of an hour, whilst he went forward to see the Men-Negroes served with Victuals. I observed from the Quarter-Deck, that he himself put Pepper and Palm Oyl amongst the Rice they were going to eat. When he came back to me, I could not forbear observing to him, "How imprudent it was in him to do so: For tho' it was proper for a Commander sometimes to go forward, and observe how things were managed; yet he ought to take a proper time, and have a good many of his white People in Arms when he went; or else the having him so much in their Power, might incourage the Slaves to mutiny: For he might depend upon it, they always aim at the chief Person in the Ship, whom they soon distinguish by the respect shown him by the rest of the People."

He thanked me for this Advice, but did not seem to relish it; saying, "He thought the old Proverb good, that "The Master's Eye makes the Horse fat." We then fell into other Discourse, and among other things he told me, "He designed to go away in a few days:" Accordingly he sailed three days after for Jamaica. Some Months after I went for that place, where at my arrival I found his Ship, and had the following melancholy account of his Death, which happened about ten days after he left the Coast of Guinea in this manner.



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Being on the Forecastle of the Ship, amongst the Men-Negroes, when they were eating their Victuals, they laid hold on him, and beat out his Brains with the little Tubs, out of which they eat their boiled Rice. This Mutiny having been plotted amongst all the grown Negroes on board, they run to the forepart of the Ship in a body, and endeavoured to force the Barricado on the Quarter-Deck, not regarding the Musquets or Half Pikes, that were presented to their Breasts by the white Men, through the Loop-holes. So that at last the chief Mate was obliged to order one of the Quarter-deck Guns laden with Partridge-Shot, to be fired amongst them; which Occasioned a terrible Destruction: For there were near eighty Negroes kill'd and drowned, many jumping overboard when the Gun was fired. This indeed put an end to the Mutiny, but most of the Slaves that remained alive grew so sullen, that several of them were starved to death, obstinately refusing to take any Sustenance: And after the Ship was arrived at Jamaica, they attempted twice to mutiny, before the Sale of them began. This with their former Misbehaviour coming to be publickly known, none of the Planters cared to buy them, tho' offered at a low Price. So that this proved a very unsuccessful Voyage, for the Ship was detained many Months at Jamaica on that account, and at last was lost there in a Hurricane.

According to the Transatlantic Slave Trade database, between 1701 and 1727 this William Snelgrave of [Bristol](#), [Rhode Island](#) captained one dozen slave-trading voyages, redeeming many, many black souls for Christ.

[THE MIDDLE PASSAGE](#)



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contact the project at <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.

"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: October 22, 2013

ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
Arrgh.