

THE daring case of piracy on board the *Flowery Land* brought out in evidence before Mr. HENRY, at the Bow-street Police-court, reads more like a page from the history of the savage bravadoes that were the terror of the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages, or the marine bandits which still infest the China seas, than the story of an English vessel that cleared with her crew from the Port of London scarce six months ago. It is difficult to imagine the mental state of darkness and brutality which this atrocious and complicated crime reveals. It seems almost impossible at this time of day for any man, much less any company of men, to believe, as these men evidently did believe, that such desperate acts of robbery and murder could be committed on the high seas with impunity; that they could kill in cold blood the captain and as many of the crew as refused to share their enterprise, seize the valuables on board, scuttle the vessel within sight of land, and after landing with their plunder on the adjacent shore, permanently escape all inquiry or pursuit by means of a few incoherent and palpable falsehoods. In this point of view the story is an instructive one, as helping to throw some light on the unsuspected depths of savage barbarism and almost incredible brutality among the lower sea-faring and refuse population close to our own doors.

The vessel *Flowery Land* sailed from London, with 19 seamen on board, on the 28th of last July, bound for Singapore. The crew was singularly polyglot, there being, besides Englishmen and Scotchmen, a Malay, two Chinese, two Greeks, seven Spaniards, one Austrian, and a Frenchman. The scenes of violence and blood afterwards enacted on board were no doubt in part due to this composite character of the crew, the Greeks and two of the Spanish sailors having apparently originated the piratical attempt, and become ringleaders of the gang who carried it into execution. After the sailing of the vessel all went well for upwards of a month, but about the 1st of September one of the Greeks, CARLOS, showed signs of a mutinous disposition, and refused his turn at the watch under pretence of being sick. Eventually he was forced on deck by the mate and boatswain, and temporarily lashed to the rigging by the mate's orders. He was soon, however, liberated by the captain and sent below again, so that in this instance he was certainly not treated with any special hardship. It seems, indeed, from his subsequent conduct, that this man purposely behaved in a sullen and disorderly manner in order to provoke the officers of the ship, and thus have some pretext for the bloody plot he and some of his associates were maturing. Soon after this, accordingly, this same man, having picked a quarrel with one of the Spanish sailors, was fighting on deck, when the mate again interfered, and struck him. A few days later the plot was carried into execution, the mate being struck down on

deck at midnight, the captain murdered in his berth, and his brother, who was a passenger on board, covered with wounds and cruel blows as he attempted to ascend the companion. On that night, the 10th of September, WILLIAM TAFFIR, the boatswain, whose evidence in court yesterday revealed the whole story, was on deck from eight till twelve, taking the first watch. All was quiet when he went below, but about three o'clock he was awakened by a noise on deck, as if people were beating heavily on the companion. He at once tried to get on deck, but found the way blocked by the body of a man whom a number of persons were beating with handspikes. The terrible sequel may be told in his own language:—
“I tried all I could to draw the man down from the ladder, but could not move him. I called to the captain for help, but got no answer. I went to his berth; he was not there. I came back to the main cabin and found him lying dead in a pool of blood on the floor. I trimmed the lamp, as the light was dim, and saw that his shirt was cut with knives. He was in his night-dress. I went to his brother's berth, and found him gone too. I then went to the companion, and found that the man lying there was the captain's brother. I went to my berth and shut myself in.” He remained shut in three-quarters of an hour, and the horror of his situation, expecting every moment to share the captain's fate, may be easily imagined. At length one of the gang who spoke English called him to come on deck, promising he should not be murdered. They wanted him in fact to navigate the vessel to some place where they might be put on shore. This he undertook to do in order to save his life, dissembling, it may be supposed, as well as he could, his horror of the bloody deed of the gang around him. His position, however, during the remainder of the voyage was a perilous one, his associates naturally eyeing him with suspicion, and being ready at any moment, should he show anything like hesitation or delay, to enforce obedience to their orders, or silence all opposition by the same violent measures that had made them masters of the ship. On the day after the murder of the captain, for example, the gang proceeding to divide his money and his goods, summoned TAFFIR to “share out” the gold among them. He refused at first, but was at length compelled to obey. Again, a few days after the murder, TAFFIR deposes that he sighted a ship steering near their course, and asked permission to speak to her, as he wanted to compare longitude. There was some difficulty about this at first, but at length permission was given, with a strict injunction, of course, to say nothing of what had occurred, and to give a false account of the name, port, and destination of the vessel. But though he faithfully obeyed these orders he did not, as appears from his evidence, escape all danger: “I did that because I was afraid of my life. I thought if I had not done so I should have to go overboard. We got the longitude, which was 33 west. After the ship had passed there was a quarrel among the crew and a great noise, between the Manilla men and Spaniards and the two Greeks, and I understood

“from LYONS that it was because they thought I had told something—those who could not speak English. They looked very dangerous, and I thought my life was in danger.” The steward, who appears to have been more obnoxious to the gang than the boatswain, was, a few days later, seriously wounded, stabbed in the side and arm, by one of them who had drunk more freely than usual. At length, on the 4th of October, the vessel sighted land, about a hundred and sixty miles from Monte Video, near the mouth of the River Plate—the destination chosen by the gang at the suggestion of their Spanish associates. Here, TAFFIR's services being no longer required to navigate the ship, he quite expected to share the fate of his superior officers; the menacing bearing of even those amongst the gang who had been most friendly towards him confirmed his worst fears. They became at once sullen and violent, refusing to answer any of his questions as to what they proposed to do with the ship and those among the crew who, like himself, might be looked upon as prisoners. Eventually, however, on his asking one of the Spanish sailors who passed near him and understood a little English whether they were going to kill him, the fellow coolly replied that he rather thought his comrade, BLANCO, was about to do it. The steward, who seems to have been specially reserved for a lingering fate, having got into one of the boats, was attacked with handspikes, bottles, and other missiles, driven into the water, and drowned. The boatswain, however, was allowed to proceed in the boats with the pirate crew and their plunder. How they came to allow so dangerous a witness to land, and soon after landing escape their vigilance, is a mystery which only the proverbial blindness which attends the worst crimes can solve. In an hour or two the cargo was safely landed, and the vessel scuttled and sunk. But although they had apparently got safe off with their prize, the avenging hand of justice soon overtook the murderous crew. TAFFIR found a way of communicating with the magistrates of Rocha, and the miscreants were apprehended and sent to England, to be dealt with as their crimes deserve.