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

**ELLS, CHARLES**

**New York [u.a.], 1842**

Preface.

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## PREFACE.

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IN the mind of the mariner, there is a superstitious horror connected with the name of Pirate; and there are few subjects that interest and excite the curiosity of mankind generally, more than the desperate exploits, foul doings, and diabolical career of these monsters in human form. A piratical crew is generally formed of the desperadoes and runagates of every clime and nation. The pirate, from the perilous nature of his occupation, when not cruising on the ocean, the great highway of nations, selects the most lonely isles of the sea for his retreat, or secretes himself near the shores of rivers, bays and lagoons of thickly wooded and uninhabited countries, so that if pursued he can escape to the woods and mountain glens of the interior. The islands of the Indian Ocean, and the east and west coasts of Africa, as well as the West Indies, have been

their haunts for centuries; and vessels navigating the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, are often captured by them, the passengers and crew murdered, the money and most valuable part of the cargo plundered, the vessel destroyed, thus obliterating all trace of their unhappy fate, and leaving friends and relatives to mourn their loss from the inclemencies of the elements, when they were butchered in cold blood by their fellow men, who by practically adopting the maxim that "dead men tell no tales," enable themselves to pursue their diabolical career with impunity. The pirate is truly fond of women and wine, and when not engaged in robbing, keeps maddened with intoxicating liquors, and passes his time in debauchery, singing old songs with chorusses like

" Drain, drain the bowl, each fearless soul,  
Let the world wag as it will;  
Let the heavens growl, let the devil howl,  
Drain, drain the deep bowl and fill."

Thus his hours of relaxation are passed in wild and extravagant frolics amongst the lofty forests of palms and spicy groves of the Torrid Zone, and amidst the aromatic and beautiful flowering vegetable productions of that region. He has fruits delicious to the taste, and as companions, the unsophisticated daughters of Africa and the Indies. It would be supposed that his wild career would be one of delight.

But the apprehension and foreboding of the mind, when under the influence of remorse, are powerful, and every man, whether civilized or savage, has interwoven in his constitution a moral sense, which secretly condemns him when he has committed an atrocious action, even when he is placed in situations which raise him above the fear of human punishment, for

“Conscience, the torturer of the soul, unseen,  
Does fiercely brandish a sharp scourge within ;  
Severe decrees may keep our tongues in awe,  
But to our minds what edicts can give law ?  
Even you yourself to your own breast shall tell  
Your crimes, and your own conscience be your hell.”

With the name of pirate is also associated ideas of rich plunder, caskets of buried jewels, chests of gold ingots, bags of outlandish coins, secreted in lonely, out of the way places, or buried about the wild shores of rivers, and unexplored sea coasts, near rocks and trees bearing mysterious marks, indicating where the treasure was hid. And as it is his invariable practice to secrete and bury his booty, and from the perilous life he leads, being often killed or captured, he can never re-visit the spot again ; immense sums remain buried in those places, and are irrecoverably lost. Search is often made by persons who labor in anticipation of throwing up with their spade and pickaxe, gold bars, diamond crosses sparkling amongst the dirt, bags of golden doubloons, and chests, wedged close with moidores, ducats and pearls ; but although great treasures lie hid in this way, it seldom happens that any is so recovered.

