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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

England infected with Piracy

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

vice of those nations who thought proper to retain them ; or they engaged in such schemes of plunder as were likely to repay their pains and expense. About the same time, the Roxolani or Russians, became known in history, making their debut in the character of pirates, ravenous for booty, and hungry for the pillage of Constantinople—a longing which 900 years have not yet satisfied. Pouring hundreds of boats down the Borysthenes, the Russian marauders made four desperate attempts to plunder the city of the Cæsars, in less than two centuries, and appear only to have been repulsed by the dreadful effects of the celebrated Greek fire.

England, in the mean time, had little to do with piracy ; nor had she any thing worthy the name of a navy ; yet Cœur de Lion had given maritime laws to Europe ; her seamen, in point of skill, were esteemed superior to their cotemporaries ; and King John enacted, that those foreign ships which refused to lower their flags to that of Britain should, if taken, be deemed lawful prizes. Under Henry III., though Hugh de Burgh, the governor of Dover Castle, had defeated a French fleet, by casting lime into the eyes of his antagonists, the naval force was impaired to such a degree, that the Normans and Bretons were too powerful for the Cinque Ports, and compelled them to seek relief from the other ports of the kingdom. The taste for depredation had become so general and contagious, that privateers were now allowed to be fitted out, which equipments quickly degenerated to the most cruel of pirates. Nay more : on the disputes which took place between Henry and his Barons, in 1244, the Cinque Ports, who had shown much indifference to the royal requisitions, openly espoused the cause of the revolted nobles ; and, under the orders of Simon de Montfort, burnt Portsmouth. From this, forgetful of their motives for arming, they proceeded to commit various acts of piracy, and considering nothing but their private interests, extended their violence not only against the shipping of all countries unfortunate enough to fall in their way, but even to perpetrate the most unwarrantable ravages on the property of their own countrymen. Nor was this confined to the Cinque Port vessels only ; the example and the profits were too stimulating to the rest-

less; and one daring association on the coast of Lincolnshire seized the Isle of Ely, and made it their receptacle for the plunder of all the adjacent countries. One William Marshall fortified the little island of Lundy, in the mouth of the Severn, and did so much mischief by his piracies, that at length it became necessary to fit out a squadron to reduce him, which was accordingly done, and he was executed in London; yet the example did not deter other persons from similar practices. The sovereign, however, did not possess sufficient naval means to suppress the enormities of the great predatory squadrons, and their ravages continued to disgrace the English name for upwards of twenty years, when the valor and conciliation of the gallant Prince Edward brought them to that submission which his royal parent had failed in procuring.

Those "harum-scarum," expeditions, the Crusades, were perhaps influential in checking piracy, although the rabble that composed the majority of them had as little principle as the worst of the freebooters. From the time that Peter the Hermit set Europe in a blaze, all ranks, and all nations, streamed to the East, so that few vessels were otherwise employed than in conveying the motly groups who sought the shores of Palestine; some from religious zeal; some from frantic fanaticism; some from desire of distinction; some for the numberless privileges which the crusaders acquired; and the rest and greater portion, for the spoil and plunder of which they had a prospect. The armaments, fitted in no fewer than nine successive efforts, were mostly equipped with such haste and ignorance, and with so little choice, that ruinous delays, shipwrecks, and final discomfiture, were naturally to be expected. Still, the effect of such incredible numbers of people betaking themselves to foreign countries, advanced civilization, although vast means of forwarding its cause were buried in the East; and those who assert that no benefit actually resulted, cannot deny that at least some evils were thereby removed. Montesquieu says, that Europe then required a general shock, to teach her, by the sight of contrasts, the theorems of public economy most conducive to happiness. And it is evident, that notwithstanding these follies wasted the population of Europe, squandered its treasures, and