

Wast of the World's Pirates in a Struggle for Life



Most Picturesque of Water Outlaws Have Their Home in China

Pirate Junks at Anchor in Safe Harbor

CIVILIZATION has driven the black flag from the high seas. But that there are pirates now actively plying their trade is a fact not generally known in these peaceful days of 1908.

They are the last of the world's buccanniers, it is true, but they are a picturesque lot, with an inheritance of romance and a bloodthirsty, thieving taste that might have come from a Kidd, a Morgan or a Leach.

They swarm the rivers and canals of China, and sometimes venture upon the adjacent high seas. In Chinese waters

coastwise vessels, whether sail or steam, are never safe from sudden attacks; while the smaller and more shallow river vessels are captured and exploited in certain sections almost at will.

History and fiction have found rich material in the outrages of Chinese pirates. Of recent years French, English and native gunboats have cruised the coast and explored the rivers and harbors in search of the murderous marauders. But their depredations continue. Only a few weeks ago a series of piratical outrages on the Grand Canal was reported.

These aroused both local and foreign governments to activity. War of extermination was declared on the pig-tailed buccanniers remaining in the nefarious business. They are now fighting for life, and the hope of civilization is that they may soon be removed from their unlawful, if romantic, activity.

DETAILED reached here today, a recent dispatch from Shanghai stated, "of piratical outrages committed within the last few days on the Grand Canal, eight hours' journey from this city. The attacks were the most daring known since the days of the Kipings. Three tons of crowded launches coming from Kashing were held up by hundreds of pirates, who are believed to be soldiers that have deserted from the disaffected districts of Chekiang. All the passengers refusing to immediately deliver up their valuables were mercilessly shot."

It hasn't been so long since Chinese pirates infested the seas along the coast of that country, and ventured far from land in their unscrupulous enterprises. Repressive measures aimed at piracy upon the high seas have been so universally adopted of late that most of the buccannering Chinese have been confining their operations to little-frequented harbors and to long river stretches inside of headlands. At the same time few ships are absolutely safe in certain Chinese waters. A British vessel, for example, laden with goods consigned to Canton or towns up the river, may come all the way from Liverpool to Hong Kong unmolested by pirates. At Hong Kong transshipment to smaller boats and junks of the river

trade is necessary for a large part of the goods. Hardly have the goods left Hong Kong when they are subjected to the risk of being seized by pirates, and in three cases out of five consignments for up-river towns never reach their destination.

The Chinese pirates travel light in long, swift river junks. Their favorite trick is to await the coming of night in one of the lagoons of the Canton delta, and then slip up to a laden boat as it pushes its way slowly up the river, board it and slay the crew. Then that boat disappears from the register of the Far Eastern trade and her goods are never more seen by the owners.

There are many reasons why the pirate remains on the Chinese coast line and in the interior. Almost every Pacific ocean port has its quota of soldiers of fortune, but most of these are now gathered in Chinese ports.

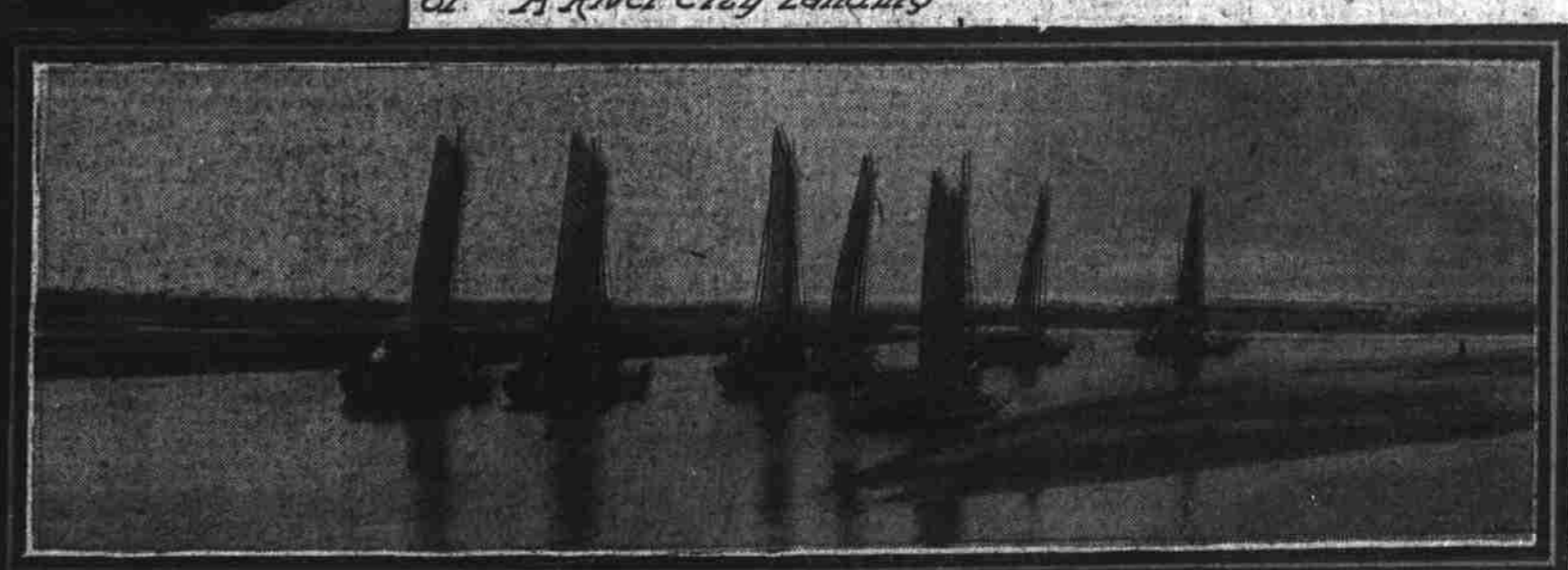
They organize raids, plan piracies and engage in a virtual war against natives, but they are careful to employ native cutthroats and marauders to carry out their plans. These may mean the capture and looting of a coastwise vessel or attacks upon river craft proceeding from seaport towns to the interior. If the capture is made without bloodshed, good and well. So much less is the chance of discovery. But even of late years most daring attacks have been made by Chinese pirates upon vessels on the high seas.



Small Pirate Vessels Captured by Warship



Where Much Loot is Disposed of - A River City Landing



Starting on a Lawless Expedition

One might cite, for instance, the capture of the British steamer *Siam* by buccanniers near Canton not many years ago. Murdered by the pirates were the Rev. Dr. MacDonald, a missionary, and four Indian members of the crew, while the commander of the vessel, Captain Joslin, was seriously wounded. In this instance the outlaws secured about \$4000 in money and some ammunition. It was supposed that the Chinese provincial authorities had intended to ship about \$40,000 by the steamer, although when the crucial time came it was found that little of the money was aboard. This robbery differed from most of the operations of the pirates in that a number of the piratical gang took passage on the steamer and arose to capture it when an opportune time came.

One of the boldest depredations ever committed was about two years ago, when two steamships were captured by the pirates.

Just below Wuchow was the British steamer *Fienam*, in need of a crew. One night a junk came alongside with a large force of Chinese, who volunteered for service. Once on deck they took possession.

They overcame and tied up the officers and crew and drove the passengers into their staterooms, where they were speedily robbed of all valuables. While this act of robbery was going on the vessel was then on the high seas—another steamer was seen approaching. It was a larger and faster steamer, the *Chanfook*. With great skill, the pirates steered the *Fienam* alongside the *Chanfook*, until the ships touched, and then,

with wonderful pluck and audacity, they leaped upon the other vessel.

Capture of the *Chanfook* was comparatively easy under the circumstances. The ship was surprised, and that was all there was to it. Later the pirates abandoned the *Fienam* and betook themselves to the *Chanfook*, which they afterward ran ashore.

In one day's work these robbers secured about \$10,000. There was no redress; they vanished amid the hills as soon as they reached shore. While the Chinese government might have been honest in trying to trace them, nothing ever came of the pursuit.

Seldom has anything ever come of pursuit of Chinese pirates, unless that pursuit was by war vessels of a foreign nation.

In the southern waters the French have been wiping out, with commendable industry, piratical lairs and fleets. English cruisers have kept down buccannering raids in the north, and English authorities are now arousing Chinese ire by threatening to patrol the rivers and canals in order to wipe out the remaining freebooters of the sea who persist in plying their trade upon the inland water courses.

So strongly has the habit of piracy become ingrained in the Chinese character that heroic measures may be necessary to uproot it.

Time was when all the adjacent waters of the Pacific were cruising grounds for piratical junks, and many a merchant vessel has fallen prey to the slant-eyed bandits of the sea.

A hundred years ago the bloodiest pirate fleet in Chinese history was commanded by Woo-che-tang, who assumed the romantic title of "Scourge of the Eastern Sea." At times thousands of junks were under command of this man.

About this time, too, one of the most adventurous and daring woman pirates of all time sprang into the limelight.

In 1807 the chief outlaw of all the Chinese coast, Ching-yih, perished in a violent gale. His widow at once took command of the pirate fleet, and in more than a hundred fights showed that her teeth were those of the barbarian.

She was the "new woman" of her time in the East. Men feared her and obeyed, even the most uncontrollable and bloodthirsty.

Rigid discipline and exact submission were demanded by her and readily given. She paid for what supplies she demanded ashore, but was merciless in her exactions from prizes afloat.

Of late years there have been comparatively few piratical outrages on the high seas off China's coast. But the old pirate system of robbery has been working at full blast in scores of secluded harbors and on the rivers and canals of the interior.

Almost any piratical expedition may be organized at Shanghai. There one may find the flotilla and jettison of the world awaiting employment.

These become, on occasion, modern buccanniers. They organize raids, plan piracies and engage in any desperate enterprise that promises large returns. They are simply following the example set for them by their predecessors.

But the main obstacles that the nations of the world have to overcome are those that have to do with the real Oriental character.

Driven, virtually, from the high seas, the Chinese pirate has now taken to the rivers and canals. There are long stretches of these water courses where there are no representatives of law and order.

Accordingly, the pirate may hold up traveling junks as he will. He may pillage to his heart's content and escape into the interior, safe from pursuit.

It may be a long time before this form of piracy is discounted and stopped. It is the last form of the famous piracies of China—and those piracies are the last piracies of the world.

Difficult, indeed, has it been to convince these people that their buccannering exploits were unlawful, without the indorsement of civilization and abhorrent to mankind. They have been pirates for centuries; they wish to be pirates still, and they resent bitterly the edict of civilization that they shall no longer be "the scourge of the eastern seas."