



Pirate Coasts of the Mediterranean Sea

Ellen Churchill Semple

Geographical Review, Vol. 2, No. 2. (Aug., 1916), pp. 134-151.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0016-7428%28191608%292%3A2%3C134%3APCOTMS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-M>

Geographical Review is currently published by American Geographical Society.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ags.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PIRATE COASTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA*

By ELLEN CHURCHILL SEMPLE

It is rather a significant parallel that the German and Austrian submarines, the commerce destroyers of the present war, frequent the same hunting-grounds in the Mediterranean as the ancient and mediaeval corsairs. They have been operating in the Iberian Sea, which forms the broad avenue leading to the Gibraltar gate; along the marine highway between Spain and the Balearic Isles, traveled by ships bound from Gibraltar to Marseilles; in and about the Sicilian Strait, where converge all lines of traffic between the eastern and the western basins; in the Strait of Otranto and the long Adriatic lane; in Cretan waters, which form the passways to the Aegean; and along the approaches to Alexandria and the Suez Isthmus.

The Mediterranean Sea has been the oldest and in some respects the greatest European training school of maritime activities. These it has coddled and guided and stimulated by a rare combination of geographic conditions. From time immemorial its coasts have sent out fishing fleets into all parts of the basin. From the days of the Cretan Minos it has produced a long succession of sea powers whose navies have sailed its waters far and wide and whose merchantmen have traded in its remotest ports.

A sinister form of maritime activity is found in the piracy which for ages was a recurrent phenomenon on many shores of the Mediterranean. It constituted a lawless combination of naval aggression and maritime commerce, seizure and sale without the formality of purchase. The blend of piracy and trade among early Phoenicians, Greeks, and Etruscans belonged to a primitive, undeveloped period when warfare was chronic, when stranger meant enemy, and when buccaneers executed a crude form of navigation act designed to crush competition in the markets of the home sea. Such undoubtedly was the attitude of the ancient Etruscan pirates toward Greek and Carthaginian ships which ventured to sail the Tyrrhenian Sea. They asserted the priority of their claim to those waters by attacking the coast and island settlements of the Greeks in the vicinity, with the purpose of discouraging encroachments upon their maritime preserves.¹ Piratical attacks were especially common in the Aegean when many of the Cyclades islands were occupied by Carians and perhaps by Phoenicians, and when national antagonisms emphasized commercial rivalry on the sea. Finally the Cretan Minos employed his naval power to conquer these islands, suppress piracy, and protect the revenues from his maritime empire, so that commerce by sea became more general.²

The decay of Cretan sea power after the Dorian invasion made possible

* A chapter from a forthcoming book on "Geographic Influences in the Ancient Mediterranean Basin."

¹ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. I, pp. 181-182 and 186. New York, 1905.

² Thucydides, I, 4-8.

the revival of piracy in Homeric times,³ and converted the former police of the Aegean into wide-ranging corsairs. A passage in the *Odyssey* indicates that it was not an uncommon event for Cretan freebooters to carry off plunder from the Egyptian coast.⁴ Homer represents the Phoenicians as kidnapping men and women to sell as slaves. Taphian pirates, Greek natives of a small island group off the west coast of Acarnania, stole a Sidonian woman and sold her to a Syrian prince. Both Taphians and Cretans, in Homeric times, were more corsairs than traders, and both were skilful mariners.⁵ When seamen landed on a strange coast, they were asked, quite naturally: "Outlanders, whence come ye? Are ye robbers that rove the sea?" The general custom of slaying shipwrecked mariners,⁶ on the assumption of their being pirates, points to the prevalence of the evil in the Mediterranean in legendary and early historical times.

The conspicuous fact in Mediterranean piracy is its repeated recrudescence whenever maritime political control is relaxed, and especially its constant recurrence, from the dawn of history down to the nineteenth century, in certain coast districts which are natural breeding places of sea-robbers. The stable factors tending constantly to produce this phenomenon are to be found in the geographic conditions obtaining in the Mediterranean. Owing to the configuration of the basin, traffic was compressed into certain narrow trade routes. These threaded their way between island and peninsula, entered sub-basins by the only possible gateway of the strait, and, when bent upon tapping the hinterland trade, concentrated on ports like Massilia and Alexandria, commanding the few breaches in the barrier boundaries of the Mediterranean. Thus traffic was restricted to fixed lines in a way impossible on the open ocean.

The sea hunter, therefore, knew various points where he was sure to bag his game. The pirate was the robber of the sea highways; and the highways of the Mediterranean were well defined and well traveled. The Oriental commerce in slaves and luxuries yielded such rich plunder to the freebooters, as it passed through Cretan waters between the Peloponnesus and Cyrenaica, that the pirates called this "the golden sea."⁷ Just such geographically determined routes attracted the buccaneers of the American Mediterranean in the seventeenth century, as they swarmed out of their hiding places in the Antilles, to seize the gold and silver freight of the homebound Spanish caravels or the useful cargoes of the outbound ships. Here Jamaica, owing to its location, played the part of Crete as an advantageous piratical base; for it commanded several marine passages into the Caribbean Sea and was within striking distance of the Spanish treasure ships as they left the Isthmus of Panama and the Mexican ports.⁸

³ Keller: *Homeric Society*, pp. 92-93. New York, 1902.

⁴ *Odyssey*, XIV, 245 *et seq.*

⁵ *Odyssey*, I, 181-185, XV, 426; XVI, 426; Strabo, Bk. X, Ch. II, 20; Herodotus, I, 2.

⁶ Herodotus, IV, 103; Strabo, Bk. XVII, Ch. I, 6, 19.; Vergil: *Aeneid*, III.

⁷ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. IV, p. 309. New York, 1905.

⁸ David Hanney: *The Sea Trader*, pp. 234 and 244. Boston, 1912.

The Mediterranean afforded a profitable field for the pirate, furthermore, because the wealth of the bordering lands lay within reach of his pillaging expeditions ashore. Owing to the prevailing rugged relief, the consequent paucity of land roads, the importance of "the wet ways" for communication and transportation, the scarcity of level land for cultivation, and the general discouragement of the barrier boundaries to inland expansion, population was concentrated on the coastal hems and small deltaic plains near the sea. Piratical raids upon these littoral communities forced the very early inhabitants of Greece, Thucydides tells us, to locate their cities from two to ten miles back from the shore.⁹ Farther than this the pirates dared not penetrate, lest their escape should be cut off. The location on the inner edge of the coastal zone characterized not only the most ancient Greek cities, like Athens, Argos, Tiryns, Mycenae, Megara, and Corinth, but also the earliest Cretan towns and palaces of the Minoan period, such as Cnossus, Phaestus, Gortyna, Lyttus, and Praesus. These lay several miles back from the shore where each maintained a port or naval arsenal.¹⁰

The same cause and effect are manifest also in the western Mediterranean. The Etruscans, owing to their nautical efficiency, might have risked coastal settlements; yet as a matter of fact they placed their earliest towns several miles from the shore. Such was the location of Pisa, twenty stadia up the course of the Arno, which even in historical times was exposed to robber raids from Sardinia.¹¹ Such was that of Vetulonium, Volci, Caere, and Tarquinii on the Tyrrhenian littoral, as well as Spina and Atria, their Adriatic ports.¹² Strabo makes the generalization that the founders of the early Etruscan cities, as opposed to later ones, either avoided the coast or merely built fortifications there as defenses against pirates. The only exception which he found to this rule was Populonia (Piombino), located on the walled summit of a lofty promontory, with its little port on the inlet at the base.¹³ But this possibly was no exception after all, for Populonia may have been originally one of the earliest Greek factories which temporarily occupied several capes and islands of the Etruscan coast, until their occupants were dispossessed by the native inhabitants.¹⁴

The necessity of occupying these salient points as coast defenses against the maritime Greeks, and their own growing sea power, drew the Etruscans coastward. They occupied also the promontories of Antium, Circei, and Surrentum on the coast of Latium and Campania and utilized them as pirate strongholds from which to conduct their depredations.¹⁵ Fearing these attacks, the agricultural Latins located their most ancient villages at

⁹ Thucydides, I, 7.

¹⁰ Strabo, Bk. X, Ch. IV, 7, 11-14.

¹¹ Strabo, Bk. V, Ch. II, 5, 7.

¹² Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. I, pp. 160-161, 179. New York, 1905. Pliny: *Natural History*, III, 20.

¹³ Strabo, Bk. V, Ch. II, 6.

¹⁴ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. I, pp. 177-178. New York, 1905.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 181.

a respectful distance from the sea, even those like Lavinium, Laurentum, and the Rutulian Ardea, which belonged to the coastal zone.¹⁶

With the general development of maritime activity in the Mediterranean, the consequent decrease of piracy and increase of oversea colonization, sites on the outer edge of the littoral were selected for their ready access to commerce. Such of the older towns as were not too far from the seaboard established there each its own port. Thus there developed twin cities, port and capital, such as Rome and Ostia, Troezen and Pogon,¹⁷ Athens and the Piraeus, Gortyna and Leben in Crete,¹⁸ Cythera and Scandia in the island of Cythera,¹⁹ and countless other primitive towns of inland location. Many of these felt the necessity of securing their connection with the sea against interruption in time of war and therefore built "long walls" like those which enclosed the thoroughfare between Athens and the Piraeus. Similar "long walls" connected Megara with its port of Nisaea²⁰ on the Saronic Gulf, Corinth with its port of Lechaemum on the Corinthian Gulf,²¹ and were projected by Argos to ensure its communication with the sea at Nauplia in the Peloponnesian War, but when half finished were destroyed by the Spartans.²²

The decline of Roman sea power in the last decades of the Republic led to a widespread recrudescence of piracy. The freebooters were emboldened to seize many coast towns and to carry their pillaging expeditions farther inland than ever before. Therefore the Gabinian Law, enacted in 67 B. C. for the suppression of piracy, conferred upon Pompey the dictatorship over the sea and over a coastal zone fifty miles wide, in order to include all the seaboard holdings and the inland refuges of the pirates.

The coastal population which was drawn shoreward when the seas were safe from marauders retreated anew to the interior on the revival of the buccaneer's trade. Thus the southern littoral of Italy, which was the site of flourishing seaboard settlements during the period of Greek colonial expansion, became wellnigh depopulated during the Middle Ages, owing to the century-long attacks of the Vandal, Saracen, and Algerine pirates,²³ who swooped down from the African coast, and the depredations of the Dalmatian corsairs, who issued from their haunts in the nearby Adriatic. Any one who has traveled along the seaboard railroad of southern Italy is familiar with the lonely little stations and the accompanying *marina*, or landing place, on the shore, while the unseen towns lie three to ten miles inland on acropolis sites in the mountains.²⁴ The same shifting of popula-

¹⁶ Strabo, Bk. V, Ch. III, 2, 5.

¹⁷ Strabo, Bk. VIII, Ch. VI, 14.

¹⁸ Strabo, Bk. X, Ch. IV, 7, 11.

¹⁹ Pausanias, Bk. III, Ch. XXIII, 1.

²⁰ Thucydides, I, 103.

²¹ Strabo, Bk. VIII, Ch. VI, 22.

²² Thucydides, V, 82-83.

²³ Norman Douglas: *Old Calabria*, pp. 135-140. Boston, 1915.

²⁴ Baedeker: *Southern Italy*, pp. 221-222, 225-228. Leipzig, 1903.

tion has occurred on other seas where pirates have flourished. The German city of Lübeck was originally located nearer the sea than at present; but after it had been frequently demolished by the pirates who scoured the Baltic coast in the Middle Ages, it was rebuilt farther inland up the Trave River. Gradually, with the return of security, it built up its port of Travemünde at the mouth of the estuary.²⁵

Thus geographic conditions made the Mediterranean basin a good hunting ground for the pirate. But they did more than this. They condemned certain districts of its coasts to be natural breeding places for corsairs and sent their inhabitants out upon the sea to earn an infamous livelihood. The fundamental geographic condition on these coasts is the same that makes for systematic robbery also in mountains and deserts, during their protracted centuries of backward economic development. The land yields only a scanty food supply, which must be eked out therefore by raids upon neighboring territories. The predatory expeditions of the mountaineers are directed against the agricultural plains at the foot of the highlands, as those of the ancient Alpine tribes against the lowland settlements of northern Italy. The son of the desert turns his raid against the river-valley farm lands, like those of the Libyan tribesmen against the neighboring Nile delta.²⁶ Where the unproductive area abuts upon the sea, like the Dalmatian or Caucasus coast, its people prey upon the nearest thoroughfares of maritime commerce, like the brigand on the mountain pass road, or pillage the nearest productive seaboard.

It is to be noted, moreover, that where mountain or desert tribes or steppe nomads make their way out to such coasts, they bring with them the mind of robbers and only alter their raiding method. They adapt themselves to the seaboard environment, blend with the local inhabitants, from whom they learn the art of navigation, and pursue their ancestral trade, exchanging the desert camel and steppe pony for the swift-moving ship. The mental habit of the previous habitat harmonizes with the economic conditions of the new one. This was true of the Illyrian pirates, whose highland brethren for centuries raided the frontiers of ancient Macedonia; it was true of the desert-bred Saracens wherever they touched the Mediterranean coasts, though their inland settlements were models of careful tillage and thriving industries; it was true of the ancient nomad Scythians²⁷ and later of the nomad Tatars when they settled on the Black Sea shore, and of the Zaporagian Cossacks of the Russian steppes, who in the seventeenth century put out from the Dnieper estuary in their frail skiffs to ravage the Turkish coasts.²⁸

²⁵ R. Reinhard: *Die wichtigsten deutschen Seehandelstädte*, p. 23. Stuttgart, 1901.

²⁶ For the general principles, see Friedrich Ratzel: *Anthropogeographie*, Vol. I, pp. 154 and 435, Stuttgart, 1899, and E. C. Semple: *Influences of Geographic Environment*, pp. 234-235, 490-496, 553-554, 586-591. New York, 1911.

²⁷ Strabo, Bk. VII, Ch. IV, 2, 6.

²⁸ For vivid description, see Gogol's novel "Taras Bulba," translated by Isabel Hapgood.

Like a natural product of the soil, pirates were a constant or recurrent phenomenon on the whole southern coast of Asia Minor, comprising ancient Lycia, Pamphylia, and Cilicia;²⁹ on the rugged littoral of Clazomenae peninsula of Asia Minor, where Mount Coryceus rises abruptly from the sea;³⁰ in many Aegean islands and especially Crete; on the forbidding Caucasus coast of the Euxine where all geographical conditions were hostile to civilization;³¹ on the Illyrian or Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic; on the Atlas-walled front of the African shore, the so-called Barbary coast; and in the Balearic Archipelago and Corsica.

All these districts, whether on islands, peninsulas, or continental shores, have in common certain geographic conditions which combined to force or lure the inhabitants into a piratical mode of life. So soon as war interrupted their few regular industries, or a corrupt government failed to hold them under restraint, or the maritime powers which policed the Mediterranean became weak or disorganized, these regions flashed into piracy. They were all mountainous coasts, broken up into isolated coves and valleys in which a strong centralized government was next to impossible, and endowed with little alluvial land. Natural conditions reduced tillage to a minimum and prevented the concentration of population necessary for local industries as a basis for commerce. The islands suffered always from the handicap of limited land, and therefore were more addicted to piracy, Thucydides tells us, than the continents. Samos, only 182 square miles in area, laid the financial and naval foundations of its great power under Polycrates (532-522 B. C.) by a long career of piracy. Its penteconters cruised the Aegean, plundering Greek and barbarian alike, levying blackmail for safe conduct. After the tyrant had made his fleet supreme on the sea, he organized the coasts and islands into a maritime confederation of wide extent; but the restless Samians easily reverted to their freebooting activities when opportunity arose.³² Crete, though it was a large island and had a fertile maritime plain of some extent at the northern base of its long mountain range, gave evidence of a constant food problem. Like mountainous Arcadia and Aetolia, in order to reduce the pressure of population upon the limits of subsistence, it became a standing source for mercenary troops in the ancient Mediterranean,³³ when a strong hand kept order on the sea. When the hand was removed, Crete became a chronic source of pirates. On these, as on other islands, human life has resorted to crime in order to equalize population and food supply.³⁴

On the rugged continental coasts of the Mediterranean, the mountains

²⁹ Strabo, Bk. IV, Ch. V, 1, 2, 3, 6.

³⁰ Strabo, Bk. XIV, Ch. I, 35. Livius: *Historia*, XXXVII, 27.

³¹ Strabo, Bk. XI, Ch. II, 12, 15.

³² Herodotus, III, 39, 47, 57-59. Ernst Curtius: *History of Greece*, Vol. II, pp. 161-162, 170 and 212. New York, 1871.

³³ Thucydides, VI, 25, 43; VII, 67. Polybius, II, 66; III, 75; V, 13, 14, 65, 79; XIII, 6; XXXI, 26; XXXIII, 16.

³⁴ E. C. Semple: *Influences of Geographic Environment*, pp. 67 and 461-465. New York, 1911.

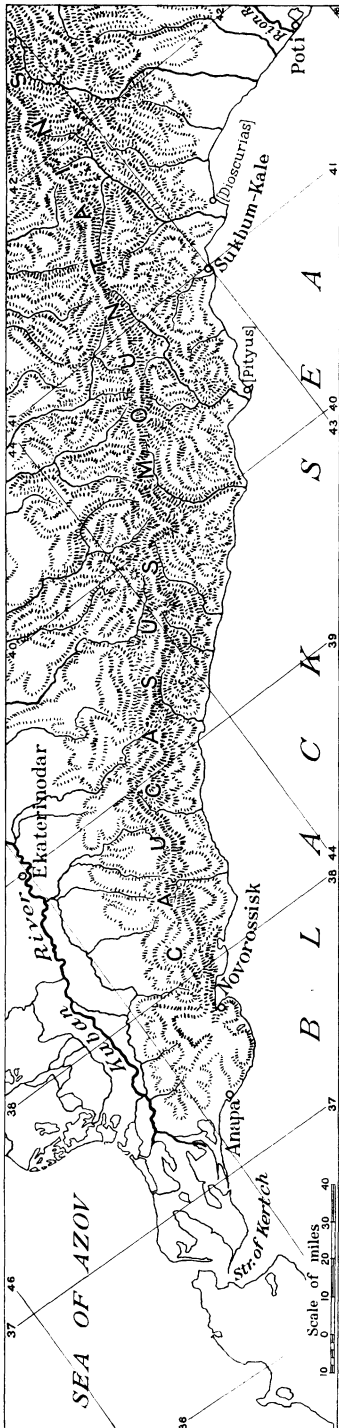


FIG. 1.—The Caucasus coast of the Black Sea. Scale, 1:13,000,000. (Ancient names in hair-line type.)

provided timber for ships, but seriously impeded communication with the hinterland. Moreover, that hinterland was undeveloped on account of the mountain barrier, as in the case of the Illyrian interior; or unproductive on account of an arid climate, as in the case of the Cilician, Caucasus, and Atlas back-country. Hence it furnished no incentive for the commercial development of the littoral. This was the condition which for centuries made the Malabar coast of India and the Norwegian fiords nests of pirates. The Lebanon country had all the geographic conditions necessary for a pirate coast, with one exception. Trade here was more profitable than piracy, owing to the rich commerce from the Euphrates fords and the desert market of Damascus which forced its way through the mountain passes to the sea. But in Pompey's time, after two centuries of nerveless Seleucid rule in Syria, after the disorganization of the hinterland trade by the successive Armenian and Parthian conquest of northern Mesopotamia, and the diversion of the through Oriental commerce to the Red Sea and Nile route, robber chiefs held many coast cities of Phoenicia and made them pirate bases.³⁵ Joppa became a notorious haunt, and for this reason was destroyed by Vespasian in 68 A. D.³⁶

The normal relation of coast to hinterland is a close interdependence. But in ancient times when the hinterland was impoverished and barred from the sea, and when the littoral itself afforded a slender basis of subsistence, the inhabitants of the seaboard were forced to live by a carrying trade under peaceful conditions, or by piracy, if the unorganized or dis-

³⁵ Mommsen: History of Rome, Vol. IV, pp. 423-424 and 430. New York, 1905.

³⁶ Strabo, Bk. XVI, Ch. II, 28. G. Adam Smith: Geography of the Holy Land, p. 138. New York, 1897.

organized state of society so permitted. The balance was easily disturbed and tipped from trade to freebooting at any jar to the social base.

Another common geographic condition was a multiplicity of small harbors and hidden recesses as lurking places for the robber fleets, with numerous headlands as outlook points and strongholds. In this respect the Aegean archipelagoes, the Balearic Isles, and the Illyrian coast were best equipped, because the maze of straits and inlets facilitated escape from pursuit. In this respect they resembled the Bahama Islands off the Florida coast,³⁷ which were long the hiding place of pirates operating about the Florida Straits and the Windward Passage. They offered the same geographic conditions as the network of sounds and creeks, deposit islands and barrier beaches, forming the embayed coast of North Carolina; there for over a century American pirates lay in wait for merchantmen trading along the coast between the West Indies and New England and did their best to nullify the effects of the obnoxious Navigation Acts.³⁸ Crete, like Cuba and Jamaica, had an admirable coastline for piratical purposes and nearby island-strewn seas in which its corsairs could safely operate. Lycia, Pamphylia, and Rugged Cilicia (Cilicia Trachea) had an abundance of small hidden ports and rock fortresses³⁹ but lacked the sheltering islands.

The Caucasus coast of the Euxine (Fig. 1) had nothing to recommend it for piratical purposes, except its poverty of resources and its ship-building timber. Its harbors were very few and badly exposed to the prevailing winds. It had no islands and for long stretches not even a beach. The Caucasus buccaneers, when they returned in autumn from their marauding expeditions, lifted their slender *camarae*, or boats, on their shoulders and hid them in the mountain forest until spring again opened their business season.⁴⁰

All these pirate coasts lay on established trade routes. The robber fleets of the Caucasus swooped down upon the well-laden Greek ships making their usual coastwise voyage to the ports of the Crimean Bosphorus, there to exchange wines and cloth for grain and cattle. In the third Mithradatic War, the Pontic corsairs who joined the fleet of the Asiatic king were doubtless recruited in part from this mountainous coast; for thither retreated the last remnants of the pirate bands who, for two years, withstood a Roman siege in Amisus, Sinope, and Heraclea on the seaboard of Asia Minor.⁴¹ During the time of Emperor Tiberius, we find the pirates from this east coast of the Euxine preying upon commerce and pillaging towns and villages of the surrounding lands. They were later reinforced by Scythian corsairs from the Dniester estuary, and in the third century these

³⁷ David Hanney: *The Sea Trader*, p. 234. Boston, 1912.

³⁸ S. C. Hughson: *Carolina Pirates and Colonial Commerce, 1670-1740*. Baltimore, 1894.

³⁹ Strabo, Bk. IV, Ch. V, 1, 2, 3.

⁴⁰ Strabo, Bk. XI, Ch. II, 12.

⁴¹ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. IV, pp. 333-335. New York, 1905.

Rome in its efforts to suppress the evil. Cythera was long a depot of Phoenician pirates. Crete, though its Minoan kings enjoyed the distinction of being the first to put down piracy in the Aegean, became a nest of freebooters so soon as the decline of Greek naval power brought disorder upon the sea.⁴⁵ Finally, the extent and flagrancy of their depredations, in co-operation with the Cilician pirates, forced Rome, in 67 B. C., to conquer and annex the island as a police measure. Crete in Saracen hands, from 823 to 960 A. D., again became a formidable nest of corsairs and a great slave market.⁴⁶ But the location which made it a desirable pirate base also made it for over four centuries, from 1206 to 1669, the most important commercial base of Venice in eastern waters.

Pompey's famous campaign of 64 B. C. was directed against the pirates who, for nearly forty years (102 to 64 B. C.), had terrorized the Mediterranean, organizing themselves into an international sea power for robbery which embraced the whole basin. They so effectually stopped traffic that dreadful scarcity of provisions prevailed in Italy and especially in Rome, which had come to rely on her oversea grain supply. The buccaneers had their ports of refuge on all the chronic pirate coasts of the Mediterranean from Mauretania to Cilicia, but the latter was their acropolis.⁴⁷ Nature had equipped it with every physical facility for the trade—timber, harbors, signal stations, coast fortresses, impregnable mountain retreats.⁴⁸ Moreover, its location, remote and inaccessible from the weak Seleucid capital, had placed it beyond reach of the arm of authority and left its people free to follow their marauding bent. Hence the Cilician sea chiefs were the last to hold out against Pompey, and his strong repressive measures against piracy produced here only temporary results. The corsairs of Cilicia resumed activities in the early years of Augustus. One of their tribes, the Clitae, necessitated a Roman punitive expedition in 36 A. D. and again in 52 A. D. In the third century the Cilician pirates emerged as the Isaurians, who from the Cilician mountains plundered on land and sea.⁴⁹

The Adriatic furnished a convenient thoroughfare for piratical operations. Throughout ancient and mediaeval times the rich commerce which traversed this broad marine channel, to and from the ports about the Po mouth, had to run the gauntlet of Illyrian or Dalmatian pirates, whose haunts flanked the sea for four hundred miles (Fig. 2). These freebooters also pillaged vessels sailing across the basin from Italy and ravaged the western coasts of Greece from Epirus to Messina. When their sovereign, Queen Teuta of Scodra, or Scutari, provoked the Romans to punitive operations in 230 B. C., the Illyrian pirates could send out a fleet of a hundred vessels equipped with a force of five thousand men. This first effort of the

⁴⁵ Polybius, XIII, 8. Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. III, pp. 291-292. New York, 1905.

⁴⁶ Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. VI, pp. 37-38, 46, and 57. New York, 1907.

⁴⁷ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. III, p. 292; Vol. IV, pp. 307-312, 351-355, and 301-302.

⁴⁸ Strabo, Bk. IV, Ch. V, 1-6.

⁴⁹ Mommsen: *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I, pp. 363-365. New York, 1887.

Romans to police the Adriatic resulted in the escape of Queen Teuta to Rhizon (Resine) in the marine labyrinth of the Gulf of Cattaro,⁵⁰ now the impregnable naval base of modern Austria in these waters; but the treaty of peace excluded Illyrian raids from the southern part of the basin beyond Lissus (Alessio). Fifty years later the founding of Aquileia at the northern end of the Adriatic helped to suppress piracy on those shores.⁵¹ The significant result of Illyrian piracy in these waters was the first interference of Rome in affairs of the Balkan Peninsula, the establishment of Roman naval supremacy in the Adriatic, and the acquisition of certain islands and ports on its eastern shore⁵² which were valuable bases for the later extension of Roman power in Greece and Macedonia.

The Illyrian pirates still persisted in their depredations. The robber confederacy which had its capital at Scodra, like its brothers elsewhere in the Mediterranean, was open to engagements as a mercenary fleet. In this capacity it took part in the third Macedonian war against the Romans, and after the battle of Pydna, in 168 B. C., saw its fleet captured and its operations checked for a time. Soon its neighbors, the Dalmatian tribe of pirates, who held the littoral from the Narenta River northward beyond the Cetina, committed such widespread depredations that the Romans sent punitive expeditions against them in 156 B. C., again in 155 B. C. and again in 135 B. C.⁵³ This last drove the pirate population inland and made them settle in barren mountain valleys where they starved and pined away. But their old haunts on the sea were soon reoccupied by remnants of the tribe, probably reinforced by refugees and outlaws, because the Romans had to punish the Dalmatians again in 119 B. C.⁵⁴ In seventy years they so recouped their fortunes and extended their confederacy that, as allies of Pompey, they offered long-continued resistance to the fleets of Caesar sent against them.⁵⁵ After order was restored, Imperial Rome established on this coast, at Pola and Salona, her most important Adriatic naval stations, because the opposite Italian coast had no adequate harbors, and she drew from these former outlaw shores the marines to man the imperial navy, just as Austria does today.

The decline of Roman power during the *Völkerwanderung* was followed by insecurity of traffic on all Mediterranean routes. In the Adriatic especially, the growing Venetian commerce of the eighth and ninth centuries and the richly freighted vessels which traveled this long waterway furnished tempting booty for piratical attacks. Geographic conditions were unaltered on the mountainous and island-strewn coast of Dalmatia, but the original Illyrian population had been largely diluted, and at many points even

⁵⁰ Polybius, II, 5, 6, 8-12.

⁵¹ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. II, p. 372. New York, 1905.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 218-9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 437, 505, and 508-509; Vol. III, pp. 421-422 and 426-427.

⁵⁴ Strabo, Bk. VII, Ch. V, 4-6, 10.

⁵⁵ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. V, pp. 103-104, 235-236, 284-285. New York, 1905.

replaced, by the influx of Slavic Serbs and Croatians who poured down to this coast in the seventh century.⁵⁶ These interlopers, accustomed to the inland occupations of farming and cattle-herding, abandoned their ancestral callings and adapted themselves to their new environment. They learned from the surviving Illyrians the traditional trade of the coast, became the only expert navigators that the Slav race has ever turned out, and developed buccaneering aptitudes that would have elicited the admiration of old Queen Teuta. Therefore, when the Venetian galleys proved worthy prizes, this new race of freebooters issued from the old pirate haunts at the mouth of the Narenta and along the whole Dalmatian coast. The task of policing the Adriatic against the marauders began in 827 and continued without interruption till the end of the eighteenth century; because the richer grew Venetian trade, the greater was the temptation which it offered to the corsairs.⁵⁷

At first the Venetian fleets were too weak to make effective resistance. They seized pirate ships, to be sure, and carried the Slav captives in such numbers to Venice to be sold as slaves that the race name became the common term for human chattels in western Mediterranean lands; but only a large navy and systematic campaigns against the pirates could remedy the evil. The increased armament necessary for coping with the marauders undoubtedly contributed greatly to the development of Venetian sea power both within and without the Adriatic.⁵⁸ Moreover, the necessity of protecting Istria from depredations led finally to Venetian supremacy in that peninsula, while the yet stronger necessity of cleaning out the corsair nests on the whole Dalmatian coastland led to the conquest and annexation of the littoral in 998. This move was imperative, because the pirates had adopted the method of the ancient Illyrians and hired themselves out as a mercenary fleet to the enemies of Venice, who thus found a convenient base in the Adriatic.⁵⁹

But the conquest of Dalmatia did not bring immunity to the Republic. The neck of the Adriatic bottle continued to send forth a stream of wealth that attracted sea-robbers from all parts of the Mediterranean. From 860 to 912, year after year, Saracen corsairs were hanging about the narrow Strait of Otranto.⁶⁰ A famous Genoese corsair seized Corfu for a short period as a convenient base, till it was wrested from him by Venice in 1206.⁶¹ After this, in the late thirteenth and during the entire fourteenth century the possession of all the Ionian Islands, which occupied a strategic position near the Otranto gate, was disputed by Venetians and by Greek and Italian corsairs. From this base they ventured into the lower Adriatic

⁵⁶ W. Z. Ripley: *Races of Europe*, pp. 404, 410-414. New York, 1889.

E. W. Freeman: *Historical Geography of Europe*, p. 118. London, 1882.

⁵⁷ W. C. Hazlitt: *The Venetian Republic*, Vol. I, p. 60. London, 1900.

⁵⁸ W. R. Thayer: *Short History of Venice*, pp. 30-35. New York, 1905.

⁵⁹ W. C. Hazlitt: *The Venetian Republic*, Vol. I, pp. 78 and 106-109. London, 1900.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 62.

⁶¹ Article "Ionian Islands," *Encycl. Britann.*, 11th edit., Vol. 14, 1910.

for their prey. The Republic maintained her command of the Adriatic only by means of a powerful patrol fleet, which policed the sea for pirates and vessels carrying contraband goods.⁶²

The decay of Venice, due to the Turkish conquest of Constantinople and the discovery of the sea route to India, was attended by a decline of her naval power which, from the sixteenth century on, enabled the Dalmatian coast population to resume their piracy. The Adriatic was also scourged by the Tunisian and Algerine corsairs, by Tuscan pirate ships fitted out with Corsican captain and crew, by Maltese Knights of St. John and Florentine Knights of St. Stephen who turned sea-robbers, and even by subjects of the Papal States.⁶³ With the Barbary and Dalmatian pirates, Venice alternated between conflicts and treaties on a blackmail basis up to the last years of her existence as an independent state.

The appearance of Genoese and Tuscan corsairs during the Middle Ages in Adriatic waters looks like a recrudescence of the ancient piracy which emanated from the Etruscan and Ligurian coasts. Ancient Etruria lacked the essential geographic conditions for chronic piracy, owing to its fertile soil and varied relief; but its location conferred upon it control of the narrow channel of traffic between the islands of Elba and Corsica, and gave it ready access to the rich commerce passing through the Strait of Messina.⁶⁴ Undoubtedly this advantageous location, plus the desire to exclude Greek competition from the Tyrrhenian trade, contributed to the persistence of Etruscan piracy. In 482 B. C. we find Anaxilaus, tyrant of Rhegium and Zancle, fortifying the Scyllaeum promontory to prevent the Etruscan sea-robbers from passing through the Strait of Messina; and thirty years later Hiero of Syracuse, who had established his naval power in the Tyrrhenian Sea, sending forth an expedition to ravage the coast of Corsica and Etruria, and to occupy the island of Elba, in order effectually to suppress piracy.⁶⁵ The evil recurred sporadically, however, for over a century after this.

Corsica, by reason of its rugged relief, poor soil, indented coastline, and location on marine trade routes, had all the physical qualifications for chronic piracy. To these were added yet another. Its small geographical area, limited population, and political dismemberment, due to its physical dismemberment, all combined to weaken the island and make it a ready prey to every policy of expansion which emanated from the near mainland, whether from ancient Etruria, from Carthaginian, Vandal, or Saracen Africa, from Rome, Pisa, Genoa, or France. To all except the African states, the location of Corsica made it a constant menace if held by a hostile power. Hence, its football political experiences were the persistent result. The free spirit of the mountain islanders made them irreconcilable sub-

⁶² P. Molmenti: *Venice in the Middle Ages*, Vol. I, pp. 117, 121-123, and 130. Chicago, 1906.

⁶³ David Hanney: *The Sea Trader*, p. 253. Boston, 1912.

W. C. Hazlitt: *The Venetian Republic*, Vol. II, pp. 205-206, 261-263, and 309-312. London, 1900.

⁶⁴ Strabo, Bk. VI, Ch. I, 5.

⁶⁵ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. I, pp. 415-418. New York, 1905.

jects under foreign rulers. Hence their constant rebellions through five centuries of Genoese rule, their chronic brigandage and feuds, all together yielded a crop of outlaws who found a ready outlet for their energy in piracy, while hatred for the mainland states gave them motive enough for depredations.⁶⁶

The rugged coast of the Maritime Alps and Ligurian Apennines, with no harbors and few anchorages and only a slender strip of tillable soil here and there, occupied an advantageous position on the ancient line of coastwise traffic between Italy and the Rhône Valley. From the earliest times the Ligurians who held this mountainous littoral systematically pillaged by land and sea.⁶⁷ The little Stoechades Islands (Isles d'Hyères), which were cultivated by the Greek citizens of Massilia, were provided with garrisons to ward off piratical attacks, in the days before Imperial Rome brought order in these waters.⁶⁸ The Massiliot coast settlements to the west suffered as did the Pisans to the east. And only a century or more of constant conflict reduced the marauders to subjection.⁶⁹ By the second century B. C. their raids became intolerable, because they were in a position to threaten Rome's increasing coastwise trade with Massilia, the new *Provincia Romana*, and Spain, which was acquired in 201 B. C.

The Spanish commerce suffered also from buccaneers who had their base in the numerous lurking places of the Balearic Archipelago. These islands had been occupied by the Carthaginians at an early date⁷⁰ as advanced outposts against the Massiliots, and long served as stations for piratical descents upon Massiliot merchantmen;⁷¹ for this mode of warfare was more congenial than big conflicts to all representatives of the Phoenician race. After the Punic Wars, these islands continued to be haunts of sea-robbers, until in 123 B. C. the Romans were forced to seize them in order to secure Spanish trade from further molestation.⁷²

These islands possessed for the most part a fertile soil and ample fisheries, which together yielded an adequate but by no means sumptuous food supply and inclined the inhabitants to peaceful pursuits.⁷³ But the frequent appearance of Balearic slingers among the Carthaginian mercenaries during the Punic Wars⁷⁴ points to a pressure of population upon the means of subsistence in the home islands which might readily tip the scales in favor of piracy. Furthermore, the abundant coves and hiding-places along their coasts suited to small craft and a location within striking distance of two important trade routes of the western Mediterranean disposed the inhabit-

⁶⁶ David Hanney: *The Sea Trader*, p. 253. Boston, 1912.

⁶⁷ Strabo, Bk. IV, Ch. VI, 2-4.

⁶⁸ Strabo, Bk. IV, Ch. I, 10.

⁶⁹ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. II, p. 375; Vol. III, p. 382, note. New York, 1905.

⁷⁰ Diodorus Siculus, Bk. V, Ch. 16.

⁷¹ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. II, p. 143. New York, 1905.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 233 and 291.

⁷³ Diodorus Siculus, Bk. V, Ch. 17. Strabo, Bk. III, Ch. V, 1, 2.

⁷⁴ Polybius, I, 67; III, 33, 72, 83, 113; XV, 11.

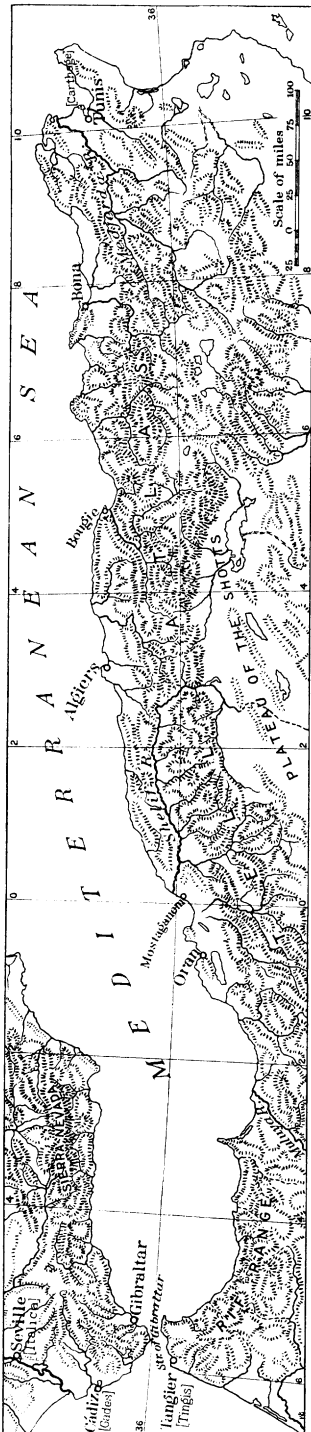


FIG. 3—The Barbary coast. Scale, 1:4,500,000. (Ancient names in hair-line type.)

ants to freebooting activities so soon as orderly control of the seas was relaxed; and they likewise attracted both individuals and nations to whom lawless pursuits were congenial. There is a recognized law of such geographic polarity.⁷⁵ Thus, the Balearic Isles were seized by the Saracens in 798 and became the haunt of pirates who were attracted thither from all the surrounding coasts. In 1009 they were erected into a separate corsair kingdom, which for over two centuries preyed upon the growing trade of Catalonia near by, especially the port of Barcelona. The Catalans and Pisans participated in a Crusade against the islands, instituted by Pope Paschal II; but not until James I, King of Aragon and Count of Barcelona, conquered and annexed them between 1229 and 1235, were Catalan merchantmen safe on the sea.⁷⁶ With the restoration of order, the archipelago became the center of a thriving maritime commerce which justified the wisdom of the ancient Rhodians⁷⁷ and Phoenicians⁷⁸ in placing trading colonies on these islands.

The rugged mountainous front which Africa presents to the western Mediterranean possesses all the qualifications for a typical pirate coast (Fig. 3), except in the Tunisian peninsula, where alluvial plains and broad intermontane valleys give access to a large and fertile hinterland. Here ancient Carthage found the land base for her great territorial and maritime empire. At several points along the Atlas coast small alluvial plains, like that at modern Oran, Mostaganem, Algiers, and Bona, break the continuity of the mountain rampart bordering the sea and afford a local food supply,

⁷⁵ E. C. Semple: *Influences of Geographic Environment*, p. 160. New York, 1911.

⁷⁶ Ulick R. Burke: *History of Spain*, Vol. I, p. 258. London, 1900.

⁷⁷ Strabo, Bk. XIV, Ch. II, 10.

⁷⁸ John Kenrick: *Phoenicia*, pp. 116-118. London, 1855.

but they are barred from hinterland trade. In front of them, on the other hand, from time immemorial have passed fleets of merchantmen, laden with the products of the East, to be exchanged in the markets of Spain; for along this coast ran the great sea thoroughfare of ancient times, leading to the Pillars of Hercules. Hence this littoral in all ages has sent out piratical raiders against the commerce of the western basin and the opposite shores of Europe.⁷⁹ Prior to Pompey's great campaign it furnished retreats and markets for the buccaneers who terrorized Italy and Sicily. The Rif coast, whose rugged mountains wall the African front of the Iberian Sea for two hundred miles east of the Strait of Gibraltar, was an incorrigible pirate haunt. Its native Mauri or Berber sea-rovers found a profitable field of operations in the nearby strait and the rich Spanish province of Baetica in the Guadalquivir valley, with its island port of Gades (Cadiz). In the second century of the Empire they repeatedly raided up the river as far as Italica (Seville), in spite of the Imperial troops stationed there to overawe the pirates. Tingis (Tangier) also had a garrison whose main duty was to hold the Rif corsairs in check; but their inroads across the strait into the rich districts of southern Spain continued through the whole imperial period. In Nero's time they caused the Baetica shore to be described as *trucibus obnoxia Mauris*. They were troublesome in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, again under Septimus Severus, and again under Alexander.⁸⁰

The geographical location of the Tunisian peninsula offered facilities for the conduct of wide-reaching maritime trade, when Carthaginians, Sicilian Greeks, and later the Romans maintained order on the sea; or for equally wide piratical depredations, when the decline of Imperial Rome gave free rein to the Vandal kingdom of North Africa. This ill-organized, barbarian community, bent upon spoils more than conquest or power, utilized the nautical aptitude of the local inhabitants and the commanding position of Carthage to pillage all the neighboring coasts from Spain to Venetia and western Greece.⁸¹ Its maritime supremacy was maintained for thirty years during the life of King Genseric, but, gradually declining, was crushed in 533 with the downfall of the Vandal dominion.

The Mohammedan conquest of North Africa in the seventh century brought a new lease of life to piracy on this coast and intensified it by racial and religious wars which prolonged it through a thousand years. The disintegration of the Saracen dominion in Africa into several small states during the fourteenth century and the arrival here of the Moorish exiles from Spain in 1502 lent new motives, both of self-protection and vengeance, to the pirate communities of the African coast. Bougie, Algiers, and Sallee, outside the Strait, became notorious haunts of the "sea-skimmers." Spain, in an effort to police the pirate coast, seized Tunis, Oran, and an island fort

⁷⁹ Article "Barbary Pirates," *Encycl. Britann.*, 11th edit., Vol. 3, 1910.

⁸⁰ Mommsen: *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I, pp. 73-74; Vol. II, pp. 353. New York, 1887.

⁸¹ Gibbons: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. IV, pp. 1 and 27. Edit. by J. B. Bury, London, 1901.

in the Bay of Algiers, but was soon forced to relinquish them, because new vigor was infused into this whole pirate coast by Turkish corsair captains from the Aegean. They seized Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli and formed them into military republics living by plunder under a nominal Turkish suzerainty. Here piracy reached its zenith in the seventeenth century but maintained itself till the French conquest of Algiers in 1830, though the Rif pirates continued their raids for several decades. The striking feature of Barbary piracy is its survival long after Mohammedan corsairs had elsewhere abandoned their trade.⁸² This was made possible by the rivalry of England, France, and Turkey in the Mediterranean, the maritime weakness of Spain and Italy, the peculiar geographical fitness of the Barbary coast for piracy, and the elements of its population, constantly recruited from robber tribes of the desert and of the Atlas Mountains.

Piracy was a social-economic effect of geographic conditions in the Mediterranean basin, but it produced in turn certain political effects that played no small part in Mediterranean history. Instances have already been given where pirate fleets were employed as a mercenary navy. In all probability those were fleets maintained and trained by piracy which Xerxes drafted into his forces for the Grecian campaign from the shores of Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Lycia.⁸³ Organized Persian rule offered them a legitimate occupation for their energies. Several centuries later King Tryphon (146-139 B. C.), a usurper on the throne of Syria, encouraged the corsairs of Cilicia and used their help to maintain his position.⁸⁴ Spartacus in 72 B. C. relied on the aid of pirates in the Servile War.⁸⁵ The buccaneer allies of Sertorius in the Spanish uprising were a match for the Roman fleet, and from their stronghold at Diana on the Artemisian promontory they intercepted Roman supply ships on their way to the army in Spain.⁸⁶ Cilician pirates under the leadership of Sertorius attacked the Pityussae Islands off the Spanish coast.⁸⁷ In the long-sustained Mithradatic Wars, all the pirate fleets of the eastern Mediterranean were employed by the Asiatic king to reinforce his Pontic and Aegean navies. By their aid he established his supremacy on the sea, almost paralyzed the Roman offensive for several years in the first war and protracted the final conflict in the second.⁸⁸ The presence of large bodies of corsairs for hire introduced, therefore, an incalculable factor into many Mediterranean wars.

Constant piratical attacks had an important politico-economic effect upon the states assailed. These found it necessary to build up a standing navy to convoy their merchantmen, protect the home coasts, and destroy

⁸² Article "Barbary Pirates," *Encycl. Britann.*, 11th edit., Vol. 3, 1910. Hans Helmolt: *History of the World*, Vol. IV, pp. 251-254. New York, 1904.

⁸³ Herodotus, VII, 91-92.

⁸⁴ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. III, p. 292. New York, 1905.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 362.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., pp. 282 and 286.

⁸⁷ Plutarch: *Sertorius*, Ch. VII.

⁸⁸ Mommsen: *History of Rome*, Vol. IV, pp. 28, 33-43, 323-324, 333-334 and 351-353. New York, 1905.

the marauding fleets. The increased maritime efficiency and daring which they thus attained reacted favorably upon their merchant marine. In all probability the sea power of Minoan Crete at the time it established its thalassocracy had been developed in part by wars against early Aegean corsairs. Negligent Rome in the last half century of the Republic was driven again and again to refit or supplement or rebuild its rotting fleet to cope with the Mediterranean pirates. Venice, as has been shown, was forced to adopt a big naval program by freebooting neighbors on the Dalmatian coast. Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi, and Barcelona, in their protracted naval wars with the Saracen pirates of the western Mediterranean, built up a sea power which inaugurated or greatly stimulated their successful careers as maritime states.⁸⁹

Constant piratical attacks led not only to reprisals but also to conquest of the lawless coasts in order to police them. The captured ships and seamen went to swell the naval and merchant marine of the victorious nation, thus contributing to its sea power. The newly acquired coasts often proved so valuable as bases for extended maritime trade and military operations, that they whetted the national thirst for farther territorial expansion. Instances of this process have already been given, notably in the case of ancient Rome and mediaeval Venice in their campaigns against the Dalmatian pirates. Spain in the early sixteenth century was drawn by the Barbary pirates into a war which might have resulted in the conquest of the African coastlands, had not Spain's attention been diverted at the time by the wealth of the Americas. James I of Aragon, at the instigation of his commercial subjects of Barcelona, conquered and annexed the piratical Balearic Isles. It was the revival of Barbary corsair activities after the Napoleonic Wars that in 1827 drew the unemployed energies of France to the occupation of Algiers and inaugurated her important North African policy.

The French conquest of the strongest robber state dealt a serious blow to the Barbary pirates. Shortly before they had been chastised by American, English, and Dutch warships. But what whipped them was steam navigation. Their rugged coasts could not breed mechanics and engineers.

⁸⁹ Bella Duffy: *The Tuscan Republics*, pp. 1, 2, 115-117, 23-26 and 34-35. New York, 1893. Articles "Genoa" and "Pisa," *Encycl. Britann.*, 11th edit., Vols. 11 and 21, 1910 and 1911.