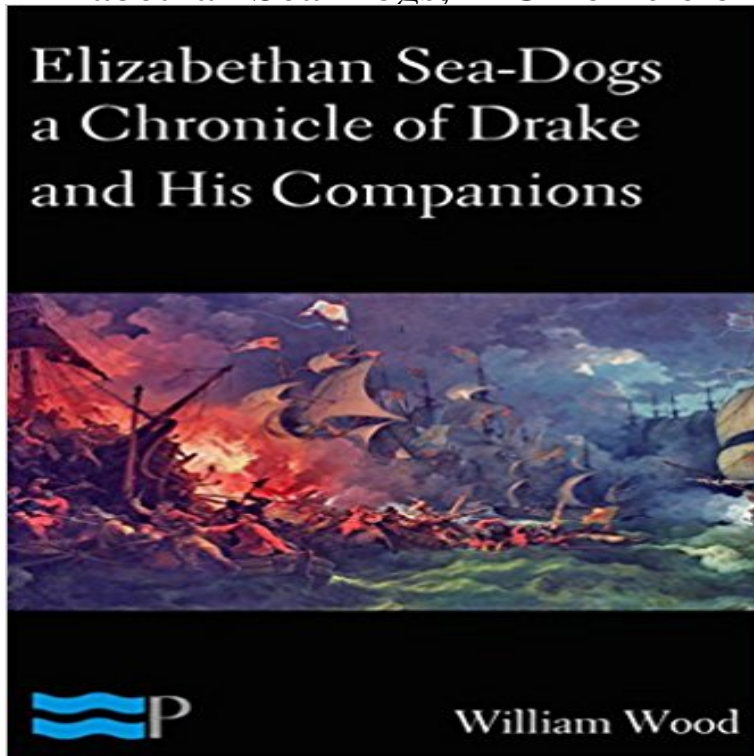


## Elizabethan Sea-Dogs, A Chronicle of Drake and His Companions



Pyrrhus Press specializes in bringing books long out of date back to life, allowing today's readers access to yesterday's treasures. This is a history of the notorious English privateers and privates that raided Spanish shipping in the New World and helped thwart the Spanish Armada, chief among them Sir Francis Drake. The life of Sir Francis Drake, or, more precisely, the tale of it, is one of those prime examples that history is written by the winners. Drake was the most famous sailor of the Elizabethan Era, and he has long been considered a hero by the English. His successes against the Spanish as a captain and a privateer were legendary, and Drake was celebrated for fighting the Queen's enemies, sinking their ships, and capturing the treasure that would otherwise be used to finance attacks on England. Drake vigorously pursued every mission given to him by Elizabeth I, and brought all his skill, experience and training to bear against her enemies. He was recognized at court for his valor, praised in story and song, and remembered for the kind of personality and esprit de corps that the English have long desired and celebrated in their military heroes. While that might have summarized Sir Francis Drake's life from an English perspective, that's not at all how the Spanish remember El Draque (The Dragon), the 16th century's most notorious pirate. Referred to as the main cause of wars in one 1592 letter to the Spanish King Phillip II, Drake harassed Spanish ships in several oceans and was so despised by the Spanish that Phillip II placed the equivalent of a 7 million dollar bounty on his head. This should come as no surprise, given that Spanish accounts tell of a captain who attacked and boarded Spanish merchant ships to steal their treasure and made off with it in the kind of haughty and dramatic ways that have become standard fare in pirate lore. El Draque also had no qualms about killing those who refused his

requests. Which version of Drakes life is more accurate? As usual, the reality falls somewhere inbetween. For most of his career, Drake was unquestionably a privateer and not a member of any organized Navy, thus answering to nobody except the Queen, and had he failed, he might have been shackled in irons and imprisoned. It was due to the fact he was successful that he was instead given a seat of honor at Elizabeths own table in her own court. While privateers were used by all European powers during times of war, Drake also happened to target enemy ships when no state of war existed, thus clearly veering into the realm of piracy. Naturally, Elizabeths enemies claimed that he was engaging in piracy with her blessing, which was probably true at times and untrue at others.

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