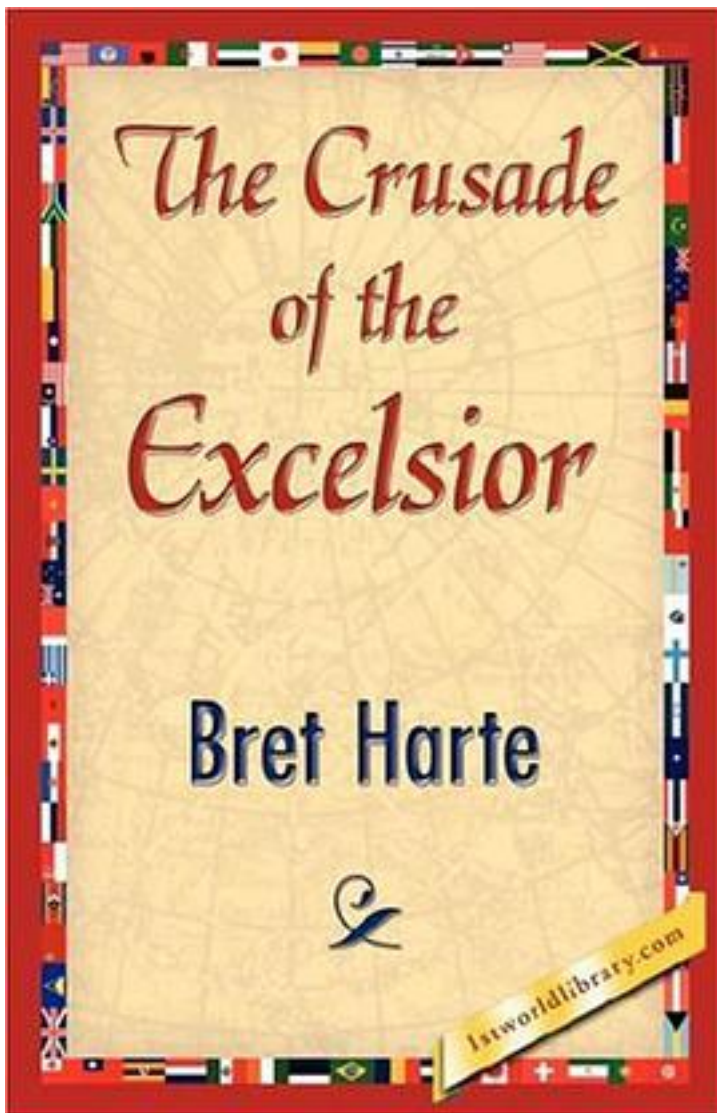


The Crusade of the Excelsior



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It was the 4th of August, 1854, off Cape Corrientes. Morning was breaking over a heavy sea, and the closely-reefed topsails of a barque that ran before it bearing down upon the faint outline of the Mexican coast. Already the white peak of Colima showed, ghost-like, in the east; already the long sweep of the Pacific was gathering strength and volume as it swept uninterruptedly into the opening Gulf of California. As the cold light increased, it could be seen that the vessel showed evidence of a long voyage and stress of weather. She had lost one of her spars, and her starboard davits rolled empty. Nevertheless, her rigging was taut and ship-shape, and her decks scrupulously clean. Indeed, in that uncertain light, the only moving figure besides the two motionless shadows at the wheel was engaged in scrubbing the quarter-deck-which, with its grated settees and stacked camp-chairs, seemed to indicate the presence of cabin passengers.

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