

The Pirate of Alastair

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CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)
"Don't you think that a girl who's engaged to one man ought to tell other men so?"

She drew back sharply and faced me with astounded eyes.

"Why, what do you mean, Mr. Selden?"

I was in for it, so I plunged ahead. "That day you came to the ship, I had no idea," I blundered on. "I did not know you were such a friend of Islip's."

"Well," she said, "and now that you know?"

"I think you should have told me. I ought to have known before that afternoon."

She was haughtiness itself. "Why, what affair was it of yours?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I was entitled to know."
"I cannot understand why. What makes you think that Mr. Islip and I—she hesitated a second—are such old friends?"

Of a sudden we were in a very nasty temper, facing each other.

"I happened to see his picture in your locker. It was lying open, face upward." She did not even tap her foot; she simply sat still and looked her indignation at me.

"Really, Mr. Selden, I cannot see how that affects you. What reason could there be for telling you my personal affairs?"

I stuck doggedly at it. "I think I should have been told," I repeated.

She gave me a single glance, then rose. "I am going back to the Penguin Club," she said.

I rose also. "Very good. I will see you there."

"No," she turned to me sharply. "I prefer to go back alone."

She was imperious; I could be equally so.

"And I prefer to go with you. The pines are lovely, and it is growing late. I owe at least that duty to your aunt."

Then she tapped her foot impatiently, angrily. "You are very tiresome, Mr. Selden. I am my own mistress, and I do not want your company."

"And I will not let you go back alone."

"You are very rude," she looked over at the beach as if for some possible help.

"Is there no one else?" she asked aloud.

There came a voice from the cabin steps behind me. "If you will permit me, mademoiselle, I should esteem it a great honor."

We both started as if we were shot, and faced about. A tall, somewhat angular man stood before us, hat in hand, bowing low to Miss Graham.

"I heard your question," he said, "and I took it on myself to answer it. Permit me." He stepped forward and placed himself at the girl's side.

"Who are you?" I asked, all amazement, for I was surprised out of my wits.

"My name is Pierre Duponceau," the stranger said, ignoring me and addressing Miss Graham. "And I count myself fortunate in coming on a lady in distress."

We both stood still, taking in the queer figure. Never had I seen a man just like him. He was dressed all in black, but his clothes were singularly rich and of strange pattern. From his shoulders hung a black cloak held under his chin by two heavily wrought gold chains. Across his open waistcoat, which was black satin flowered in white, were three gold chains, and there were rings on his fingers. Moreover, his manner was strange, exotic, polished to a degree, and his voice had a peculiar, fascinating foreign softness that I had never heard in any other man. His height was over six feet. I recognized the figure that I had seen in the storm.

He was smiling easily, the least perturbed of the three. "Permit me, mademoiselle," he repeated, and offered Miss Graham his arm.

She shot one glance at me, and then, half smiling, placed her hand on his arm. So he led her across the deck to the ladder.

I was still dumb with surprise. I saw the man in black leap to the path, help Miss Graham down the ladder, cross the causeway, and disappear with her behind the cliff. Then I sat down on a chair. Was I awake or dreaming? A man had come out of the ship at a crucial moment, and a man who, my instinct told me, was not of our age or people. I no longer recognized Alastair; I was beginning even to doubt my sober self.

CHAPTER IX.

Darkness fell, and still the man in the cloak did not return, and I went back to the cottage with my curiosity unsatisfied. I did not know what to make of his sudden appearance, nor of the summary fashion in which he had interposed between Miss Graham and myself. He, a total stranger, escorting her home through the woods! And yet this phase of the matter did not so much surprise me, for I felt intuitively that we were dealing with a gentleman. As far as my recollection of sea-rovers went, I recalled that pirates had always been scrupulously polite in their relations with the gentler sex.

There was no gainsaying that this sudden apparition had interposed himself between Miss Graham and me, yet I did not resent this so much as I might have, because things had been coming to a very bad pass, and might speedily have resulted in even more serious trouble than had occurred.

I questioned Charles closely as to whether he had detected any suspicious characters prowling about the beach, but his answer was in the negative. "If you should notice anything unusual," I told him, "be sure to report it immediately to me." It was clear to me that something was happening of more substantial texture than a dream.

Later in the evening I lighted my pipe and walked in the direction of the ship.

As I came to the path I saw the man in the cloak sitting on deck, and hailed him.

"May I come on board, Monsieur Duponceau?"

He rose and peered at me through the dusk. "Is it the gentleman who dined here this afternoon?" he asked, somewhat suspiciously.

"The same."

"You are welcome," he answered, and I could not help smiling at his assumption of ownership.

He shook hands with me as I came on board, waved to the vacant chair, and poured me water in one of my own glasses.

"I must apologize that I have no wine to offer you," he said in such a manner that my likings instantly went out to him. "I should not even have had the pleasure of offering you this but for the fact that you yourself provided it."

"Will you smoke?" I handed him a cigar, which he accepted, and lighted with a match I furnished. For the first time I noticed a pair of heavy pistols on the table.

"You travel well guarded," said I, looking at them.

"I have need," he answered, "graved need." I looked closely at him. He was in perfect earnest, his pale face absolutely serious, his deep eyes set beneath black brows. He pushed his somewhat long hair back from a fine, broad forehead. "I do not know you, you are, sir, but I take you for a friend—one I assure you of a class now sadly small."

"I live near the beach," I explained, "and my name is Selden. I imagine that you are a stranger to this shore?"

"An absolute stranger. I come from the other side of the ocean. This is the first time I have ever been to America."

I waited, but he would vouchsafe nothing further. So we sat and smoked silently, while I felt his keen eyes studying me.

"May I ask your age, Mr. Selden?" he said at length.

"Certainly. Twenty-eight."

"Ah! You are very much younger than I. I am somewhere between 40 and 50, one who has seen much, and so almost an old man."

I could not imagine what was coming. "It is in reference to this afternoon," he said, as though in answer to my thoughts. "When I hear a woman in distress I am water, I cannot but interpose. Still, as I returned here this evening I thought that possibly you might feel aggrieved. Believe me, Mr. Selden, at the time I had eyes only for the lady."

He paused, then went on: "If you will pardon a much older man, I would give you a bit of counsel. Never contend with a woman; let her have her way. Above all, never contend with a woman who cares for you."

"I have the least reason in the world to think that this one does?" I answered.

He made no reply, but smoked thoughtfully. I suddenly found his further silence unendurable.

"What are your plans, sir?" I asked abruptly. "For I do not suppose that you dropped down here entirely by chance, and intend to stay until chance again moves you away."

"No, I did not arrive solely by chance," he answered, "although that had much to do with it. But I expect to stay until fortune, be it good or bad, summons me. That is, always supposing, Mr. Selden, that you do not drive me away from your beach."

"I?" I said, much surprised. "How can your stay here hurt me?"

My new acquaintance let his eyes rest upon my face a moment, then smiled as though at a passing joke of his own.

"You have a saying that 'where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise'; I will not explain, therefore, and only hope that you may never know; but—and his eyes shifted for a moment from mine to the pistols on the table—"If you do know, it will not be a very pretty piece of information."

I clenched my pipe between my teeth; the night wind was stirring; the flavor of strange adventure hung over the ship as strongly as the salt breeze from the sea. I felt myself indescribably fascinated. Duponceau drew his cloak somewhat closed around him, and muffled it about his chin, so that all of his face I could clearly see was his long, wonderful black eyes. Indeed, they were wonderful—those eyes of his. The more I looked into them, the more they held me, and yet the less I knew about the man himself.

I was just wondering if this Duponceau was not something of a hypnotist when I found that he was speaking in a soft, low, almost ruminative voice.

"I like you, Mr. Selden, I like you extremely, and so I would not bring you into any harm; and yet if you are my friend I shall most likely do so, for that curse was laid upon me in the past. I have had many friends and even more enemies, and some of the friends have turned enemies, but none of the enemies friends. I tell you this so that you may the better judge, because you must be one or the other. Nobody has ever been indifferent."

I could not detect arrogance; simply the statement of facts.

"I would rather be your friend," I answered.

He was silent again, gazing at and through me with his dreamy, speculative vision. I had the feeling that I was in a measure spellbound—that I could not start a conversation for myself, could not act without his volition.

"There are reasons," he continued in time, "while I cannot tell you much. If I am not one of the world's great men by birth, I am by achievement. There was a Corsican born in the last century whom all the powers of Europe sought for years to blind and silence; there are many men

there who would do the same for me. Wherever Napoleon went he brought strife; wherever I go strife follows." He ceased looking through me, and gazed at me. "You have your quiet beach, your snug house, your summer with the fair lady of this afternoon; do you still wish me to stay?"

"The ship is any one's property," I said, "and the shore is free. If you want more, you have only to ask for it at my cottage."

"What would the lady say?" he continued.

"The lady has nothing whatever to say in the matter," I returned, annoyed at his continual reference to Miss Graham. "I am free to choose for myself."

Duponceau smiled. "Mr. Selden, you are a young man of spirit, but you are ignorant, very ignorant. It all depends on the lady. You would not weigh me in the balance for a moment if she willed otherwise. No one is free; there is always some other power. Even the Corsican could not withstand his star." The smile faded, vanished; Duponceau's eyes were stern and fixed.

"I have been called a pirate, a robber, a modern Juggernaut, but it was only because I had my vision, and could see farther than others could."

He was leagues away, his thoughts fighting. I watched him until his mind came back.

"Now," he said, "we will fight it out. I take you at your word—the ship is mine, the shore any one's property."

Suddenly he rose and stood peering up the beach. "Some one is coming," he said, and I saw that his hands felt for the pistols on the table.

I looked, and saw Charles swinging a lantern. "It is only my servant," I answered.

"Can he be trusted?"

"Implicitly."

"Tell him who I am."

"We waited until Charles came on board. He showed no surprise at seeing the two of us."

"I came for the dinner things, Mr. Felix," he stated, looking at me and ignoring Duponceau.

"Charles," I said, "this is Monsieur Duponceau, who has lately come to stay in this ship. You are not to mention his presence here to any one, but will do whatever he asks. You need not take the things away; they may be of use to him in the cabin. Monsieur Duponceau, you may rely on Charles as on yourself."

Charles bowed to the man in black, a fine figure, gazing steadily at my man. I could not help noting the picture that he made, his hand still on the pistols, his soft black hat low upon his forehead, his cloak flung across his shoulder.

Charles turned to go. "Has there been any message for me?" I asked as an afterthought.

"No, Mr. Felix." Charles hesitated; "but I found a man prowling about the back road after supper, and though I'd never seen him before, I couldn't learn his business. He looked like a sly one, sir."

I turned to Duponceau; he was smiling.

"You see, Mr. Selden, how quickly my words find proof. Where I come strife follows."

(To be continued.)

The Facts in Race Suicide.

The birth rate in the United States in the days of its Anglo-Saxon youth was one of the highest in the world. The best of authority traces the beginning of its decline to the first appearance about 1850 of immigration on a large scale. Our great philosopher, Benjamin Franklin, estimated six children to a normal American family in his day. The average at the present time is slightly above two. For 1900 it is calculated that there are only about three-fourths as many children to potential mothers in America as there were forty years ago. Were the old rate of the middle of the century sustained, there would be 15,000 more births yearly in the State of Massachusetts than now occur. In the course of a century the proportion of our entire population, consisting of children under the age of 10, has fallen from one-third to one-quarter. This, for the whole United States, is equivalent to the loss of about 7,000,000 children. So alarming has this phenomenon of the falling birth rate become in the Australian colonies that, in New South Wales, a special governmental commission has voluminously reported upon the subject. It is estimated that there has been a decline of about one-third in the fruitfulness of the people in fifteen years. New Zealand even complains of the lack of children to fill her schools. The facts concerning the stagnation, nay even the retrogression of the population of France, are too well known to need description.—Atlantic Monthly.

In Distress.

"Where be you going in such a hurry, pa?" asked the tall woman in the red sunbonnet as her husband dashed by with a powerful pair of farm horses.

"Going to pull an automobile party out of the mud, sis," laughed the old farmer. "They've got the 'C. D. Q.' signal flying from their machine."

Tactical Skill.

He (thoughtlessly)—This bread isn't like the kind—

She (angrily)—Well, your mother made it, all the same.

He (deprecatingly)—I was going to say, my dear, like the kind we had the last time you made it.—Baltimore American.

Works Both Ways.

"Matrimony without love," remarked the married woman, "is something awful."

"It can't be more awful than love without matrimony," sighed the spinster.

Unsatisfactory Satisfaction.

Biquor—How does the new furnace work?

Kiquez—Work? Say, it makes my blood boil every time I think of it!

FARM AND GARDEN

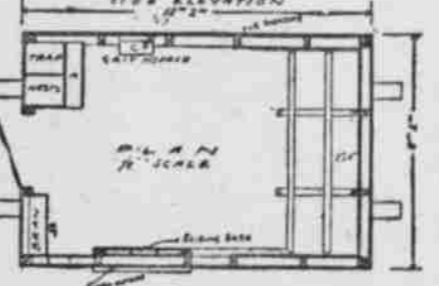
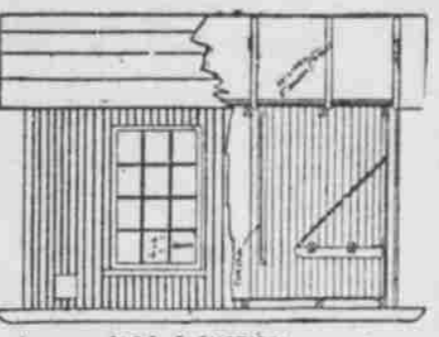
Farm Poultry House.

For a farmer's poultry house I know of nothing that will give better satisfaction than a moveable colony house, such as is used at Macdonald College, Que., a photo and plan of



FRONT VIEW.

which accompanies. This house is 8x12 feet, floor built on two skids and accommodates 25 hens and 3 males in the winter and half as many more during the summer. A team of horses can draw it to any part of the farm that may be desired. This gives fresh ground to the hens, and feed that might otherwise go to waste, can be made use of. For farm use the studding need not be so high, and the house can be built of available material. A loose board ceiling over which is placed straw provides for the absorption of moisture and even in the



PLAN OF INTERIOR.

coldest days, hens are quite comfortable. A farmer can add to his equipment one house at a time, and gradually work up to the desired number.—F. C. Elford.

Cockleburrs.

A good many farmers are still struggling with the cocklebur nuisance. It is possible to rid the ranch of this pest in one year and realize a profit on the operation. Any time before the weeds have attained much height take a plow and harrow to the field and before the day is done sow one and one-half bushels of good kaffir corn to each acre plowed. Harrow well and the next day repeat the operation until the cocklebur territory has been thoroughly covered. When the kaffir seed is in the dough mow or bind with a harvester and you will have one of the very best crops or roughage to be had. Remove this crop from the field as soon as convenient. Two years or so of this kind of tillage will clean out the burrs and the operation is certainly worth while.—Denver Field and Farm.

Pump for the Garden.

A good pump should be part of the equipment of every garden. For the small garden a good bucket, compressed air or knapsack pump will be most satisfactory, while for larger gardens a barrel pump, with an attachment for spraying several rows when occasion demands, or an automatic pump geared to the wheels of the truck, will be found more economical of time and labor. The small compressed air sprayer is handy, as it leaves both hands free for use, and is, therefore, useful if it is desired to spray two or three small trees, possibly with the use of a stepladder to reach their tops.

Fertilizers.

Fertilizers may be divided into two general classes—direct and indirect, or nutritive and stimulant. A direct or nutritive fertilizer is one which furnishes nourishment to the growing crop. Nourishment means simply nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash. These are the three ingredients which must be renewed through the medium of manures and fertilizers. A stimulant or indirect fertilizer is one which does not furnish an actual plant food to the soil, but by its stimulating action renders available some plant food which previously existed in the soil in an insoluble or unavailable condition.

Sowing Orchard Grass.

If orchard grass is not sown thickly it will not be a success. Three bushels to the acre should be used. Orchard grass is more vigorous than timothy, with a stronger root system; but if a permanent meadow is expected it must be top-dressed freely.

Horses and Corn Growing.

In growing corn one of the factors that is seldom rated at its true worth is first-class motive power. Anyone who has plowed, harrowed, planted and cultivated with an ill-matched, short-weighted, high-strung team knows how difficult it is to do good work. No farm hand thus handicapped can render a service that is satisfactory to a good farmer. Farm teams should be evenly matched as to age, size and temperament. Weight is essential. Teams should be big enough to keep a reserve power constantly on tap; they should draw any implement with ease and at a steady, lively pace. If they are of standard draft type and are shifted occasionally from one class of service to another they will go through the season without breakdowns. This depends, however, to a large extent on how they are fed and managed. Much depends also on the ease and comfort which they enjoy in the collar; sore necks and galled shoulders, due to poorly-fitted collars, prove serious obstacles to good, continuous work. Corn-belt farms should be equipped with heavy draft teams; the highest type of diversified agriculture in that territory depends on this reliable, efficient motive power. Big horses bear a close relationship to a big corn crop.—Chicago Live Stock World.

Dipping Stock for Lice.

There are various kinds of stock dips, and most of them are good. Their use is becoming more common because their value is better known than formerly. Almost every stockman has animals that are not thrifty, and he doesn't know the reason why. It very often happens that such animals are troubled with parasites of some kind, perhaps several kinds. They are too small to be seen with the naked eye, and the farmer tries different kinds of medicines, when an outside application of some disinfectant is the only remedy needed. When stockmen once learn the value of dipping they need no further encouragement. They keep on dipping twice a year, because they know it pays both in dollars and in satisfaction.

We have found crude oil one of the best and most effective louse killers and disinfectants. It makes an excellent dip for swine. It will remove all of the old scales and scurf and improve the general appearance of the herd.

When mixed with crude carbolic acid at the rate of one gallon of crude carbolic acid to fifty gallons of crude oil it makes a cheap and effective disinfectant for use in the hog houses, hen houses and water holes in the hog lot where hogs are accustomed to wallow.

It will, when used alone, prove a very cheap oil to use on farm machinery when it is stored away for winter.

It can be used with safety as a fly repellent on all farm animals by the use of sprayers, and will prove as well adapted to that purpose as many of the more expensive dips and mixtures. For cuts and bruises on farm animals it is excellent and can be used with safety. Use on cows' teats when sore.—Agricultural Epitomist.

Testing Milk.

In some sections many of the best dairymen are adapting the Holland plan of combining and hiring men to visit each herd one day in the month and test the milk of each cow, thus giving the owners an idea of which cows are the ones that are paying for their keep. This plan is a very sensible one and should be encouraged. The cost is comparatively small, as the tester boards with the family while he is doing his work and is carried to the next place the day he has completed his work. This insures regularity in the work. In Michigan this plan has greatly increased the average production per cow. Wisconsin, too, has taken up this matter. It is good business and it may become popular, but some of our dairymen are hard to turn from the beaten paths of their fathers.—Farmers and Drovers' Journal.

When Orchards Fall.

The ashes from apple, pear and peach trees contain about 70 per cent of lime, and the crops of fruit borne every year also contains lime. When orchards fall it is always profitable to apply lime, and it should be done at least once in five years. Wood ashes are preferable to lime for orchards, but the lime is much cheaper. Lime will also prove of benefit to grass that may be growing in an orchard, and it is destructive to certain grubs and other orchard enemies. It is best applied by plowing the orchard land and broadcasting the lime over the surface.

Feeding Sheep.

There are several points in feeding sheep that must not be overlooked. The feed lot must be dry, with plenty of clean, dry bedding; the animals must have plenty of clean, pure water, and the feed troughs should be kept clean. These should be arranged so that the sheep cannot foul them with their feet. Another point is to keep them from becoming excited or frightened. To this end it is better that one person feed them all the time.

Encouraging Forestry.

New York State has taken a practical way of encouraging forestry. During the past planting season more than 1,000,000 seedlings were distributed at cost throughout the state for planting. Where it is desired and is found feasible, the services of a foreman are furnished to direct the planting, the state bearing a share of his expenses. The seedlings were of pine and spruce and were supplied to 149 persons.

LASHES OF FUN

Patron—Have you pigs' feet? Walk with that.

She—Does the course of true love run smooth? He—Oh, yes; there are banks on both sides.

"Money may make the mare go," said Uncle Eben, "but I don't see as it's much of a guaranty agin kickin'."

Daughter—Mamma, who was Minerva? Mother—The goddess of wisdom—she never married.—The Club Fellow.

Gladys—So you've sent Herbert about his business, have you? Maybelle—Yes. But I have since used the—er—recall on him.

Father—You never heard of a man getting into trouble by following a good example. Son—Yes, sir, I have—the counterfeiter.—Boston Transcript.

Julia—Going to Marie's dance? Bertha—I shall be out of town that night. Julia—I wasn't invited either.—Cowell Widow.

"What! Spend \$100 on a bathing suit?" "Now, hubby, this isn't a bathing suit. This is a beach costume."—Washington Herald.

She—I heard you singing this morning. He—Oh, I sing a little to kill time. She—You had a good weapon.—Kansas City Journal.

First Chauffeur—Do you find out who you have run over? Second Chauffeur—Of course; I always read the papers.—New York Sun.

Sillicus—Yes; she has threatened to make things unpleasant for him. Cynicus—Is that so? When are they going to be married?—Philadelphia Record.

"I can't tell her she's the first girl I ever loved. She knows I've been engaged before." "Well, tell her you're glad you discovered your mistake in time."

Friend—Does the baron, your son-in-law, speak with much of an accent? Richpurse—He did when he discovered how I had fixed his wife's dowry.—Puck.

Church—In the future the man with the alrhaps will take nobody's dust. Gotham—Woot? He? You just try to hire one, and you'll find out.—Yonkers Statesman.

The Young Doctor—Just think; six of my patients recovered this week. The Old Doctor—It's your own fault, my boy. You spend too much time at the club.—Life.

"You don't seem to give Bykine credit for any originality whatever." "I don't. His memory is so wretched he can't quote correctly; that's all."—Washington Star.

Guest—Mercy! What's this awful profanity down stairs? Hostess—My husband has come in late and fallen over the new Persian prayer rug.—Cleveland Leader.

"Who's that homely girl you spoke to?" "Sir, that lady has promised to be my wife!" "Cheer up. Lots of women don't keep their promises."—Cleveland Leader.

Mr. Newlywed—The moth has eaten every single thing in this closet. Ida, Mrs. Newlywed—I don't see how they could get in. I've kept the door locked all summer long.—Brooklyn Life.

Bill—I see a good many of the apartment houses in New York have the kitchen on top. Jill—Yes; that's so the cook who uses benzine won't have so far to go.—Yonkers Statesman.

"You seem to have a great deal of faith in doctors," said a friend of the sick man. "I have," was the reply. "A doctor would be foolish to let a good customer like me die."—Boston Home Journal.

Mrs. Brickrow—It does a lady good to have Dr. Grinn when one is sick. He is always so jolly! Mr. Brickrow—You'd be jolly, too, if you were getting three dollars for a ten-minute call.—New York Weekly.

"What diagnosis did the doctor make of your wife's illness?" "Said she was suffering from overwork." "Is that so?" "Yes, he looked at her tongue and reached that decision immediately."—Detroit Free Press.

Mr. Slimpurse (after a decided refusal)—I know what the matter is. It's because I'm poor. You would marry me if I were rich. Miss Gallie (thoughtfully)—Perhaps so; but you would have to be very, very rich!

The following conversation was overheard between two boys, aged 10 and 5: "Joe, why can't chickens talk?" "Aw, they don't have no wings." "Why, they don't have no wings, but they want anything, they just pull their wish-bones and they gets their wish."

"Sure, it's Mike, the boy, that's the lucky man." "How was he lucky?" "Why, mum, he got insured for five thousand dollars, and the very next day he fell off the ladder, painted and broke his neck."—Baltimore American.

Mr. Newwed—You never call me pet names now unless you want something. Before marriage it was different. Mrs. Newwed—Oh, no. Before marriage I called you pet names because I wanted you.—London Gentlewoman.

"More than five thousand elephants a year go to make our piano keys," remarked the student boarder who had been reading the scientific notes in a patent-medicine advertisement. "The land's sake!" exclaimed the landlady. "Ain't it wonderful what some animals can be trained to do?"