

The Pirate of Alastair

By
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CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)

I followed his directions to the porch enclosed with glass, and found Miss Graham sitting there with an elderly woman who proved to be her aunt, Miss Corey. She presented me, and the elder lady, after making a few comments on the awful night, withdrew. Still standing, I put my hand into my inner pocket and drew forth the box with the locket.

"When I went back to the ship this afternoon I found you had dropped the locket from your chain. Permit me to return it."

"Oh!" she said. "How good of you to bring it! I discovered it was gone and was afraid I might not be able to find it after the storm. Thank you so much, Mr. Selden."

I felt singularly cold and haughty, and seemed to detect a certain reserve also in her manner. The air of the Penguin Club was not conducive to informality.

I had intended to call her attention to the fact that the locket was open when I came upon it, but could not bring myself to do so in the face of the chill that seemed to have settled down upon us.

"Won't you sit down and talk to me?" she said, but I shook my head.

"I must be getting back. The storm is getting worse every minute. The wood road will soon be a swollen river."

There came a growl of thunder and a flash of livid lightning. Miss Graham scarcely moved a muscle. "I love storms," she said, "but I don't blame you for wanting to get home as soon as you can. You must be soaked even in those clothes."

I looked at my rough attire, and then at the dainty white evening gown she wore, and laughed a little sharply at the contrast.

"It's lucky I don't often come to the club," I said. "They would probably warn me from the premises as a scare-crow of ill omen."

Rodney Islip came on to the porch, in evening dress, as though to emphasize my own incongruities.

"Will you dance, Barbara?" he said. "They're playing one of your favorite waltzes." Then he discovered me. "Hello, old chap!" said he. "How the deuce came you here? You don't mean to tell me you rode through the thick of this storm?"

Petty resentment got the better of me; I barely noticed him, and bowed to the girl.

"Don't let me keep you, Miss Graham. My mission is over. Good night."

She held out her hand; I barely touched it. I was at the door when Rodney spoke. "I say, old man, have you seen the evening papers? Terrible times in France, more trouble on the market; let me get you the news." He was so full of the stock exchange himself that he thought we must all be interested.

"No, I thank you," I answered, bluntly, and went out, scolding myself for my rudeness to this chap whose only fault lay in the fact that Miss Graham cared so much about him. I was to be still more scornful of this rudeness to him in the days to come.

I stood in the shadow while they passed me, then I stole back to the glass-covered porch and looked in for a moment at the dancing. I watched Islip lead Miss Graham on to the floor and float away with her, and I caught sight of the locket hanging on its chain about her throat. She looked very fair in her white gown, with her neck bare, and Islip looked very happy as he danced with her. I looked again at my own rough, uncouth garb. This was no place for me. Suddenly I hated the Penguin Club and all it contained, all its civilization, all its clothes and dances. I would be off to my little hut in the dunes, with no one but Charles by, and he my very humble servant.

Nero was ready, and I swung myself up and plunged off again into the night. Flashes of lightning showed me the depth of the water in the woods. I ploughed my way homeward, caring nothing what happened, riding as though a legion of devils pursued.

I paid no attention to Charles' fire and the hot grog that he had ready. I flung off my sodden clothes and went to bed, finding my one satisfaction in the crashing guns of the thunder that seemed to bombard Alastair from the sky. It was certainly the night for any mysterious deed, I remember thinking as I fell asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

I must have been asleep for some time when a sudden sky-cracking crash of thunder brought me wide awake. An instinctive movement made me jump out of bed and go to the front window which looks out upon the sea. The blackness of the pit, and only the roar of the waves against the cliff! Then while I peered into the night came a flash of lightning, revealing the beach and the waves and the open sea with startling clearness. The scene was over in the time it takes to tell it, but I had seen something—a long ship's boat, oar-blades flashing, half way between the light of the Shifting Shoal and Alastair. There

followed blackness, and another crash of the sky's guns.

I waited, my eyes trained on the spot, and again came the flash, and now, out near the Shoal, I saw a long, black schooner, bare of canvas, pitching like mad in the mael of an angry sea. She was not on the Shoal—she might be some distance off it—but she was tasting a very nasty squall. Darkness, another peal, more lightning, and now I saw that the long boat, shooting furiously landward, was heading towards me, was making straight for the beach as fast as the waves and the oarsmen could drive her. Another lifting of night, and I saw a tall man—he seemed strangely, uncannily tall—half standing, half stooping in the stern sheets, the ends of a cape flying past him in the gale.

When I could see again the long boat was making ready for the dash into the roaring surf. The oarsmen—there were some twelve—were laboring to keep the bow straight on. The tall man was standing up to see where he should go, and I caught sight of his white and storm-distorted face. I could not move, I could not utter a cry; I stood transfixed, scarce breathing, my body taut, waiting to see what would happen next.

Seconds passed in the darkness, then a flash, and I saw that the boat had weathered the worst of the surf, and was grinding on the shore. Four of the men had leaped out and were hauling hard at the sides; the steersman, gaunt and black, still clutched the tiller, half crouching, and was shouting. Succeeding darkness gave me a chance to wonder what manner of men were these making for Alastair, deserting their ship on the coast, and landing where there was no harbor, and only a whinge beach. Light again, and I stood dumfounded, transfixed, for I saw a little procession marching up the beach to the pines east of me: first the tall man in the long, black, flapping cloak, then two men bearing a good-sized box between them, and then two others, carrying what looked to me like shovels. Darkness, a terrible roar of thunder, and I pinched myself to make sure that I was awake.

I struck a match and held it behind my hand in order that no signal should be given. My watch told me the hour was half past one. I found that I was shivering from the cold, and slipped into my coat. At every flash of light I was back at the window, raking the beach with my eyes. I saw nothing but the grounded boat, with a number of men standing by, and far off the tossing hulk of the schooner.

I did not even dare step into the hall to call Charles, so afraid was I of losing something of this remarkable sight. Minutes passed. I kept my watch in my hand. Flash succeeded flash at greater intervals, but the scene was still the same: the boat evidently waiting, the farther reaches of the beach empty.

Half an hour had gone when my patience was rewarded. The same procession appeared from the pines, minus only—so far as I could see—the box that two of them had carried. There was a long interval of blackness, and then I saw the long boat plunging again through the breakers, and the crew struggling to keep her righted with their oars. I could see the boat was sharp at either end, and the men no novices at the dangerous work of beaching. They were gone, going back to their schooner, and I felt that the spirit of mystery was lifting from Alastair.

Still I waited, and in time the scene lighted, and I saw that the boat had left something; the tall, cloaked man still stood upon the beach, gazing seaward as though to catch the last of his mates. I remember that even in that brief instant I felt there was something strange about him, something fantastic, something out of keeping with the New England shore.

Darkness shut in, the roar of thunder lessened, the lightning passed; the outer world only sent me the deep, distant booming of the sea upon the cliff. I stumbled back to bed and pulled the clothes about me, full of wonder at what my eyes had seen.

I lay there for a long time, thinking, conjecturing what all this strange matter meant. Somehow, my quiet beach had been transformed; the space between the cliffs now shadowed forth a mystery, and yet, preposterous as the idea seemed, I felt in some way that I had always expected a remarkable something to happen, my dreams in some way to come true, for Alastair was no common place and was fit for some surprising history.

In time I dropped asleep, to dream of queer things.

CHAPTER VIII.

When I awoke in the morning I was more than half of the mind that I had dreamed of the lightning's singular pictures, or at least that, being suddenly startled from sound sleep and dazzled by successive flashes and stunned by the roar of thunder, my imagination had played some trick on me. Anything else seemed too remarkable to be believed. Yet I could not quite convince myself that I

had not seen the tormented schooner, the landing on the beach of the long boat, the march into the pines, and the final picture of that tall, gaunt figure gazing seaward. I could not believe that my imagination or my dreams could be so vivid as my remembrance of those scenes.

I questioned Charles closely at breakfast as to how he had passed the night. It seemed that he had slept stolidly through all the uproar. Even had he not, he would probably have seen nothing, for his room was at the back of the house.

The storm continued, though with lessened violence. After breakfast I ventured out, dressed for a wetting, and went first to the place where, as I remembered, the long boat had been beached. The waves had done away with all traces of the keel. Then I followed as nearly as I could the path which the strangers had taken to the pines; but the wind and rain had obliterated the footsteps, if there had ever been any there. I poked into the pines, only to be drenched by waterfalls from my palms. The mystery was as deep as ever when I finally desisted and went back to shelter.

After some thought, I determined to keep my secret to myself. Charles would respectfully listen to my statement, but without further evidence he would be only too apt, taking the facts in conjunction with my mysterious ride to the club in the evening, to believe I had dreamed it all. What would a schooner's crew be doing on our lonely beach in the height of a midnight storm? A sensible man would naturally be inclined to doubt.

I settled down to work, and, shutting my mind both to the mystery and to Miss Graham, succeeded in getting a good deal done by night. The next day I passed in similar fashion, living in quiet comfort so long as the storm lasted.

The third day broke fair, and early in the morning I swept the sea and the beach with my binoculars. Never were sea and land more peaceful; the tempest appeared to have cleared the atmosphere and brought it to a new serenity. My work accomplished, I set out for the little river to the west of the cliff, to see how my catboat had weathered the gale. I found there was some bailing to be done, and then, called by a gentle breeze, I ran up sail and for an hour beat up the channel. The hot sun of noon sent me home, and I sat down to my mid-day dinner.

Charles had brought me papers and a note from the club. I ran through the papers first, to prove to myself how little I cared for the note, but at last I broke its seal.

"I am going to hold you to your invitation for supper in the Ship now that the storm is over. May we have it to-day about 6?"

That was all, without even a signature.

I was in two minds as to what to do. I could not disappoint her without seeming more than churlish, without writing myself down once and for all as no gentleman, and yet the sight of her notes roused much of my sleeping resentment. If I went, I would at least show her that two could play at her game.

I visited the larder and decided on a menu. Then I startled Charles half out of his senses, though to his credit he said he never showed it. "You will pack these things"—I pointed out certain provisions—"in the wheelbarrow, and take them on to the Ship on the beach. You will also take the folding-table from my study, and two folding-chairs, and set the table on the deck. I am going to take supper there with a lady at 6. You can leave the lead tea in a bottle. Have the supper ready at a quarter before the hour, and then leave. We will not require any service."

"Yes, Mr. Felix," said Charles, sedately. I frowned as though the whole proceeding bored me, and returned to my work.

As half past 5 I dressed carefully and left the house. As I walked up the beach I could not help but contrast this sunny scene with the night of the storm. Whatever that night had brought to Alastair, it was clear I was not to know much about it.

I waited on the shore until Miss Graham appeared, and crossed the path with her to the Ship. I pulled the short rope-ladder over the side and helped her on board. We beheld a supper table immaculately set, and places for two.

Miss Graham was delighted, and I could not help relenting a little when I saw how very pleased she was. Moreover, I was the host, and she my guest, and I could not cast a shadow over my own feast. I tried, therefore, as best I could, to forget Islip and the locket, and to think only of what a beautiful late afternoon it was, of how fresh the smell of the sea came to the old Ship's decks, and of the beauty of the girl who sat across from me. I think she detected that at first I was making an effort, and so tried to help me, for she was very lively and talkative, making much sport of the supper, all the courses of which were spread before us at once, and of our having to wait upon ourselves.

When we had finished supper, I asked Miss Graham's permission to light a cigarette, and pushed my chair a little back from the table. There was a new moon in the sky, and I pointed it out to her. "This is the finest hour of the day," I said. "If only the Ship would up anchor and take us for a sail!"

"If your pirate doesn't come now, just after supper, with a crescent moon hanging right side up, I don't believe he ever will," put in the girl pensively.

Her playful words, combined with the ingenious voice and the far-away, child-like dreaming of her eyes, aroused something of my old resentment. Almost before I knew what I was doing I had fallen a victim to an impulsive temptation, and was leaning on the table with my eyes fixed on her.

(To be continued.)

FOREIGN-MADE CIGARETTES.

We Import Heavily Despite Our Large Domestic Production.

Though the United States is the greatest cigarette producing nation of the world, there are imported into this country every year more than \$3,000,000 worth of foreign made cigarettes, some Turkish and some Egyptian. Turkey is a large tobacco producing country, yielding 50,000 tons of tobacco every year, and the Turks, it is well known, are a nation of smokers. The amount of tobacco raised in Egypt is inconsiderable, and yet Egyptian cigarettes are imported into this country in considerable amounts every year. The explanation of the matter is simple. It seems that the Greek tobacco crop last year was the largest Greece ever harvested—about 200,000,000 pounds. A brand of Greek tobacco is used for Egyptian cigarettes.

Why, it is asked, Egyptian? The answer is that Egyptian cigarettes are made by Greeks, because cigarette paper is too expensive for Greece, where it is a government monopoly. Thus the business has gone over to Egypt. The most famous cigarette makers of Egypt are Greeks.

A very large business in cigarette making has been established in Alexandria, and it is in the hands of Greeks, who import their tobacco from their own country and in turn ship it to foreign countries. England and the United States are the chief markets for Egyptian cigarettes, which are, in fact, Greek cigarettes, those bearing the title Turkish being imported from Turkey direct.

There has been a decided influx of foreigners who manufacture cigarettes, into this country, during the last few years. Americans are inclined to like the taste of the foreign brand better than the domestic product and the manufacture of them is heavy.

SOME MARRIED MEDITATIONS.

By Clarence L. Cullen.

The approaching census will not state how many myriads of married couples are living together just out of the force of habit.

Some women like to make their husbands go to church on Sunday morning just to show their neighbors that they can make 'em.

Women are such artistic dissemblers that a pair of them can waltz together at a manless summer resort hotel and pretend that they enjoy it.

A woman just knows that a doctor must be a crackerjack in his profession if he has fine white teeth and beautifully kept finger nails.

What no man can understand: How his wife can hide two suits of pajamas in his suit case so that he can't ever find them without a search warrant and a writ of replevin.

The main reason why a woman does not like her husband's bachelor friends is that she knows that they know a heap of things about him that she doesn't know and that they'll never tell her.

When a woman wants to make another woman feel worried about her new dress she says: "It's quite pretty—but do you think it's exactly your color?" Or: "It fits real well—er—in the back, doesn't it?"

You're in pretty bad when your wife (without your ever knowing it) brags to her women cronies that she can make you do anything she wants simply by opening her tear ducts at the psychological moment.

When women themselves write about women's "mystery" and their "intuition" and their other fancied etherialnesses the effect is about as ridiculous as it would be if men were to brag of their biceps and the aquiline contour of their noses.

Caught Bending.

Professor Cube Root's class of geometrical geniuses were receiving instructions. They were first taught that a circle was a thing like this—O. They then learned that a straight line was one without wabbles in it, so—

"Now, boys," said Professor Root, "can any of you describe to me what a half circle is like?"

Up shot half a dozen grasping hands.

"Well, Teddy," said Professor Root, "let's hear your definition of a half circle first."

"Please, sir," answered Teddy, "it's a straight line caught bending."—London Express.

As He Remembered It.

"Shadbolt, did you ever have a touch of anything like the appendicitis?"

"Once. Have you forgotten, Dinguss, that when you were operated on for it you touched me for an even hundred?"—Chicago Tribune.

Women are great talkers, but most of their victories over men can be traced to tears or smiles.

A woman isn't necessarily gifted because she has the gift of gab.

WHERE DANCES ORIGINATED.

Waltz First Popular Among German Peasants.

Of all the wonderful, stately old dances which 200 years ago were in vogue, only the minuet remains, and that nowadays is very rarely attempted. Of course every one admits that of all dances the waltz is queen. It originated among the German peasants in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. As they danced it it was the slow waltz, called the landler.

Later the Vienna musicians took it up, quickened the pace, and by their lovely musical settings of this dance rhythm established the reign of the waltz throughout the world. It is noteworthy that the composers of the finest dancing waltzes ever written—Schubert, Weber, Beethoven, Strauss, Lanner, Labitzky and Waldteufel—were all Vienna men. It is properly a three-step dance, whether slow or fast. The two-step waltz is a recent innovation and not an improvement.

Besides the waltz we owe to Germany the gallop, an impetuous, dashing dance dating from about 1800; the polka, a justly popular four-step dance derived from the Bohemian peasantry about 1830, and the redowa, a quick movement in triple time, also Bohemian in origin.

France has given us the minuet, the quadrille or contradance and the farandole, all square dances or dances participated in by several pairs or sets simultaneously.

Poland has furnished some beautiful dances, notably the much-admired mazurka in modern triple time; the stately polonaise, a kind of processional much used in European courts and at elaborate social functions; the varsoviene, a slow three-step, and the cracovienne, a fast two-step.

Italy's chief contribution is the jig, which is danced under different names in all countries—in Italy as the tarantella and saltarello, in England as the hornpipe, and in Scotland and Ireland as the reel.

The only dances native to his country are sundry jigs, reels, clog dances, break-downs, etc., mostly originating among the Southern plantation hands. While these dances are lively and amusing, they cannot be called artistic, like the national dances of Germany, Poland, Spain, Scotland and France.

ENGLAND TO FALL.

British Nobleman Predicts Capture by Germany.

The Earl of Clanwilliam, who is in Winnipeg with his bride on his way to Alaska, expressed himself as of the positive belief that England is doomed. He says Germany has made every preparation, has strengthened her army and navy, and will invade England without a moment's notice. Nothing will prevent England being devastated and captured. The British are unprepared. Her army is weak and she could make little resistance against an invading force.

It is such talk as this that has kept many Britons in a condition of nervous anxiety for months, so much so that the nation may be said to have been hysterical. But it seems to us that such talk is all rot. Perhaps Germany could take England. The question is, however, could she hold it? Japan could take the Philippines from us almost without an effort. The United States could capture Canada or Mexico, Great Britain could take Denmark and Russia could conquer Sweden in a month. But in none of these cases would the matter end there. Nations in these days are not permitted to go forth on pillaging and conquering expeditions against their peaceful neighbors. Civilization would not stand for that. The other powers would be asking questions and taking action before the sun could set twice. No, no; the old days are past and with them the old ways of doing things.

LIVE STOCK NOTE.



Miss Citee—Your pigs are quite fat, aren't they?

Farmer Yappe—Yes, marm.

Miss Citee—It