

The Pirate of Alastair

By
RUPERT SARGENT
HOLLAND

Author of "The Count at Harvard," etc.

Copyright, 1908, by J. B. Lippincott Company. All rights reserved.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

The larder was well-stocked, thanks to Charles' foresight, and we made a most excellent supper of potted ham, boned chicken, pilot biscuit, and coffee, boiled as only Charles knows how. While supper was being prepared Duponceau and I made the round of the house, putting up the great storm-shutters with which I usually protected the windows from the winter gales, and piling packing-boxes and extra-heavy furniture against the doors, so that they might be ready to withstand any sudden attack. I was surprised to find how snug we could make the cottage. It had been built to weather the roughest of off-shore gales, but I never thought of it as useful for a log-house in case of attack by land. I was very proud of it when we barred the last shutter.

Meanwhile Charles was spreading the table, and Rodney, reclining upon a couch as became a wounded warrior, was puffing contentedly at the first cigarette he had had in three days.

"Little did I think, Selden," said he, "when I lunched with you that day, that I'd be coming back as a member of a midnight garrison, defending a mysterious gentleman in a black cloak, who popped up out of the sea. Not but what I enjoy it," he added, as Duponceau looked his way; "I haven't had such a good time since I went bear-hunting in Labrador; but I should like to know what's happened to the market."

"Perhaps I can smuggle Charles through the enemy's lines to the club in a day or two," I answered.

Rodney grunted. "You talk of a day or two as though time were nothing. The whole bottom might drop out in less than an hour. However, I don't care so long as supper's come."

We disposed of a prodigious meal, and when we had finished Duponceau examined with great interest an armory of old swords and other war-like instruments that hung over the mantel-piece. Finally he unhooked two long and rusty blades, compared them carefully, and, carrying them with him, went to the stairs.

"You're not going to kill him?" I exclaimed.

"Certainly not; but possibly we can end this campaign to-night. Come with me."

Rodney and I followed him up to my study, where our prisoner was stretched out in the Morris chair. Duponceau flung the two swords on the center-table, and I could see a quick look of alarm flare up in the captive's eyes.

"I am about to propose," said Duponceau, "a happy settlement of all our difficulties. Instead of your band of six or eight outlaws fighting my three comrades and myself, what say you if you and I fight it out, you to withdraw your party if I win, I to go with you if I lose? Come, that sounds fair enough." He loosed the bandage from the prisoner's mouth. The wry smile reappeared.

"What do you take me for? I'm no fence, and the parties back of me wouldn't stand for such a game anyhow. They want you taken quietly, delivered up, and don't care what happens to any number of me."

Duponceau looked taken aback; he thought over the man's words for a moment, then turned to us. "You'll bear witness that I've done everything in my power to settle this affair with the loss of nobody's blood but my own, and that my offer was refused."

Rodney and I agreed. "What shall we do with him?" I asked.

"Turn him loose," said Rodney. "It's better to have all our enemies on the same side of the house."

Duponceau was of like mind, so we took the man down-stairs, and, opening the front door, sent him out into the night. "I'll tell the chief about what you offered," he said as he left, "and if he says it's a go, we'll bring our best fence with a flag of truce. But you needn't expect him, for from what I've heard the boss won't risk no chance of losing you."

I closed the door, and double-bolted it. Charles had laid a fire and lighted it, for we were all stiff with our life on board the ship, and as I stretched out comfortably before it I remembered the old English saying that a man's house is his castle, and was determined that no men in the pay of private schemers should enter mine without my full consent.

CHAPTER XVII.

I was dreaming of the sharp crackle of musketry when I awoke to find small stones rattling against the shutters of my study window. Duponceau had slept in my bed—as became the guest of honor—and I had found lodging for the night upon the divan that graced the den. I went to the window, and, cautiously peeping through a crack's opening in the shutters, looked for the stone-thrower. I could see only the white top of the nearer dunes, and a sky of cloudless blue, the white and blue as perfect as ever painter dreamed. Although I could not see my visitor, it was evident that the opening shutter was visible, for a larger stone struck the shutter and fell on to the balcony. Curiously enough, it was wrapped in a handkerchief, and one which I in-

stantly saw was not a man's property. With this lure, I opened the shutters wide and stepped on to the balcony. Now below me I saw Barbara, dressed for riding, the color in her cheeks high from so much cannonading.

"Good morning," she called to me. "I rode down to the ship, but found that you had all flown, so I left my horse in the woods and came here. I thought you must have gone for the season, by the looks of the house. May I come in?"

"You may," I cried, my heart bounding with new delight at the sweetness of her voice. "I remember a day when you wouldn't enter."

"You forget, Mr. Selden, that that was when there was peace in the land. Many things happen in a siege."

"Many delightful things. One minute and I'll be down at the door."

I hurried down-stairs, but before I could open the front door I heard Barbara's voice crying, "Wait, wait!"

Rodney jumped from his couch and joined me. He as well as I had slept in his clothes. "What is it, Felix?" he asked.

"Miss Graham is outside and wants to come in, but she's just called to me to wait. I'll open the little side window first."

I slid the window-bolt and looked out. Two men, the disagreeable chap of our first meeting and another surly-faced individual, stood some twenty feet back of Barbara. I placed my revolver on the window ledge.

"Now, then, what do you men want?" I demanded.

"We don't want the lady to go in," the disagreeable-looking one replied.

"Does the lady want to?" I asked.

"She does," said Barbara, in a most determined tone of voice.

"Then she shall. Slide back the bolts, Rodney," I whispered. "Now if any one chooses to interfere with her entering my house, he can reflect that he's looking into a straight steel barrel."

The door opened, and Barbara, her head high, walked in. I shut the small window and put the revolver in my pocket. "There's a pretty mad-looking pair out there," I said. "Welcome to the log-house!"

But Barbara was not regarding me.

"Why, Rodney," she exclaimed, "what has happened to your arm? They didn't shoot you, did they?" She had caught sight of Rodney's arm in a sling.

"It's nothing, Barbara," he said, beaming; "only a scratch. I might have been potted by that badly shooting snipe."

She looked at him, her face all admiration. "It's like you to speak lightly, but you've been in danger, and partly on my account, for you'd never have laid eyes on Monsieur Duponceau if it hadn't been for me."

I would have drifted out of the room if I could, but I was caught between them and the door.

Rodney smiled; I could imagine how pleased he must be feeling.

"We've had several scraps on the ship," he explained, "and when our food gave out we came up here."

"You poor dears!" she exclaimed, and this time I was included in her words. "I've been thinking of you every minute of the last two days, and wanting to come over to join you. Well, I've stolen away at last, for a morning ride, and now I'm going to stay here with you."

"Stay here with us!" we both exclaimed in amazement.

"Until after breakfast. I'm going to set your table, and pour your coffee, and fix your rooms, and show you in general what a woman can do in a house."

We both had had visions of that already, I fancy. I caught Rodney's eye; he smiled, and the color rose to his face.

"Where's Charles?" Barbara demanded. I led her into the kitchen, where Charles was busied, and Rodney and I sat on the dresser and watched while Barbara rolled up her sleeves, pinned a napkin over her dress as an apron, and proceeded to direct Charles as to the cooking things. Either one of us would have been supremely happy if the other had not been there.

When the table was set, and the breakfast on its way from the kitchen to the dining-room, Duponceau appeared, for the first time free of the cloak he had worn on the ship, but still all in black, save for his gold chains, and still enveloped in that peculiar air of mystery which instinctively set him apart from all ordinary beings. Barbara curtsied to him, and he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it with the grace of the old-time school.

"We are not quite forgotten by the outside world," he said, with almost a tinge of royalty in his voice, "very far indeed from forgotten, when so charming an emissary joins us."

Barbara looked pleased; I could see that Duponceau was still her paragon of romance.

"Will you take the head of the table, monsieur?" she asked. He carefully seated her behind the coffee-urn, took his own place, and Rodney and I sat at the sides. It was the first state breakfast my cottage had ever known.

Barbara contrived that we should all forget that we were cooped up in a log-

house. She smiled at Rodney and at me impartially, and listened attentively to everything Duponceau said. Even Charles felt her influence. I could see him linger in the doorway on the alert to serve her.

Breakfast came to an end, and Barbara insisted on bandaging Rodney's arm. I think he was sorry that she should know how slight the wound really was, for he demurred, though with a look of great satisfaction; but he finally consented to roll up his sleeve. I drew Duponceau away to my den, and the two were left alone for a long half-hour. Monsieur Pierre and I discussed matters of defense.

When we returned to the living-room Barbara's face was flushed, and Rodney's cheeks were red. His arm was wound with a new bandage and a little gold pin fastened it.

"Will you take me over to the house?" asked Barbara, jumping up; and now it was my turn to gloat, for she insisted on poking into every nook and cranny, on learning how two men left to their own devices lived, and on improving what she found. I, who had once been averse to feminine influence about a house, surrendered. She straightened the pictures, rearranged the ornaments and knick-knacks, and finally started in upon my desk.

"Oh, please don't touch that!" I exclaimed.

She stopped and looked at me. "Rodney let me fix his arm when he didn't want to, and you—"

"Please do," I said, motioning towards the papers, and she placed them in little piles, quite regardless of what they were about.

"Now I've been horrid enough," she said when she'd finished. "I dare say men are better off living alone. Think how angry you'd be if a woman should do that every day."

"That depends on the woman. I could imagine—"

"I always told you you were imaginative," she broke in. "The woman you could imagine would probably be a nymph."

"Yes," I agreed; "she is."

"And nymphs are proverbially slippery creatures."

"Yes, so I've heard."

"So she might slip away from you without a moment's notice."

She sat down in my big desk-chair.

"Poor Rodney," she sighed. "It seems as if he were sacrificing a great deal. Think of his stocks and bonds."

"Yes," I agreed. A moment later I added, "I haven't written a line for ever so many days."

"And it's so important that a broker should keep in touch with his office," she added.

"And that a writer should write."

"Then why did you give it up?"

"Duponceau," I answered. Our eyes met, and we both laughed.

There was a brief silence, and then she rose. "I have a feeling that the crisis is coming. Remember that I trust you to shield my pirate. I must go back to the club."

We went down-stairs, and Barbara made her adieu.

"I'll go with you to your horse," said Rodney.

"I shall be delighted to go," I put in at the same moment.

"I am not so valuable a man as you," Rodney explained, "in case they should cut us off."

Barbara looked from one to the other of us. "Rodney—" she began.

I bowed. "I yield." He was the older friend, and, much as I feared him, I could but admit that he was entitled to the privilege.

Isip smiled with pleasure. "Thank you," he said.

"Rodney must not go," she finished.

It was my turn to start for the door.

"Nor must you," she continued to me. "I am much safer alone than with either of you."

The matter was settled; we could only hold the door open, and let her pass out. We watched her as she went down the beach. Once she turned and waved her riding-crop in farewell. It was cruel that we should be penned up within four walls when the world was crying aloud for joy of the day, and she was going out to it.

We turned back ill at ease towards each other, and just then a bullet ploughed into the house to the right of us. We jumped in, slammed the door, and bolted it.

There was a cry from Charles. "They're coming up the balcony!"

(To be continued.)

Perfect Confidence.

A physician was summoned to a very sick man, who was very much preoccupied with troubles of his own. On arriving at the sick man's bed, he said to his wife:

"Your husband is in the last throes. Every movement shows that the end is near."

At this moment the sick man's head fell over the pillow, when the doctor said: "The end has come, your husband is dead."

In a shrill, thin voice the sick man said:

"Tain't so, Maria."

At once the wife laid her hand on his head and remarked: "Don't disturb yourself, Rufus—the doctor knows best."—Harper's Monthly.

In the Wrong Place.

It was not until three batmen in succession had struck out that a disgusted patron in the bleachers yelled: "Hey! You mutts oughta be up here. You're nothin' but fans."—Kansas City Times.

Her Preference.

Edith—Would you marry a man to reform him?

Mayme—Not if I could get a man who didn't need reforming.

Of the world's population there are sixty-four to the million who are blind.



Doctor—Have you a last wish? Patient—Yes. I wish I had some other doctor.—Life.

"Did your new chauffeur turn out all right?" "No; that's why he's in the hospital."—Puck.

"Waiter, has this steak been cooked?" "Yes, sir, by electricity." "Well, take it back and give it another shock."

"Why did you tip that boy so handsomely for handing you your coat?" "Did you see the coat he gave me?"—Tatler.

"When she hit him with the golf ball, did it knock him senseless?" "I guess so. I understand they are soon to marry."

Pat—An' phwat the devil is a cha-fin-dish? Mike—Whist! Ut's a fryin-pan that's got into society.—Boston Transcript.

"Our train hit a bear on the way down." "Was the bear on the track?" "No; the train had to go into the woods after him."

Bacon—I understand some of your hens have stopped laying? Egbert—Two of them have. "What's the cause?" "Automobile."

Little Ella—I am never going to Holland, when I grow up. Governess—Why not? "Cause our geography says it's a low lying country."

Ikey—Vat is a promoter? Father of Ike—A promoter is von who vill supply der ocean if some von else vill furnish der ships.—Princeton Tiger.

Mother (at lunch)—Yes, darling, these little sardines are sometimes eaten by the larger fish. Mabel (aged 5)—But, mamma, how do they get the cans open?

Teacher—Now, boys, here's a little example in mental arithmetic. How old would a person be who was born in 1875? Pupils—Please, teacher, was it a man or a woman?

"I am sorry, my son, if your studies worry you. Do the best you can, and let it go at that." "But I'm at the foot of the class, mother—that's where the shoe pinches!"—Chicago Tribune.

She (to future son-in-law)—I may tell you that, though my daughter is well educated, she can not cook. He—That doesn't matter much, so long as she doesn't try.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Police Justice—Have you any way of making a living? Vagrant—I hev, y'r Honor. I kin make brooms. Police Justice—You can? Where did you learn that trade? Vagrant—I decline t answer, y'r Honor.

Mrs. Gudethyng—Why did you have to leave the army? Wayward Cuffdrop—Well, you see, I was in the hospital most of the time; the food was too rich for me. I was used to living in a boarding-house.—New York Globe.

Mrs. Highsome—Why did you leave your last place? Applicant (for position as cook)—To tell ye the honest truth, ma'am, the mussus discharged me. Mrs. Highsome—Then you didn't leave of your own accord. I'll take you!

"I see that Jane Bleeker always takes Charlie Brainard with her when she drives her new motor-car. I thought she favored Clarence Green." "Yes, put poor Clarence isn't any good at pumping up tires."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"Did you have a pleasant time at the picnic, Ronald? I trust that you remembered to fletcherize, and masticated each mouthful 100 times." "Yes'm, an' while I was chewin' my first bite the other boys et up all the grub."—Life.

Visitor—Who is that crazy man yelling and struggling so? Hospital Attendant—He isn't crazy. That's Dr. Sabre, the celebrated surgeon. They brought him here yesterday, and the doctors have just ordered an operation.—Puck.

Irate Tailor (who has called frequently to collect, without success)—My dear sir, I wish you'd make some definite arrangement with me, then. The man—Why, surely—let's see—well, suppose you call every Monday.—Bohemian.

"Ma, what are the folks in our church gettin' up a subscription fer?" "To send our minister on a vacation to Europe this summer." "Won't there be no church services while he's gone?" "No, dear." "Ma, I got \$1.23 in my bank—can I give that?"—Cleveland Leader.

Nervous Passenger (on lake steamer)—It must be terrible to think of an accident happening to the boat while you are away down there in that hole. Stoker—It's jist the other way, ma'am. If the boat sinks I won't have to go through more'n about half as much water as you will fore I git to the bottom o' the lake.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

The King of Italy is the only vegetarian monarch.

Over a large extent of Russian territory German is the commercial language.

In France and Austria provision of rescue work in mines is made compulsory.

The price of a gondola ride in Venice has been increased from a franc to a franc and a half.

The London Lancet says six hundred children of leprous parents are being educated by the Mission of Lepers, and the children show no signs of leprosy.

For the year ended March 31, 1908, the municipal gas department of Birmingham, England, was able to contribute \$347,754 to the reduction of city taxation.

Death from fright in the first stages of ether and chloroform before consciousness is lost is best avoided by letting the patient hold and inhale the stuff himself.

The seaweed known as Irish moss is used to some extent as a food by the peasantry along the coasts, also as a jelly for invalids, and as a stiffening for calico in the printing process.

German manufacturing, exporting and financial circles are keenly alive to the growing custom of establishing in foreign cities department stores to serve as channels for supplying German merchandise.

Bermuda producers are beginning to find it more profitable to meet the wants of the increasing influx of visitors than to compete with the Gulf and South Atlantic truck farmers in the New York markets.

Dr. Roberts' suggestion in 1881 of sewing wounds of the heart was received as a joke. Dr. Rehn, of Germany, in 1897 got the first recovery from heart wound. Altogether there have been sixteen such operations, with seven amazing recoveries.

In answer to the question, "What passages in holy scripture bear upon cruelty to animals?" one boy said: "Cruel people often cut dogs' tails and ears, but the Bible says, 'Thou whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.'"—Christian Register.

Dr. Wurtzen has had great results in many cases of smallpox, quick cures and no pitting. He keeps the patient in total darkness, and finds Finzen's red light treatment uncertain. No white light is allowed even for a second, but red light lamps are momentarily used to examine patients.

There are 1,990 Young Men's Christian Associations in Germany—only 1,939 in America; yet, where the German associations have but 117,000 members, the American have 446,000. And German association property holdings have a value of \$2,400,000, contrasted with a value of \$40,000,000 in America.

Although the young oriental understood ordinary methods and occurrences very well in his new California abiding place, he occasionally found a puzzle. "Japanese boy pretty smart when he can speak American in a year," he said, "but Missouri boy he speak good after he has been here only six months."

In commenting on and gloating over the ocean breezes which tear in from the eastward over Massachusetts Bay a Boston paper rubs it in by saying: "What an experience it is to read the Cincinnati Enquirer's vivid account of the general suffocation in the Ohio and Miami valleys, and then call for an extra blanket and go to sleep!"

Devil fish weighing up to 200 pounds are sometimes caught in Japan. These fish are amphibious; they are often seen wobbling on their tentacles like giant spiders in search of patches of sweet potatoes. The natives kill them with clubs. In the water they are caught in jars lowered to the bottom, which the octopus enters, thinking them a good retreat from which to catch its food.

The wooden front corsets of George II. time were commonly worn by dandies, as shown in Hogarth's portraits. The doughty warriors of Gustavus Adolphus wore corsets to a man. Catherine de Medici loved small waists and poison. She introduced the ruff and a thirteen-inch waist. This monster invented a steel corset. No wonder the portraits of that day look so solemn.—New York Press.

This is a story told by a commercial traveler after a trip through southern Canada: "Being impatient to get out of a sleepy little town I hurried to the station. After a while an object slowly emerged from the distance and slunk up alongside. I boarded the solitary coach, and, after a tedious wait, the engine began to gasp feebly, the old coach creaked a little, but the train did not move. I was about to get out to see what was the matter when the forward door of the coach was suddenly flung open and a head popped in. 'Hey, you,' said the engineer, leaning at me, 'climb off till I get a start, will ye?'"