The Pirate of Alastair

By RUPERT SARGENT HOLLAND

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CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

Rodney thought. "The poor French workingmen, the widows and orphans, who had saved and slaved, gave him everything they had, because he knew how to make money multiply as no one else did. He drew them pictures of the great factories and stores and hotels he would build for them with their money, and told them how by adding their mite to mites together they might produce something gigantic. How about them left without a sou?"

"It was their own lookout," I tried to argue.

"Well," said Rodney, "the right and wrong of this sort of thing lie deep, but it may be that a man has no right to use his own imagination to see for other people; that he can build air-castles only for himself."

"Perhaps," I agreed; "but, as you say, if he had succeeded, he would have been a hero."

"That's all the difference. However, he didn't, and so he's an outcast." Rodney laughed. "And to think that I've been doing my best to defend the worst scapegrace the market has known in years."

I sat back on my couch and clasped my hands about my knees.

"What must we do now?" I asked at length.

"Give him up; deliver his precious self and his treasure chest to the bloodhounds."

I shook my head. "No, I can't do that. We've been too close together. They may take him, but I can't have a hand in it."

Rodney sat staring out of the window. "Well," said he, "I don't believe I can either, though as a broker I see my duty plain enough. I can't do it, I simply cannot do it."

We sat silent for some time, each intent on his own thoughts.

"Ought we to tell him that we know?" Rodney said finally.

"I was wondering. Perhaps we should, but I don't believe we can. When you face him and look into those clear black eyes and hear that voice I doubt if there'll be anything to do but keep your mouth shut."

"Yet we must do something," objected Rodney, "for I must be off for New York in two hours from now, to try and straighten out my losses."

"Suppose we go down and look at him," I suggested. "Possibly we can think of something then."

We went down-stairs and looked in the dining-room, the hallway, and the kitchen. In the kitchen we found Charles drowsing. We could find no trace of Duponceau. I waked Charles and questioned him.

"When did you last see Monsieur Duponceau?"

Charles rose and pulled a paper from his pocket.

"Only a couple of minutes ago, Mr. Felix," he said, "he gave me this note for you and told me not to disturb you, but to give it to you when you asked for him."

I opened the paper and read it to Rodney.

"My ship has come at last. I am going on board. I can get there alone; no one could help me. If you knew all, perchance you would not wish to help me. I have done sufficient harm without taking you and the others farther. Ask mademoiselle to pray for me. Good-by."

I looked up at Rodney in blank amazement; and as we stood so, a shot came from the beach. We turned and made for the stairs.

CHAPTER XX.

From the balcony we sighted a schooner lying between the beach and the Shifting Shoal. A long-boat was in the water, and men were hurriedly manning it. Below us on the beach stood Duponnceau, a pistol in either hand, fronting a half-dozen of his enemies, who were between him and the cottage. I would have leaped to his help, but a glance told me that the matter was too far gone for that.

Duponceau fired quickly, steadily, then wheeled and ran for the dunes. Bullets chased him, ploughed into the sand behind him, whizzed past him, but by some miracle failed to hit him. He reached the nearest sand-wall, and was hidden from us. A moment later and we saw him appear, his pistols reloaded, and watched him stand again at bay and shoot. Then again he fled for the next dune up the beach, and the pursuers, temporarily stayed, were after him again.

It was to be a running fight, stand and deliver, then hide, until the long-boat should ground upon the beach and the fugitive spring into it. I looked to the boat and prayed that it might come quickly, but the distance was long, and the sea ruffled and choppy.

Again Duponceau appeared, and again the enemy were held at bay, and dropped and ducked and dodged as his bullets flew among them.

A moment's stand, and he was hidden in the next dune, loading, making ready for another dash. It was breathless, speechless work. Rodney and I gripped our glasses, shut our teeth, watched and hoped and prayed. Again the enemy were on, after him, gaining fast, and again he shot out from the dunes, and, a lone figure, fronted and scattered them with his fire. A man went down with a bullet in his leg, and Duponceau had gained another breastwork.

Now the boat from the schooner was coming closer in. I caught an agonized glance from Duponceau in its direction, then his eyes returned to his foes, and he was shooting, ducking, and squirming into the sand-wall. It was a pitiful chase, like that of a hare by hounds, but it was also heroic, for the man made a noble quarry, and the hounds were more than fearful of his fire.

"He's down!" cried Rodney. True, Duponceau had fallen, but on the second he was up and on again, and now he had found the last dune, and he must stand there or dash across the unprotected beach.

"Come on!" We fled down the stairs, through the open door, and hard up the shore. Now we could see another element of danger. Some of the enemy had stolen through the pines, and were firing at Duponceau down the length of his dune.

"Look!" I muttered. We stopped, breathless, panting, wide-eyed. Duponceau burst out from the dune, whirled about, fired back at the hidden foe, wheeled and shot at the men who were following him up the beach, and, turning, headed straight for the Ship.

"Run!" I murmured, and Rodney echoed me: "Run, Duponceau, run, and may Heaven help!"

I have seen men run, but never as Duponceau ran that day. He seemed to skim, almost to fly, across that open space, and behind him came his enemies, no longer firing, no longer cursing, matching their speed against his frantic flight.

The Frenchman neared the rocks, was on them, was up and clambering over the Ship's side. Then came a sharp report, and I could see Dupponceau quiver and hang useless—worse than useless, for he was only half over the vessel's rail.

"He's done!" I breathed.

But as he hung there Barbara suddenly appeared beside him and pulled him inboard, supported him across the deck, and got him as far as the cabin door before he collapsed on the boards.

Barbara disappeared, and then reappeared with something in her arms.

"The chest!" I muttered. "He couldn't forego that!"

I saw Barbara lift and steady Duponceau on his feet, saw him clutch the box with one hand, while he held a revolver in the other. He staggered across the deck.

"Come on!" I breathed, and we were off for the Ship.

The long-boat was half way in when a new shout threatened to sound Duponceau's death-knell. Men came out on the cliff and stood high above him, ready to fire down upon him. There was a ring about him now—enemies on the rocks, on the cliff, and men already scrambling through the water to lay their hands on him.

"Look!" cried Rodney. I saw Barbara whisper in Duponceau's ear, saw him straighten up to his full height and fire at the men above him. One bullet ripped into the cliff, another shattered an arm.

We stood now on the rocks, a stone's throw off. Duponceau looked seaward and gave a cry. With terrible effort, he leaped to the farther rail, raised himself to plunge—the box still in his arms—into the sea, and sink or swim to help. He balanced, crouched, and then—a clear report and he fell, a leg broken, down into the waves. His stand was over, the fight done; his enemies had taken him.

A couple of men lifted him from the water and carried him to shore; another man followed with the chest. Rodney and I drew near and looked at him; he was conscious, and only his set teeth showed the agony he suffered.

"It's over," he said. "The boat was late." Then his eyes lighted on me, and he tried to smile. "Good-by," he muttered. "Take my good-by to her."

Carefully the men lifted him and carried him into the pines.

"He will live," said Rodney briefly, and I nodded. It was not for Duponceau to surrender easily, though I wondered if now he would not prefer it so.

CHAPTER XXI.

The long-boat returned to the schooner, and in a quarter-hour the latter had vanished as silently as she had come. Rodney and I went on board the Ship, and found Barbara sitting against the broken mast, her eyes deep with unshed tears of pity. We sat there and talked of Duponceau's flight and capture. "If it hadn't been for the chest, he would have escaped," said Barbara. "His face lighted when he had it in his arms again."

It was some little time after this when Rodney stood up.

"I'm going to the club. I have to pack and catch the next train to New York. May I take you home, Barbara?"

The girl's eyes looked over at the beach regretfully, then roamed over the Ship, standing there all desolate, lapsing again into that silence from which it had just been awakened. I saw a certain wistfulness steal into her eyes.

"No, Rodney; I don't think I'll go home just yet. I'm not in the humor to meet aunt and the people at the club. I'd like to sit here and think a while."

"Well," said Rodney, "good-by." He shook hands with her. "Good-by, Felix. If you ever find this place too lonely for you, come and see me in New York. Things do happen there sometimes, though not such things as here in Alastair."

We shook hands, and I caught a glimpse of some passing regret beneath the smile on the surface of his eyes.

As I had watched Duponceau, I watched Rodney disappear into the pines. The cheerful man in tweeds, like the mysterious man of the sea, had said farewell to the beach, but each had left a trace of himself there which I should never forget.

I turned back to Barbara.

"It's all over," she said. "They've all come and gone, and it might have been a dream."

"Here's the Ship," I answered, "riding at anchor, just as she did before."

"That makes it seem more like a dream," she said; "that after all that has happened, the Ship is just the same as on the first day I found her, and the beach"—she turned to face it—"is just as sunny and as desolate."

"Yet the pirate came," I answered, "a real pirate, a lineal descendant of Captain Kidd, and he brought treasure and hid it and dug it up again, and fought like the thorough-going gentleman adventurer he was. Monsieur Pierre Duponceau was no ordinary man."

"Tell me what you know about him," she commanded, and settled down, leaning against the mast.

"He was an uncommon man," I began, "but whether an uncommon man becomes a hero or a scapegrace depends upon the luck of time. Duponceau had ideas that were far about the heads of most men, ideas that some one at a later day might use to great ends, or which he himself might have used so had he been given time. He planned, gathered his cargoes, launched his ships in search of the Golden Fleece, and was on his way to winning it when a quartering gale drove his craft upon the rocks. Had the wind veered by a needle-point, he might have won. He was planning to make the poor of France well-to-do; instead he made them much poorer than they were; and yet those same plans pushed on may succeed when it's too late for the poor investors or for him. That's about the way it stands."

Barbara was silent, her eyes watching the distant glitter of the sea.

"There's so much luck in things, isn't there?" she said finally. "I like him, anyway; I like him for what he tried to do." Then, after a pause: "You were always sure something would happen here, weren't you? So was I. Something had to happen. Do you suppose he came of his own free will, or because we had wished so hard for an adventure?"

"Wishing hard can accomplish almost anything, I've been told."

"What are you going to do now that everything is over?" she asked presently.

I shook my head disconsolately.

"I have barely yet faced the possibility of no more teas on the beach, no more sunsets from the cliff, no more adventures on the Ship. It's not a very pleasant prospect, is it?"

"But the beach and the cliff and the Ship will still be here," she answered.

I followed her gaze seaward.

"A week ago I discovered a curious thing. For years I had lived here and found all the beauty I wanted in watching the changing colors of the waves, and the golden glow through the woods, and the dawn pinks of the sand, and yet all of a sudden I found they had absolutely vanished, that I couldn't possibly find them any more."

I waited, and finally I caught her low-whispered, "Why?"

"Something had happened. I couldn't see them alone; I could see them only when some one else was there to see them, too."

She gave a little sign. "I know; I can understand just what you mean."

"The pines show no more armies, and the Ship gives up no more adventures, unless there is some one else here to see and live them with me."

"And," she said slowly, thoughtfully, "if there were some one else, would all these wonders still come?"

"Surely, for we would be living them all the time we were together."

"Poet!" she said. "Dreamer!"

I waited, fearful and hopeful in one.

"And yet I dream, too," she said at last; "and I think that you have shown me more wonderful things than any one else could."

"Then do you still think," I asked, "that some other man will come who can show you more?"

She would not answer my question. "The man we imagined came out of the sea and is gone. I feel as if I'd lived years in a fortnight. Dear old Ship, how I hate to leave her!"

"Why must you? Why not sail on and on in her forever? Why not set sail in her for the Fortunate Isles? Barbara, will you?"

She turned and looked into my eyes, and I read her answer.

So, with Barbara sitting against the mast, our Ship set sail.

[THE END.]

Hasty Correction.

Hojax—I hear you are engaged old man. Allow me to congratulate you.

Tomdix—You didn't hear it quite right, my boy. I'm married.

Hojax—Oh, I beg pardon. You have my sympathy.

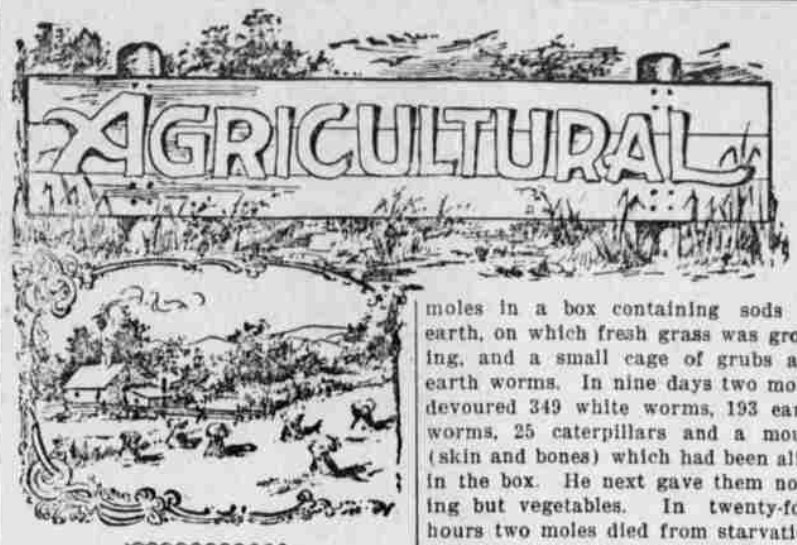
Justice.

"My wife and I always settle our little disputes by arbitration."

"And who is the arbitrator?"

"My wife, of course."—New York Times.

The hardest trial of the heart is, whether it can bear a rival's failure without triumph.—Aikin.



Blight of Potatoes.

Early blight is a potato disease which causes more or less damage to the crop every year. The trouble is most marked in unusually dry seasons and is caused by a fungus which grows and spreads rapidly. The spores of this fungus when seen through a microscope have the appearance of clubs. They enter the vines and the first thing one notices is that the leaves are turning yellow. The disease is likely to come during the first or second week in July. It may be easily prevented by spraying with Bordeaux mixture before the disease gets a hold on the crop. After it has a start it is of no use to spray, because the spores are already inside the vines.

In order to kill the potato beetle at at the same time, one-fourth of a pound of Paris green may be added to

the barrel of Bordeaux mixture. The spraying can be done quite cheaply. The cost of four sprayings is estimated at $1.85 per acre. This includes the cost of labor also. In Vermont a trial was conducted by one hundred farmers to test the value of this spray. The period covered five years, and the result was the increase of 70 per cent in yield. The high value of Bordeaux mixture as a preventive of early blight has been proved many times, and should not be overlooked by anyone who expects to raise a good crop of potatoes.

Oats as a Poultry Food.

Oats make an excellent food for the poultry, providing they are of the right kind. The long, slim oat, with plenty of husk or hull is poor feed for anything, but the plump, meaty oat is a good feed for all stock, including poultry.

Hulled oats for young chickens after they are three or four weeks old will help them to make bone and muscle faster than any other one feed, and this is the most desirable element at this period of growth.

For grown or feeding fowls we have at most seasons of the year fed one feed of oats daily with most satisfactory results. We have fed some oats after boiling them for fall and winter feeding, but they were of poor quality, and the boiling was to soften the hulls rather than because the boiling added any other value to the oats feed itself. Boiling is not necessary with good oats except by way of variety in feeding. The best way is to feed them in the litter, scattered well and deeply so the fowls will have to do considerable scratching.—Agricultural Epitomist.

Weeding One Unprofitable Cow.

Dairy farms are continually advancing in value, which should be regarded as the part of the profits. Grain farming is hard on the land. Many hard run grain farms have been brought back to a good state of fertility by changing to cows.

With the case in test it will be possible to weed out the poor cheese cows on the same principle that we have used the Babcock butter test to weed out the poor butter cows. Instead of keeping cows for cheese which average 70 pounds of casein per 100 pounds of fat, we may breed cows that will produce milk containing close to 10 pounds of casein for 100 pounds of fat. We need to specialize in cheese just as intelligently and carefully as in butter production.

Moles Destroy Crop Enemies.

A distinguished naturalist carefully examined the stomachs of fifteen moles caught in different localities, but failed to discover therein the slightest vestige of plants or roots. On the contrary, they were filled with the remains of earth worms. Not satisfied by this fact, he shut off several moles in a box containing sods of earth, on which fresh grass was growing, and a small cage of grubs and earth worms. In nine days two moles devoured 349 white worms, 193 earth worms, 25 caterpillars and a mouse (skin and bones) which had been alive in the box. He next gave them nothing but vegetables. In twenty-four hours two moles died from starvation. Another naturalist calculates that two moles destroyed 20,000 white worms or grubs in a single year. If this is correct, it is a strong argument in favor of multiplying rather than destroying the moles.

Horses Increasing in Value.

A table has been compiled from the statistics of the Census Bureau and the Department of Agriculture, which shows that the rise in the market value of horses has been out of all proportion in the last fifteen years to the increase in their number in the United States. From 1893 to 1908 the horse population so to speak, increased 3,785,000, or 23 per cent. In the same period the gain in the number of human inhabitants was 21,979,000, or 33 per cent. But the increase in the value of the horses in this country was no less than $875,300,000, or 88 per cent.

These facts will astonish many persons who have supposed that the growth of the automobile interest has been very adverse to the horse breeders and to the market demand for horses. On the contrary, the prices obtained for good horses, especially for heavy draft animals of blood and stamina, have risen far beyond the hopes of horse dealers a few years ago. Horses are worth about 50 per cent more in proportion to their number than they were in 1893.

To Cure Kicking Cows.

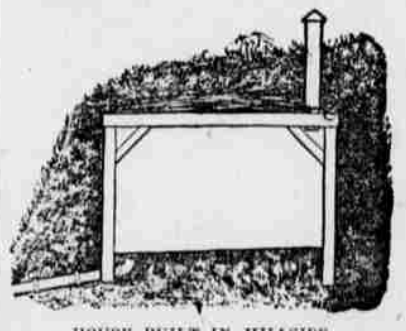
To cure a kicking cow is often a difficult and tedious task, and unless some method of restraining them from kicking is adopted more loss than profit may result through spilt milk. The person milking also runs considerable risk of injury in some form or other.

When the cause of kicking can be assigned to vice or an acquired bad habit, the following little arrangement will be found useful, and, at the same time, simple, harmless, effective, inexpensive and easily applied. A strap about one inch wide should be buckled around each hind leg a little above the hock sufficiently tight to compress the hamstring.

The animal cannot kick, and if flies are troublesome and cause her to switch her tail, the best plan is to either strap it to her leg or secure it to one of the straps with a piece of cord. Use the straps every time the animal is milked, and after three weeks or so omit, to ascertain whether a cure has been effected or not.—Irish Farming World.

Apple Storage House.

This apple storage house is built in a hillside. The roof is covered with brush and earth. A ventilator is arranged in the top and a tile drain at the lower side to carry off water and admit cool air.



HOUSE BUILT IN HILLSIDE.

Feeding Whole Grain.

Bulletin No. 242 of the Michigan Experiment Station, offers some exact data upon the subject of feeding whole grain to cows, heifers and calves. When whole grain was fed to cows, 22 per cent was unmasticated; when fed to heifers, 10 per cent; when fed to calves, 8 per cent. Chemical analysis showed no change in composition of the unmasticated parts, so it is a safe assumption that the animal derives no benefit from grain that passes through the digestive tract unaltered.

Picking Hops.

There are two drawbacks to hop picking. One is so-called hop poisoning, which is simply a sort of prickly heat or rash, sometimes produced by contact of face and arms with the nettle-like fuzz on the stalks of the hop vine. It does not affect all pickers. The other is the dark staining of the hands resulting from the resin of the blossom. It may be removed with the crushed green leaves of the hop.