THE IRON PIRATE

A Plain Tale of Strange Happenings on the Sea

By MAX PEMBERTON

CHAPTER IX.

There were two great ships abreast of each other, and they were steaming with so great a pressure of steam that the dark green water was cleaved into two huge waves of foam before their bows; and the spray fell in tons upon their decks.

The more distant of the two ships was long in shape and dark in color; she had two funnels painted white, but marked with the anchor which clearly set her down to be one of the famous Black Anchor fleet. Her decks were dark with the figures of passengers and crew all crowding to the port side, wherefrom the other ship was approaching her.

It was this other ship which drew our gaze. Almost of the same length as the passenger steamer, which she now approached obliquely, she rode the long swell with perfect grace, and many of her deck houses and part of her prow shone with the brightness of pure gold. Full the sun fell upon her in a sheen of shimmering splendor, throwing great reflected lights which dazzled the eye. Every ornament on her seemed to be made of the precious metal, now glowing to exceeding brilliance in the full power of the sunlight.

She was a very big ship, and she had all the shape of a ship of war, while the turrets fore and aft of her capacious funnel showed the muzzles of two big guns. I could see by my glass a whole wealth of armament in the foretop of her short mast forward. There was a great deck erection, with a gallery and a bridge for navigation; but no men showed upon the platform, and, for the matter of that, no soul trod her decks, so far as our observation went. Yet her speed was such as I do not believe any ship achieved before. Now rising majestically on the long roll of the swell, now falling into the concave of the sea, she rushed onward towards the steamer she was evidently pursuing as though driven by all the furies of the deep.

As we watched her the gun in her foremost turret belched out flame and smoke, and we observed the rise and fall of a shell, which cut the water a cable's length ahead of the straining steamer. At that moment she ran up a flag upon her signal mast, and, as I read it with my glass, I saw that it was the flag of the Chilian republic.

It was a matter of satisfaction to me that Mary still slept, and I looked for the appearance of Paolo with some question. But he remained below through it all. The skipper was the first to speak.

"That ship yonder," said he, jerking his thumb to starboard, "is it any business of ours?"

"None that I know of," I replied; "but it's a mighty fine sight, skipper, don't you think, a Chilian warship running after a liner in broad daylight? What's your opinion?"

"It's a fine sight enough, but I would give half I'm worth to be a hundred miles away from it; do you want me to get this boat into port again?"

"Of course."

"Then I'm going to put up the helm and sheer off. I'm not a man that loves fighting myself, and, with a ship and crew to look after, I've no business in any affair of this sort."

"Hold on a bit, skipper," said Roderick, "as we are, if you please; why, man, it's a sight I wouldn't miss for a fortune."

I had my glass to my eye in a moment and the light was so full upon the vessel, which must have then been a mile and a half away from us. There was now someone moving upon the bridge, and could recognize the shape of a man.

Throughout the strange scene, this vessel of mystery never gave one sign that men worked at her furnaces below. No evidence of that terrible power which was then driving her through the seas at such fearful speed.

But of the activity of her human crew we had speedily further sign; for, there was some belching of flame fro[illegible] turret, and thi[illegible], crashed full [illegible] forepart of the great liner, and we heard the shout of terror which rose from those on the decks. Then men appeared at the signal-mast of the pursuer, and rapidly made signals in the common code.

Then there was activity on the deck of the nameless ship, and men were swinging off a launch, which dropped presently into the sea and with a crew of some half dozen men. Again I got glass full upon the man who walked the bridge; and I knew him. He was the man I had met at Paris, the one styled Captain Black by my friend Hall.

The last link in the long chain was welded then. The whole truth of that weird document, so fantastical, so seemingly wild, so fearful, was made manifest; the dead man's words were vindicated. There on the great Atlantic waste, I had lived to see one of those terrible pictures which he had conceived in the midst of his long dreaming.

"Mark," said Roderick, "it's time to go; we'll be the next when that ship's at the bottom. Remember we have Mary on board."

Indeed, she stood by us as we spoke, very pale and quiet, looking where the two ships lay motionless, the boat from the one now at the very side of the black steamer, whose name, the Ocean King, we could plainly read.

"Don't you think you're better below, Mary?" asked Roderick.

"Not until you go; and why should I make any difference? I overheard what you said. Am I to stand between you and those men's lives?"

"I am for standing by to the end," said I; "if we can save one soul."

"Gentlemen," said the skipper, "it's your yacht, and these are your men; if you care to keep them afloat, keep them. If it's your fancy to do the other thing, why, do it. It's a matter of indifference to me."

"Men," I said, "there's ugly work over there, work I can make nothing off; but it's clear that an English ship is running from a foreigner, and may want help. Shall we leave her, or shall we stand by?"

They gave a great shout at this, and the skipper touched the bell, which stopped our engines. Glasses were turned upon us from the decks of the yellow ship, and from the Ocean King, whose men were still busy with the signal flags, and this time, as we made out, in a direct request to us that we should stand by. I watched the captain of the steamer parleying with the men in the launch below him.

While a tall man with fair hair—my glass gave me the impression that he was the fellow known as "Roaring John"—stood in the bows of the launch, and appeared to be gesticulating wildly to the skipper of the Ocean King, the nameless ship set up of a sudden a great shrieking with her deck whistle, which she blew three times with terrific power; and at the third sound of it the launch, which had been holding to the side of the steamer, let go, runing rapidly back to the armed vessel, where it was taken aboard again.

The whole thing was done in so short a space of time that our men scarce had opportunity to express surprise when the launch was hanging at the davits again. The great activity that we had observed on the decks of the war vessel ceased as mysteriously as it had begun. She bounded past us at a speed the like to which I had never seen upon the deep.

So remarkable a face-about seemed to dumbfound our men. But the key to the riddle was given, not by one of them, but by Paolo, whom I now found at my elbow.

"Ha!" he cried, "she's American!"

I saw what troubled him. There was a great white steamer coming up at a high speed, and I knew the form of her at once, and of two others that followed her. She was one of the American navy. The secret of the flight was no longer inexplicable; the yellow ship had fled from the trap into which she was so nearly falling.

"You have sharp eyes, Paolo," said I; "I imagine it's lucky for the pair of us."

The nameless ship, of a sudden, ceased her flight, and came almost to a stand some half a mile away on our port bow. As she swung round to head the seas, I saw at once that another cruiser, long and white, and seemingly well armed, had come up upon that side, and now barred her passage.

The nameless ship had now hundreds of men about her decks, and these were at the machine guns and elsewhere active in preparation. The great hull swung round slowly and passed at a moderate speed past the bow of the other. When she was nearly clear, her two great guns were fired almost simultaneously, and, as the shells swept along the deck of the cruiser, they carried men and masts and deck houses with them, in one awful confusion of wreckage and of death. The cruiser was utterly unprepared for the treachery, and lay reeling on the sea as her opponent treated her to the hail of her machine guns.

The battle could have ended but in one way, had not the other American warships now come so close to us that they opened fire with their great guns. The huge shells hissed over our heads, and all about us. The captain of the nameless ship fired twice from his turrets, and then headed off at prodigious speed. In five minutes he was out of gunshot; in ten, the American vessels were taking men from their crippled cruiser, whose antagonists had almost disappeared on the horizon!

Upon our own decks the noise and hubbub were almost deafening. We put out a boat with ease upon the still sea and hailed the passenger steamer after twenty minutes' stout roving. She w[illegible] a pi[illegible]iful spectacle [illegible] got up on her [illegible] deck, Captain Ross, her commander, greeted us with great thanks. He took us to his chart room, for he would have all particulars about us.

"Twenty years," he said, with tears of anger in his eyes, "I have crossed the Atlantic, but this is the first time that I ever heard the like! It's piracy on the high seas; and they shall swing, if there's only one rope in Europe. What does it mean? Are we at war? You saw the Chilian flag. Is there no treaty of Paris?"

The first of the American ships came up with us, and the commander of her put out a boat, and having gone aboard the maimed cruiser, he came afterwards to the Black Anchor ship, and joined us in the chart room.

"It's an international question, I guess," he said; "and if he doesn't pay with his neck for the twenty men dead on my cruiser, to say nothing of the twenty thousand pounds or more of damage to her, I will—why, we'll run him down in four-and-twenty hours."

I heard it agreed between them that the second cruiser of the American fleet should start at once in pursuit, while the ironclads should accompany us to New York, so making a little convoy for safety's sake.

With this arrangement we left the ship and regained the Celsis. Paolo stood at the top of the ladder as I came on deck, and listened, I thought, to our protestations that the danger was over with something of a sneer on his face. Indeed, I thought that I heard him mutter, but I did not know then how much the laugh was to be against us, and that we should leave the convoy long before we reached New York.

CHAPTER X.

For full five days we steamed with the other vessels, under no stress to keep the sea with them, since they made no more than twelve knots, for the sake of the cruiser which had been so fearfully maimed in the short action with the nameless ship. On the early morning of the fifth day I found myself unable to sleep and went above at daybreak, to see the white hulls of the American war vessels a mile away and the Black Anchor boat a few cable-lengths ahead of them. Paolo was on the bridge. I heard Dan the other side of the skylight, and he was holding forth with much fing phrase to Roderick's dog, Belle. I called him to me, and had it out with him there and then.

"What's in the wind now, Dan," I asked, "that you're preaching to the dog? Is there any more nonsense amongst the men forward?"

"There's a good deal of talk—maybe more than there should be."

"And what do they talk about? Tell me straight, Dan."

"Well, I've got nothing, for my part, to hide away, and I don't know as they should have; but you know this ship is a dead man's!"

"Who told you that stuff?"

"Plain yarns, Mister Mark, is best told in the fo'castle. I feel more like a father to you gentlemen than if I was nat'ral born to it; and this I do say—what's this trip mean? what's in yer papers? and why ain't it the pleasure vige we struck flag for? 'Where's it going to end?' says the second mate to the men; 'what is yer wages fo' takin' yer lives where they shouldn't be took?' And what follows?—why, white-livered jawings, and this man afeard to go here, and that man afeared to go there, and the Old One amongst 'em, so that half of 'em says, 'We was took false,' and the other half, 'Why not 'bout ship and home again?' No, and you ain't done with it, not by a long day, and you won't have done with it until you drop anchor in Yankee-land, if ever you do drop anchor there, which I take leave to give no word upon."

"It's a curious state of things. You mean to say, I suppose, that there's terror amongst them—plain terror, and nothing else?"

"Ay, sure!"

"Then it remains for us to face them."

I went to bed at 10 o'clock, and for an hour or two I slept with deep forgetfulness. At what hour Dan awoke me I cannot tell. He shook me twice in the effort, he said, and when I would have turned up the electric light, he seized my hand roughly, muttering in a great whisper, "Hold steady." I knew then that mischief was afloat, and asked him what to do.

"Crawl above," he said, "and lie low a-deck;" and he went up the companion ladder when I got my flannels and rubber shod shoes upon me. But at the topmost step he stood awhile, and then he fell flat on his hands, and backed again down the stairway, so that he came almost on top of me; but I saw what prompted his action, for, as he moved, there was a shadow thrown from the deck light down to where we lay; and then a man crepped upon the stair and descended slowly, his feet naked, but in his hand an iron bar; for he had no other weapon. At the sight of him, we had backed to the foot of the stairway; and, as the man crept down, we lay still. Swiftly and silently he entered the place; and, going to my cabin door, he slipped a wedge under it, serving the other doors around the big cabin in the same way. The success seemed to please him; he chuckled softly, and came again to the ladder, where with a quick motion, Dan brought his pistol butt full upon the fellow's forehead, and he went down like a dead thing at the foot of the swinging table.

There we left him, after we had bound his hands with my scarf; and with a hurried knock got Roderick from his berth. He, in turn, aroused his sister, and in five minutes we all stood in the big saloon and discussed our plan.

Dan's whispered tale was this. The watch was Paolo's, who had persuaded four stokers and six of the forward hands to his opinion. These men, the pipes of the second officer, had determined on this much—that the voyage to New York should be stopped abruptly. We, being locked in our cabins, were to have no voice in the affair; or, if waked, then we should be knocked on the head, and so quieted to reason.

It was a desperate endeavor, wrought of fear; but at that moment the true hands of the fo'castle were battened down, and Dan, who had seen the thing coming, escaped only by his foresight. That night he had felt danger, and had wrapped himself up in a tarpaulin, and lain concealed on deck.

As it was, Paolo stood at the door of the skipper's room; there were three men guarding the fo'castle, and five at [illegible] foot of the hurricane [illegible] than we had [illegible] with; but we were three, and eight men stood between us and the true hands.

(To be continued.)

Bobby's Joke.

"Pa," said Bobby, as he leaned over the deck rail, "what kind of a boat is that out on the lake?"

"That," replied pa, as he raised his glass, "is a sister ship to the one we are on."

Bobby watched the big funnels for a while and then said:

"Pa, I think that must be a brother ship."

"Why so, my son?"

"Because it smokes so much."

Fixing the Blame.

Stern parent—No, sir. I'll never give my consent to your marriage with my daughter until you are able to support her.

Young Man—Oh, very well. If you want her to die an old maid I have nothing more to say.

His Journey.

Beenaway—Let me see! About Nogoodson—when I left he was going from bad to worse and—

Staidhome—It subsequently developed that he had no return coupon.—Puck.

Ought to Be Happy.

"Well, there's really nothing in the world I like better than good, plain, old-fashioned cabbage."

"Judging from the smell of the cigars you habitually smoke you've got cabbage to burn."—Houston Post.

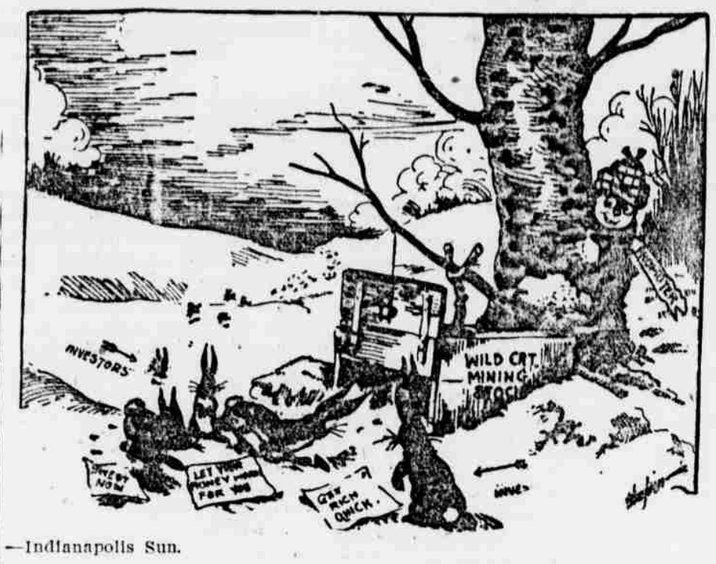
Surprising.

Bachelor—What brand of smokes does your wife like?

Benedict—My wife, sir!

Bachelor—Yes. Why, do you choose your own cigars still?—Detroit Free Press.

THE RABBIT SEASON.



—Indianapolis Sun.

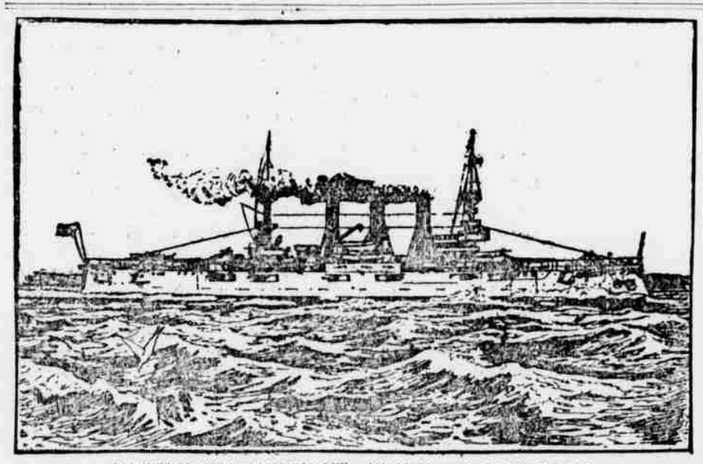
MONARCH OF THE SEA.

Battleship Vermont Is Able to Whip Any Ship Afloat.

The standardization trial of the battleship Vermont took place off Rockland over a measured mile. This was to test the screw revolutions at varying speeds, that is, to find out how many revolutions of the screws per minute were required to cover a mile in a given time.

Incased in ice from stem to stern, the new battleship came into Boston harbor from her trial trip and dropped anchor off the navy yard. She looked like a huge specter as she came up through the narrows, for with the exception of the funnels there was no part of the vessel that wasn't coated with ice and the bow and forward part of the battleship were burdened with tons of the frozen water that had been thrown up as the huge war vessel plowed through head seas at a 17.4-knot clip.

But the trial board is satisfied that the Vermont is the queen of the American navy, for they say that she behaved beautifully through it all. She was required to make eighteen knots but without forcing her she made 18.33 easily over the four-mile course. The boat will soon be ready for active service in the North Atlantic fleet.



BATTLESHIP VERMONT, PRIDE OF THE NAVY.

Naval Constructor Baxter who has had charge of the completion of the Vermont, said: "Here goes out a ship which demolishes all records of the world in naval construction. Not even Great Britain, the leading country in shipbuilding, has ever sent one of its battleships to sea without preliminary deep water trial. But I know enough about the condition of the vessel to say that she is ready to whip any other battleship in the [illegible] of course [illegible] her a fine practice with her guns."

Long-Lived Mathers.

At Jenkintown, Pa., Oct. 27, four members of one family whose ages aggregate 350 years gathered at a reunion, when Isaac Mather, the oldest of two brothers and two sisters, celebrated his 100th birthday. There were also present two sons and one daughter of the centenarian whose aggregate ages totalled 206 years. It is not believed that anywhere else in the United States will be found a family that can present a like showing.

The four persons whose ages totalled 350 years were: Isaac Mather, 100 years old; Mrs. Rebecca Michener, his sister, 87 years old; Miss Ann Mather, his sister, 79 years old, and Charles Mather, a brother, 84 years old.

The children whose ages totalled 206 years are: Miss Martha Mather, daughter, 75 years old; Israel Mather, son, 73 years old; Isaac Mather, son, 58 years old.

Isaac Mather, the centenarian, lives on the old homestead, built on the original tract of land granted to his ancestors by William Penn, at Chelten Hills. In this region he is best known as the "Grand Old Man of Chelten Hills." He is a Quaker and attends services regularly on Sunday.

He attributes his long life to simple habits. Never in more than half a century has he retired later than 8 o'clock at night, and he is up with the sun in the morning. His brother, Charles, at 84, is still in active business.

Heroic Treatment.

In these days, when child study is a hobby, ridden long and hard, it is interesting to read of the nerve-training which fell to the lot of the Quaker authoress, Amelia Opie, in 1769 and after. The modern mother would shrink with horror from some of the methods used on the sensitive child, but in this case it resulted in splendid stuff. Mrs. Opie is quoted in a book on "Quaker Worthies."

I was a creature of fears, tears and screams. My first terror was of black beetles, then of frogs, skeletons, black men and madmen.

My mother made me take a beetle in my hand and hold it. As her word was law, I obeyed, but with awful shrinking. I gradually became accustomed to it, and was frequently told to take one up and put it out of harm's way. I soon overcame that terror.

I was made to hold frogs in my hands, and was taught to nurse a skeleton as I would a doll. I acquired the love of the African race by hearing of its wrongs, and I became an eager advocate of emancipation. Mother compelled me to listen to her kindly converse with two poor old lunatics, and I grew to pity them instead of fearing them.

Why Opals Are "Unlucky."

The world is full of superstition, and one of the worst is that the opal is "unlucky." This superstition arose when the "black death" swept Europe. At that time the opal was very unpopular, and some noticed that when a victim of the disease was dying the opal on the finger brightened and when he was dead it became dull. Of course, this took the popular fancy and at once opals became "unlucky," and have remained so ever since. Very likely they do not change at all on the fingers of a dying person, and the whole matter is like that question which once caused so much discussion in the scientific world, i. e., why i[illegible] you put [illegible] when [illegible] in a bowl of water the weight of the bowl is not increased? Many learned answers were given, but finally one duffer weighed a bowl of water with and without the fish in it, and thus settled the matter.—Kansas City Journal.

Old Story Retold.

Charles Francis Adams was escorting an English gentleman about Boston. They were reviewing the different objects of attraction, and finally came to Bunker Hill. They stood looking at the splendid monument, when Mr. Adams remarked:

"This is the place, sir, where Warren fell."

"Ah!" replied the Englishman, evidently not very familiar with American history. "Was he seriously hurt by his fall?"

Mr. Adams looked at his friend. "Hurt!" said he. "He was killed, sir."

"Ah, indeed!" the Englishman replied, still eyeing the monument and commencing to compute its height in his own mind. "Well, I should think he might have been—falling so far."—Harper's Weekly.

Chance for Him.

One afternoon the proprietor of an animal store said to his young clerk:

"Tom, I'm going upstairs to work on the books. If anyone comes in for a live animal let me know. You can attend to selling the stuffed animals yourself."

About half an hour later in came a gentleman with his son and asked Tom if he could show him a live monkey. To the customer's amazement the clerk ran to the foot of the stairs and yelled:

"Come down, come down, sir; you're wanted!"—Judge's Library.

It is a part of the love disease for a girl to worry more if her young man gets a splinter in his thumb than if father gets a telegraph pole in his arm.

OPEN AIR RESTORES SKIN.

Hospital Physicians Test Plan Which Makes Grafting Unnecessary.

How the city hospital physicians avoided the necessity of the delicate operation of grafting live cuticle on Johnnie Cottle's scalded breast and saved his mother, who had volunteered to furnish the skin from her own body, the pain of the sacrifice form an interesting chapter in the history of painless surgery.

About two months ago the 8-year-old boy sustained burns so serious that his life was despaired of. The skin covering his entire breast was destroyed and phyicians at the hospital first thought that in order to save the life of the child the cuticle of a live person would have to be grafted on his body Mrs. Cottle, who lives at 1213 Armstrong street, offered to furnish the required amount and was ready to undergo an operation every day until her boy's breast was covered and healed.

Day after day Mrs. Cottle went to the hospital prepared to undergo the operation, but each day she was told that the boy was not ready. She finally became worried and then the secret was revealed to her.

On the third floor of the hospital, with nothing but the sky above him, the patient, his breast exposed to the open air, was lying on a cot, covering which was a thin gauze to keep away dust and impurities of the atmosphere. For two weeks the raw breast of the boy was thus exposed to the action of the air until a perfect scale was formed over the wound. Then the boy was taken indoors, nutritive salves were applied and now he is all but ready to be discharged.

For a long time physicians at the city hospital have realized the curative powers of oxygen and other components of air, but the case of Johnnie Cottle is the first successful demonstration of the theory. Basing their contention on the successful experiment, the physicians now declare that instead of bandaging a wounded member they will expose it to the open air, taking care to keep from the wound all impurities.—St. Louis Republic.

LEGAL INFORMATION.

The approval by the State commission of a freight based upon limited valuation of the property is held, in Everett vs. Norfolk & S. R. Co. (N. C.), 1 L. R. A. (N. S.), 985, not to absolve the carrier from liability for full value of the property if lost through its negligence.

Mere violation of a statute making it a misdemeanor to hunt on another's property without a permit is held, in State vs. Horton (N. C.), 1 L. R. A. (N. S.), 991, not to be such an unlawful act as to render an accidental homicide committed while so doing a criminal offense.

A contract made with a foreign corporation before it has obtained permission to do business in a State is held, in State vs. American Book Co. (Kan.), 1 L. R. A. (N. S.), 1041, not to be, for that reason, invalid or subject to cancellation at suit of one of the contracting parties.

A gift inter vivos is held, in Harris Banking Co. vs. Miller (Mo.), 1 L. R. A. (N. S.), 790, not to be established by depositing a fund in a bank with the statement that it was intended for the donee, and the delivery to the latter of a certificate of deposit with an indorsement indicating that it was [illegible]

A marine [illegible] underwriter is held, in Standard Marine Insurance Company vs. Nome Beach L. and T. Company (C. C. A. 9th C.) 1 L. R. A. (N. S.) 1095, not to be liable for a loss occurring through the deliberate act of the master in pushing through dangerous ice for the purpose of reaching his destination quickly.

The adoption of a by-law by a fraternal insurance order, excluding from membership persons engaged in the sale of intoxicating liquors, is held, in Grand Lodge A. O. U. W. vs. Hadlock (Kan.) 1 L. R. A. (N. S.) 1064, not to avoid the certificatfe of a member already engaged in that business, and who continued therein after the adoption of the by-law.

An unconstitutional impairment of contract is held, in Meyers vs. Knickerbocker Trust Co. (C. C. A. 3d C.), 1 L. R. A. (N. S.) 1171, to be effected by a change of the law permitting individual creditors of a corporation to enforce their claims against individual stockholders, so as to provide one suit in equity in behalf of all creditors, to which all stockholders may become parties and abating suits pending under the former law.

Slight Error.

The newest airship, says the Louisville Courier-Journal, is 190 feet long and resembles an ear of Kansas corn. That is an exaggeration. Ears of Kansas corn are not 190 feet long. The Louisville editor seems to have confused the length of the ears with the height of the stalks.—Kansas City Journal.

American Lawlessness.

One community in this State complains that it has been the scene of ten murders in a month. It would seem as though the survivors had a right to feel anxious.—Philadelphia Ledger.

With Oats in It.

"He's put the cart before the horse,"
Old Dobbin said, "and I'm
Quite glad to be the horse, of course—
You see, it's feeding time."
—Philadelphia Ledger.