

THE IRON PIRATE

A Plain Tale of Strange Happenings on the Sea

By MAX PEMBERTON

CHAPTER VI.

We caught the first train to London. When I got to a hotel I wrote two letters. One was to the Admiralty, the other to the office of the Black Anchor Line of American Steamships. I told Roderick what I had done, but he laughed at the idea. The next day I found myself standing in a meagerly furnished ante-room at the Admiralty, and there waiting the pleasure of one of the clerks, who had been deputed to talk with me.

"If there is any responsible person here," I said, "I should be glad to impart to him some very curious, and, as it seems to me, very remarkable information concerning a warship which has just left Spezia, and is supposed to be the property of the Brazilian government."

"It's very good of you, don't you know," he replied, as he bent down to arrange his ample trousers; "but I fancy we heard something about her last week, so we won't trouble you, don't you know;" and he felt to see if his bow were straight.

Within half an hour I sat in the private room of the secretary to the Black Anchor Steamship Company. He was a sharp man of business, keen-visaged as a ferret. I told him shortly that I had reason to doubt the truth of the statement that a warship recently built at Spezia was intended for the purposes set down to her; that I believed she was the property of an American adventurer whose motives I scarce dared to realize, and that if his company would agree to bear the expense, and to give me suitable recompense I would undertake to bring him the whole history of the nameless ship within twelve months. When I had done, he rang the bell for his clerk, and I could see that he felt himself in the company of a maniac.

Roderick was not at all surprised—it seemed to me rather that he was glad.

"What did I tell you? Who will believe such a tale as we are hawking in the market place—selling, in fact, to the highest bidder? But I believe the whole of your dead friend's story, and therefore I have bought a steamer."

"You have done what?"

"At 2 o'clock to-day, in your absence, I bought the steam yacht Rocket. Before we go on board her, the yacht will be rechristened by Mary—who will stay with her dear maiden aunt in our absence—and will be named after your vessel Celsis. Her crew will consist of our silent friend, Captain York, of his brother as chief mate, and of your men now at Portsmouth, with half a dozen more. We shall need eight firemen, whom the agents will engage, and three engineers, already found. Your cook will serve us very well, and we want now only a second and third officer. As these men will be mixed up with us on the quarter-deck, I have told the agents to send them to see you here—so you'll run your eye over them and tell me if they'll do."

"Roderick, my old friend, would you mind giving me that yarn from the beginning again?"

"I hate palaver," he said, "and didn't think to find you dense. Now, look here; until you read me that paper in your cabin, I don't know that I ever felt anger against any man, but I'll bring the man who murdered Martin Hall and many others to justice or I'll never know another hour's rest. Is it money you want? Well, what's mine is yours; and I'm worth two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Is it profit of a dead man's work you're after? Well then, mark your man, learn all about him, run him to his hole, and don't fear to recompense yourself. What we're going to do must be done at our cost, which is my cost. And what we're going to do isn't to be done at this hotel; it's going to be done on the high seas, and after that in America on the Hudson river, where, if Hall be right, is the home of Captain Black. It is to the Hudson river that I mean to go now."

In an hour I was closeted in the room below with Francis Paolo, who had come from the agents to seek the berth of second officer to the new yacht Celsis. I found him to be a sprightly, dark-faced Italian, apparently no more than 25 years old; and he greeted me with much smoothness of speech. He had served three years on a big steam yacht, and as he was unmistakably a gentleman and his discharges were in perfect order, I engaged him there and then. Had I known him then as I know him now, I would have paid a thousand pounds never to have seen him!

CHAPTER VII.

It was our last day in London. Roderick and I sat down to dinner in the hotel, the touch of depression upon us both. Mary had left us early in the morning to go to Salisbury, where her kinsfolk lived. We were going down to Plymouth by the 9 o'clock mail. So soon as we had dined, I went up to my room to put the small things of need away; but, to my amazement, the whole of the plate had been turned utterly inside out by one who had been there before me. My trunk lay upside down; my writing case was unlocked and stripped, my diary was torn and rent, my clothes were scattered. I thought at first that a common cheat of a hotel thief had been busy snapping up trifles, but I got a shock greater than any I had known since Martin Hall's death when I felt for his writing, which lay secure in its case, and found that, while the main narrative was intact, his letters to the police at New York, his plans, and his sketches had been taken. For the moment the discovery made me reel. I rang for a servant, who sent the manager to me. His perplexity and dismay were no less than mine.

"No one has any right to enter your rooms," he said; "and I will guarantee the honesty of my servants unhesitatingly. No one has been here after you since yesterday, when the Italian gentleman came. To-day he sent a man for a parcel he left here, but I know of no one else who has even mentioned your name."

Was I watched from the very beginning? Had I to cope, at the very outset,

with a man worth a million, the captain of a band of cut-throats, who stood at no foul work, no crime, as Martin Hall's death clearly proved? My heart ached at the thought; I felt the sweet drooping off me; I stood without thought of any man; the one word "watched" singing in my ears like the surging of a great sea. And I had forgotten Roderick until he burst into my room, a great laugh on his lips, and a telegram in his hand.

"What do you think?" he said; "Mary's arrived all right."

"Oh, that's good; I hope she'll like Salisbury."

"Yes, but she isn't at Salisbury at all; she's at Plymouth, on board the Celsis. She went straight down there, and never as much as sent her aunt a telegram. You don't seem pleased."

"I'm not pleased," I said, going on with my packing. "I don't think she ought to be there."

"I know that; we've talked it all over, but when I think of it, I don't see where the harm comes in; we can't meet mischief crossing the Atlantic, and the danger does begin in New York till she's well on the lee-side of it."

It was full day when we reached the yacht, and I did not fail to cast a quick glance of admiration on her beautiful lines and perfect shape as I clambered up the ladder, at the top of which stood Captain York.

"Welcome aboard," he said, giving us hearty hand shakes; and without further inspection at that hour we followed him to the cabin, where steaming coffee brought the blood to our hands and feet, and put us in better mood.

"So my sister's here," said Roderick.

"Yes, last night, no orders," jerked the skipper with his usual brevity.

"Ah, we must see to that—and the second officer—"

"Still ashore; he left a bit of writing; he'll be aboard midday."

He had the writing in his hand, and was about to crumple it, but I caught sight of it, and snatched it from him. It was in the same handwriting as the letter which Captain Black had sent to me at the Hotel Scribe in Paris.

"What's the matter?" said Roderick, as he heard me exclaim; but the skipper looked hard at me, and was much mystified.

"Do you know anything of the man?" he asked very slowly, as he leaned back in his chair, but I had already seen the folly of my ejaculation, and I replied:

"Nothing at all, although I have seen that handwriting before somewhere; I could tell you where, perhaps, if I thought."

Roderick followed me to my berth and had the matter of the handwriting out. I told him at once of the robbery of some of the papers, and the coincidence of the letter which the second mate had left with the skipper. He was quick-witted enough to see the danger; but he was quite reckless in the methods he proposed to meet it.

"There's no two thoughts about this matter at all," he said; "we've evidently run right into a trap, but luckily there's time to get out again—of course we shall sail without a second mate?"

After a six hours' sleep I went aft to the quarter-deck to take stock of the yacht. I had scarce made my inspection of our new ship when Mary burst up from below and began her explanation, standing with flushed cheeks, while the wind played in her hair, and her eyes danced with the merriment of it.

"The question is," said I, "when are you going ashore again?"

"I don't know, but I guess I'll get ashore at New York, because I mean to go to Niagara."

She laughed saucily, throwing back her head so that her hair fell well about her shoulders. I turned round, hearing astep, and there stood our new second mate, Francis Paolo. Our eyes met at once with a long, searching gaze, but he did not flinch. If he were a spy, he was no poor actor, and he stood his ground without the movement of a muscle.

I watched him walk forward, and followed him, listening as he directed the men; and a more seaman-like fellow I have never seen. If he were an Italian, he had left all account of speech in his own country, and he gave his orders smartly and in a tone which demanded obedience.

As I watched him from the hurricane deck, I heard a collier who had not yet left the ship give him some impudence. The new mate hit him such a terrific blow on the head with a spyglass that the fellow reeled through the open bulwarks right into his barge, which lay alongside. The men were hushed before a display of temper like this; the skipper on the bridge flushed red with disapproval, but said nothing.

The order "Hands heave anchor!" was sung out a moment after, and as Roderick joined me aft, the new Celsis steamed away from Plymouth and the episode was forgotten. And in that hour the great pursuit began.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was Paolo's watch. A night for dreamy thoughts of home, of kinsfolk, of the more tender things of life, but for us the night for the talk of that great "might be" which was then so powerful a source of speculation for both of us. And we were eager to talk, eager to know when we should next hear of Captain Black or of the nameless ship.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Roderick after twenty surmises of the sort, "if we heard something of her as we cross. I have given York orders to keep well in the track of steamers; and if your friend Hall be right, that is just where the unknown ship will keep. I would give a thousand pounds to know the story of the man Black. Is it possible that a man could commit piracy, to-day, in the Atlantic, where is the traffic of the world; where, if the powers once learned of it, they could hunt him down in a day? And

yet, put into plain English, that is the tale your friend tells."

"It is; I have never doubted that from the first. Captain Black is either the most original villain living, or the whole story is a silly dream—besides, we have yet to learn if he is the commander of the nameless ship; we have also to learn if the nameless ship is not a myth."

I remained above for half an hour, gazing over the great sweep of the Atlantic. Paolo was on the bridge. I took all opportunity of watching him. I made pretense to go to my cabin, and bawled a good-night to the mate as I went; but it was only to put on felt slippers and to get a warm coat, and I made my way stealthily amidships. I took a stand aft of the skipper's cabin, where I could pry, yet not be seen. I heard Paolo address several of the men forward, and it seemed to me that his mode of speech was not quite that which should be between officer and seaman.

It chanced that in this watch the new men were on deck, my old crew being in the port watch. Suddenly, on the far horizon over the starboard bow, I saw the flare of a blue light, bright over the water; and showing as it flared, the dark hull of a great ship. Paolo himself struck light to a flare which he had with him on the bridge, and answered the signal.

This action completely staggered me. Without a thought I rushed up the ladder to the hurricane deck and stood beside him. He started as he saw me, and I could see him biting his lips, while an ugly look came into his eyes.

"Good evening, Mister Mate," I said; "will you kindly tell me why you burnt that blue light?"

"I burnt it to answer the signal yonder."

"But that was no affair of ours!" He shrugged his shoulders, and muttered something about custom. Yet in another moment he made effort to recall himself, and met me with an open, smiling face which covered anger.

When I turned in at last, the little wind there had fallen away. I must have slept very heavily for an hour, when a great sense of unrest and waking weariness took me, and I lay, now drowsing, now dreaming, so that in all my dreams I saw the face of Paolo. I seemed to walk the decks of the Celsis, yet was Paolo there more strong and masterful than I.

Then the man Paolo stood over me, looking straight into my eyes; and when I would have risen up to question him I was powerless. I opened my eyes and saw, during the very reality of time that others looked down into mine. I saw them for some small part of a second, yet in the faint light that came from the port I recognized the face and the form, and was certain of them; for the man who had been watching me as I slept was Paolo.

A quick sense of danger waked me thoroughly then. I put my hand to the tap of the electric light and the white rays flooded the cabin. But the cabin was empty and Roderick's dog sat by my trunk, and had, I could see, been licking my hand as I lay.

I knew not how to make out the meaning of it; but I was trembling from the horror of the dream, and went above in my flannels. I looked into Paolo's bunk, and he slept there, in so heavy a sleep that I began to doubt altogether the truth of what I had believed. How could this man have left my cabin as he had done, and yet now be berthed in his own? The dream had cheated me, as dreams often do.

But more sleep was not to be thought of. I felt to talk with Dan, and paced the deck with him, asking what was his opinion of our new second mate.

"It's not for me to be spouting 'bout them as is above me," he said, "but you ask me a fair question. In course, I ain't the party to be thinking ill of any man, but what I do know I know. He's no more'n a ship with a voice under the fore-hatch—"

I laughed at him as I asked, "And what's the matter with a ship like that? Why shouldn't there be a voice under the fore-hatch, Dan?"

"Well, you see, sir, as there ain't nobody a-livin' in that perticler place, you don't go for to look to hearin' of voices, or, in plain lingo, there's something queer about it."

The sound of a gunshot to leeward awoke me from my thoughts. Fearing that some vessel lay in distress, we put the helm up and went half-speed for a time. We had cruised thus for five minutes or more when a terrific report burst upon our ears. The thunderous echoing of a great weapon which a man-of-war only could carry.

The sound died away slowly; but in the same minute the fog lifted; and I saw, away a mile on the starboard bow, a spectacle which brought a great flush upon my face, and let me hear the sound of my own heart beating.

(To be continued.)

Great Mixture.

Banker—You have a lady stenographer?

Broker—Yes.

Banker—And she reads novels while she works?

Broker—Well, sometimes she glances at the one she leaves open on the desk. But why do you ask?

Banker—Oh, just because between every quotation of stock there was something about the villain with white teeth, the ever-pursued heroine and the hero with the manly chest.

Philosophy of the Times.

Slow Principal—How are your history recitations?

Smart Teacher—Don't have any. S. P. (aghast)—Don't have any? S. T.—No. Isn't it impressed on us that history repeats itself?—Baltimore American.

Qualified.

Hitts—Windig ought to make a successful campaign orator.

Pitts—Why do you think so?

Hitts—Because he talks so much and says so little.

Valuable.

Wife—Wake up, John! I'm sure I hear a burglar downstairs.

Husband—Great Scott! I hope he doesn't discover that chunk of ice in the refrigerator.

Seething.

Angry Patron (to waiter)—Here! Take away this lobster. Why, it's as cold as I am.



Raising Seed Corn.

The best way of raising corn for seed, as followed in the West, says C. W. Merrill in Tri-State Farmer, is to prepare a seed bed or testing ground of from one to two acres far removed from other fields. To begin with, no car should be used which is imperfect from which to select grain for the seed crop, selecting such type of corn that you wish to grow, the work of selection should be followed year after year, selecting the best ears that show an improvement over previous years. Any plant that is deficient in any requirement should not be allowed to develop a tassel, and especially a barren stalk.

As to corn feeding, the seed plots should not suffer for want of plant food. From field experiments with fertilizers on corn in the West last year, on soils of average fertility, a higher per cent of potash than ordinary fertilizer contains gave remarkable results and would undoubtedly give similar results on the average lands of Georgia. In Georgia last year were used more fertilizers with corn than was ever used in years before, and with proper fertilizers and more attention to the selection of seed, and intensive culture, there is no doubt or reason why the average yield of well-bred corn should not be increased in the South, and especially Georgia.

Storing Winter Apples.

Many growers must be reminded of the importance of getting fruit to storage as promptly as possible after picking. The United States Department of Agriculture has demonstrated that fruit deteriorates more in a few days between the time of leaving the trees and the time it reaches storage than it does in as many months of storage at a low temperature.

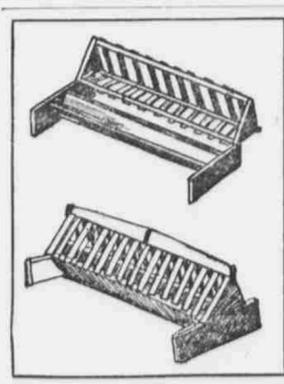
It was formerly thought necessary to put apples in piles in the orchard, to "sweat," but this has been shown to have been a mistake. Don't do this; but, on the contrary, send your apples to storage at once, in refrigerator cars, if the weather is warm and the distance is great. Many of the best apple handlers want their fruit in storage before night of the day it is picked, if at all possible, and there is no doubt that they are right in regard to this.—Western Fruit Grower.

Incidence of Dehorning.

Fourteen cows were subjected to the tuberculin test by the Wisconsin Station and then dehorned. The milk of these cows, as regards yield and composition, was compared with the milk of cows dehorned but not tuberculin tested, of cows tuberculin tested but not dehorned, and of cows neither dehorned nor tuberculin tested. The result showed an average decrease of about 8 per cent in the yield of milk for the first few days after dehorning, but a loss of only about 2 per cent in the yield of butter fat. Dehorning, therefore, increased the fat content of the milk .027 per cent. These results are noted as being in accord with the results of investigations at other experiment stations which are cited. The tuberculin test was apparently without effect upon milk secretion.

Convenient and Cheap.

This feed trough, recently illustrated in Reliable Poultry Journal, is substan-



FOWL FEED TROUGH.

tial, cheap and easy to construct. The length is forty inches and it is sufficient for twenty hens.

Keeping Apples.

Burying them in the ground proves successful when other methods fail, provided every apple is sound and free from blemish when harvested. The reason is that temperature in the ground or mound in which the apples are kept varies but little, and they are always cool. The same results will be obtained if a cold and even temperature can be secured in a cellar.

Wintering Sheep.

It is true of all poor stock that it is never profitable, and it is especially true of sheep. Weed out closely. The most important point in successful winter management of the flock is to begin with strong and healthy animals. Sheep need not be cared for in a different manner from most other farm stock, but there is more wisdom than luck in keeping them in good condition through the winter.

Record Price for Land.

The following from Orange Judd Farmer shows what profits some men undertake to make farming: "Ten acres of farm land in Christian County, Illinois, sold for \$5,000 a few days ago, or \$500 an acre. True, the land lies just outside the city limits of the county seat, but it is not to be cut into city lots. It will be used for raising fruit and vegetables. In other words, the purchaser, W. O. Simpson, expects to make the interest on his \$500 land, and considerable profit besides.

This shows what careful, intelligent farming and gardening will do. If Mr. Simpson can make money on his high-priced land, need his neighbors on farms equally productive feel discouraged? We in this country must practice intensive agriculture. There is abundant evidence that this will pay.

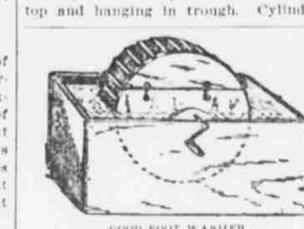
Sheep-Shearing Machine.

Sheep-shearing machines are a great improvement over hand work both in cleanliness of clipping and in the time required for each animal. It requires some skill to keep clippers sharp. Upon this much of the success and ease with which these machines are handled depends. It is necessary to know how to handle a sheep while clipping it.

A man who has had considerable experience in shearing sheep by hand will understand this part of the work and can usually handle a machine clipper with great ease. One man and a boy with a machine can handle about twice as many sheep in a day as is customary when they are hand-sheared. Every purchaser of a sheep-shearing machine should get a good sharpener with it.

Handy Root Washer.

A handy root washer can be had by making a slatted cylinder with hinged top and hanging in trough. Cylinder



GOOD ROOT WASHER.

can be made any size, but one that holds one and one-half bushels is better than one made larger. Fill with burrs or other roots, hook down cover and turn slowly a minute or two. Lift from the water and empty.

Cure for Hog Cholera.

After many years of experimenting for the cure of hog cholera the Department of Agriculture has worked out a method which gives promise of being an effective remedy. The method consists in the injection of serum from the blood of an immune hog, after the immune has been treated similarly with the serum from hogs affected with the disease.

Dr. Marlon Dorset, of the Bureau of Animal Industry, who has worked out the process, has had it patented in the name of the department and given the invention without price to the country. In this way the possibility of anyone monopolizing the new treatment will be avoided. It is estimated that the money loss from hog cholera reaches \$15,000,000 annually.

Best Crop for Pigs.

In the spring and summer, rye and clover are used for pastures until the pigs weigh about eighty-five to 100 pounds. Then barley is added until some early variety of flint or sweet corn is ready. Only a small field of this last is necessary, or an amount sufficient to carry the pigs until the field corn is denting. Then the pigs are turned in small areas of the field corn at a time, until they are fat. By fencing in and using these crops in this order the cost of growing pigs is reduced to a very low figure. We know of several farmers who are following this practice and are highly pleased with it.

Safe Corn Shredder.

As the corn shredder has killed and maimed a great many people, the below suggestion for reducing the danger of using them will be welcomed. A man who runs one of them says: "To unchoke shredders with safety to the feeder, take a croquet ball and saw it in halves. Then bore a hole in the center of the flat side of one of these parts, through to the center of the oval side. Then insert the end of a broom handle in the hole, beginning at the flat side. Fasten this with a wedge or nail. Keep this tool in a convenient place, and when the machine clogs stir up the fodder with the ball end and all is right again. Try it."

Feeding Value of Grain.

The fattening value of grain depends largely upon the free oil or fat contained in them, with their sugar, starch, etc. One per cent of oil is considered equal to more than 2 per cent of sugar and starch. At these estimates 69 pounds of corn equals 78 pounds of barley, but the barley is richer in albuminoids, and is, therefore, more valuable than corn for the development of flesh.

Fixed Wages on Farm.

Fixed wages for a "day's work" is not the proper mode of contracting. There is as much difference in a day's work between individuals as in the value of the products of the farm. Nor can any method be devised for determining the value of a day's work on a farm until the labor has been performed. Wherever work can be done by the piece it should be the rule, though this cannot well be the case on a farm.

THE WEEKLY HISTORIAN



1777—Battle of Chestnut Hill, Pa.

1783—Washington bade farewell to his officers.

1795—Timothy Pickens of Massachusetts became Secretary of State.

1800—Austrians defeated the French at the battle of Hohenlinden.

1815—Execution of Marshal Ney.

1818—Illinois admitted as a State of the Union.

1831—John Bishop and Thomas Williams executed at the Old Bailey for the murder of a poor Italian boy for dissecting purposes.

1861—Engagement between Confederate gunboats and Federal vessels at Cape Hatteras. John C. Breckinridge expelled from the United States Senate.

1862—Gen. Banks' expedition sailed for New Orleans.

1865—Leopold II, ascended throne of Belgium.

1867—Resolution of Judiciary committee to impeach President Johnson voted down in the House—102 to 57.

1869—National Colored Labor convention met in Washington.

1871—Seventeen immigrants frozen to death in Saline county, Nebraska. Court house and many other buildings destroyed in fire at Hagerstown, Md.

1874—Destructive fire at Charlestown, W. Va.

1875—Steamship Deutschland wrecked on the Galloper Sands, 50 lives lost.

1880—The explorer Stanley reached the eastern coast of Africa at Bagamoyo.

1890—King Kalakaua of Hawaii landed at San Francisco.

1901—Norcross attempted to assassinate Russell Sage by exploding a bomb.

1903—Trial of Dr. Meyer, the alleged murderer by poison, began in New York City.

1894—Financial panic in Newfoundland; government resigned.

1896—Gen. Maceo, Cuban leader, killed in a skirmish.

1890—British lost heavily in unsuccessful attempt to carry Boer positions at Spytfontein.

1900—Gen. Mercier, in the Senate of France, projected the invasion of England by arms. Tension between Portugal and the Netherlands over South African affairs caused severance of diplomatic relations.

1901—Industrial arbitration bill passed by Parliament of New South Wales.

1902—British and German fleets seized custom house at La Guayra, Venezuela.

1904—Bad break in market caused partly by attack on Amalgamated Copper by Thomas W. Lawson, a Boston stock broker. Mrs. Cassie Chadwick, millionaire swindler, imprisoned.

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Remarks made by President George F. Baer of the Reading railroad at the dedication of the high school building at Reading, Pa., were to the effect that because the education of all the people must necessarily be limited, it is dangerous and creates rash and superficial thinking and unrest. He likened the man who protested against industrial conditions to Jack Cade, the leader of the peasant uprising in England during the middle ages.

A decision of the Supreme Court of Washington upholds the policy of the Seattle school authorities in denying all privileges except class attendance to pupils who are members of secret or Greek-letter fraternities. The members had been prohibited from belonging to debating clubs, athletic teams, glee clubs and the like. The court says the evidence shows that such fraternities tend to destroy good order, discipline and scholarship in the schools.

In anticipation of overcrowded schools after Jan. 1, when the new Georgia child labor law goes into effect, a number of business men in Columbus, Ga., have founded the secondary industrial school, which will give a thorough training in the trades to the children of factory operatives. Especial attention will be given to the cotton industry, in the hope of supplying skilled labor, for which there is a great demand. The length of the course is four years, and it will include courses in shorthand, domestic science and the common branches.

Prof. Folwell of the political science department of the university of Minnesota thinks that there is not as much culture in the schools as there ought to be. In regard to coeducation, he says: "The irruption of women into men's colleges does not seem to have improved the manners of the men nor injured those of the women to any material degree, but a longer experience is needed to justify a final resolution of the problem of coeducation." He thinks the small college and the female seminary did more for culture than the big universities of the present.