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The Pirate of Alastair

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CHAPTER X.

Signs multiplied. When Charles and I returned to the house we found muddy footprints staining the dining-room floor and tracked across the kitchen. No intruders were to be seen, nor other evidence of their visit, but the mere fact that the sanctity of my home—hitherto always left open to the winds—had been invaded, angered me. I bade Charles see that the house was securely locked hereafter whenever he left it in my absence.

Over the mantle in my den hung two muskets, out-of-date but still capable of doing holes in the atmosphere. My little armory held a shotgun, for use in the marshes, and two revolvers, whose only use heretofore had been for target practice. I took them from the drawer and looked them over; they were ready for work when needed.

I sat on the porch, and considered the situation. Something was about to happen, something I could not tell what—that centered around this man who had mysteriously taken possession of the ship and proposed to offer combat on the sands. What he was or who he was I could not guess; speculation in these lines brought me immediately into blind alleys; but there was no doubt that in situation and character he was certainly the direct descendant of a more adventurous age. I was unmistakably drawn to him. I could see him as he stood on the beach, buffeted by the storm, gazing at the men who were pulling away, and as he had stepped from the hatchway, hat in hand, bowing to Barbara Graham with the chivalrous manner of a cavalier, and again as he sat across the table from me, his slender hands ready to seize upon the pistols, his eyes, full of amusement and audacity, looking straight into mine. There was no doubt about it, the ship belonged to him by right of inheritance, and his arrival had brought me strange tidings. I thought over the matter a long time before I went to bed.

Early the next morning I took my dip in the sea, and was returning, clad in a bath-robe, when I caught sight of a man peering at me from the pines. I waved my towel, and he disappeared. As I was finishing dressing, a little later, I stepped out upon my balcony, and I saw the same man, much nearer now, gazing intently at the cottage. I hate spies, so I spoke somewhat angrily.

"Hi, there! What do you want?" I cried, beckoning to him.

He came forward rather sheepishly, and touched his hat.

"I was only taking a look at your house, sir."

"And is that what you were doing some twenty minutes ago?"

"Yes, sir; that's all I was doing."

"Are you an architect?" I demanded.

He wore a plain blue suit, with an old straw hat, and might have been almost anything.

He smiled. "No, I was merely looking about to see what there was to see. There wasn't any harm meant."

"There isn't any harm done, but, then, there isn't anything to see. I'm not very partial to sight-seers, especially when they hide behind trees. If there's anything you want to ask me about, speak out."

He hesitated a moment. "A stranger—a tall man who speaks French—hasn't stopped at your house, has he?"

ammunition than I have," Duponceau confessed.

"There is plenty in my cottage," I told him.

"Let's get it now," cried Barbara, "and some of the guns."

We went to the cottage, and Barbara, in her interest, forgot what she would have termed the proprieties, and entered and looked about my dining-room while I collected cartridges and pistols. She insisted on helping Charles put up a quantity of food to carry to the ship. At last we started forth again, she with the provisions, I with a shotgun and two revolvers. Half way down the beach two men came out of the pines and walked down to meet us.

"Where are you going with those guns?" one of them, a fairly faced chap, demanded.

"What business is that of yours?" I asked.

He changed his tactics. "We're looking for a man who's reported to have landed somewhere on this beach a night or two ago."

"Yes," I said pleasantly, gazing absent-mindedly at the sky.

"Well," went on the other, "where are you taking those guns?"

I looked at him angrily now, but before I could find words Barbara was speaking.

"If there is one thing I particularly dislike," she said, "it is curiosity. If you must know, we came out here to hunt sand-shells, and we're just about to begin. That's all; you may go now."

He waved her hand towards the pines. The men were clearly surprised. They were more so when they saw the girl calmly sit down on the sand, motion me to do likewise, and proceed to load one of the revolvers. Shortly after, they withdrew, whispering to each other.

In order to disarm suspicion, we sat there some time, and I built miniature sand fortifications in order to teach Barbara the art of war.

"I wonder if I can learn to shoot?" she said presently. "If I meet many more like those, I shall be tempted to try."

I handed her a loaded pistol. "Aim at that rock out there," I said, pointing at one showing above the water.

She took aim, did not close her eyes, pulled the trigger. The report, sharp and clear, cut the silence of the beach like a knife. We saw the water splash where the bullet entered. A frightened gull screamed loudly away.

The little puff of smoke faded; all was still again.

Barbara looked at the revolver, then at me. Her lips were smiling, but her eyes were deep with excitement.

"The war has begun," I said. "The shot was to let the world know that Alastair is armed."

(To be continued.)

WAS A TRIFLE SLOW.

Train Schedule of a Certain Southern Railroad Broken by Hog.

"For several years I have been a commuter on the Erie," said the sunburned man, according to the New York Herald, "and I have joined in the general rally at the expense of that unique system. But never again I have just come from Florida, where they have railroads compared with which the Erie is the personification of rapid transit. If you get off the main line of travel in Florida you are up against it good and plenty."

"I wanted to go from Tampa over to the east coast, and part of the itinerary took in a branch road from Orange City Junction to New Smyrna. The distance is twenty-seven miles. You leave Orange City Junction at 4:35 p. m., and if the train is on time it gets you to New Smyrna at 7:15. Only two hours and forty-seven minutes to come twenty-seven miles! That's all! Two trains a day are operated over this road—combination passenger and freight trains."

"There used to be an engineer, named Bill Rogers who ran this afternoon train. He is dead now. I understand the strenuous life was too much for him. Bill used to be greatly annoyed by the razorback hogs that roamed at large through the country, branded just like cattle. There was one hog in particular that gave Bill a lot of trouble. Every evening he could be found lying comfortably between the rails at a point about two miles outside of New Smyrna, and Bill would have to climb down from his cab and pry the hog off with a crowbar. You can kill a negro down in that country and nothing is thought of it, but you mustn't kill a hog. If you do, you are liable to go to jail."

"Well, Bill had a grudge on one day, and when he saw the hog stretched out in the usual wallow he determined to defy the law. So, instead of stopping to pry the hog off the track, he opened up his throttle and started for the obstruction at full speed. Just as the engine was almost upon him the hog seemed to realize that something was wrong. Not waiting for the usual assistance, he got up, shook himself, and started down the track ahead of the engine. And I have the assurance of at least a dozen respectable witnesses that the hog beat the train into New Smyrna station by a fraction over three minutes!"

An Assured Fact.

"Do you think that man who talks so much is really acquainted with his subject?"

"Well, there can be no doubt that he is on speaking terms with it!"—Washington Star.

EVENTS OF THE DAY

Newsy Items Gathered from All Parts of the World.

PREPARED FOR THE BUSY READER

Less Important but Not Less Interesting Happenings from Points Outside the State.

An agitation is on in Japan for naval expansion.

Clyde Fitch, the American playwright, is dead.

Another slight earthquake shock has been felt in Mexico.

Actors in Chicago have gone on strike for better pay.

The power of the British house of lords is at stake on the tax bill.

Harriman has suffered a relapse and his condition is the cause of alarm.

An aeronaut fell 1,000 feet at Chicago and though badly injured, still lives.

Japan and China have signed a treaty for the settlement of the Manchurian dispute.

An Eastern woman has just had a hat made from the skins of eight rattlesnakes.

The Pressed Steel Car company, of Pittsburg, has granted the demands of its striking employees.

Estimates of the population of the United States vary greatly, but the average seems about 95,000,000.

Russia now wants a share in the Chinese railway loan.

The deficit of the German imperial government for 1908 is said to amount to \$30,500,000.

Two colored men have been hanged by a mob at Mobile, Ala., for murdering the sheriff.

Explorer Cook says he has data to prove the most skeptical that he was actually at the North Pole.

Jap grape pickers in California have demanded an increase in wages and may be replaced by Hindus.

A small tempest was caused by an Italian warship stopping while the Atlantic fleet was at target practice.

A sword fish has been caught off the Catalina islands, Cal., which weighed 141 pounds and measured eight feet in length.

More explosives have been found in the bunkers of British war vessels and members of the admiralty are in a state of ferment.

The latest creation in the millinery line is to be known as the Cook hat, in honor of the explorer. It is two feet high covered with black fur, while a white egret representing the pole bristles from the top.

China is planning the improvement of her army.

Count Zeppelin will continue preparations to fly to the North Pole.

President Taft says he will probably visit Alaska next summer.

A serious epidemic is feared in the flood stricken districts of Mexico.

German scientists say the finding of the North Pole is of secondary importance.

The American Locomotive company says it is rushed with order for new equipment.

An Indiana man has just died at the age of 96. He leaves 38 children and had outlived four wives.

Ienmark believes Cook's story of the discovery of the North Pole and will give him a royal welcome.

Attorney General Wickersham says if the polar continent is found holding this government will annex it.

Dispatches from Java say the volcano Smern is in active eruption, causing great havoc. There has also been an earthquake with hundreds of fatalities.

Revolutionary cocked hats are to be worn by women next season.

Wilbur Wright has suggested that cities appoint an inspector of balloons.

The loss of life in the Monterey, Mex., flood is now estimated at 3,000.

A tornado devastated Dialville, a small town in Texas. Several persons were injured.

Supplies are being sent to Monterey, Mex., and the general condition is much improved.

Mrs. Florence Vandervort, a millionaire widow of Los Angeles, has married a poor man.

No lives were lost in the Nevada cloudburst and the property damage is placed at \$100,000.

The American warship squadron is in Chinese waters.

MORE MEXICAN FLOODS

Cloudburst Floods Rivers and Overflows Fertile Valleys

Mexico City, Sept. 7.—A special dispatch received here from Morelia says that floods yesterday ruined a large section of the Zamora district. A terrible cloudburst in the mountains caused rivers and streams to overflow and miles of fertile valleys are under water.

Further details have been received here of the flood that swept the town of Tula, in the state of Tamaulipas, last Saturday. A wave between 45 and 50 feet high engulfed the lower half of the town. Two hundred houses and the San Juan bridge were carried away and many lives were lost. The storm raged for three days.

Terrible as are the conditions at Monterey, the correspondent declares they are just as bad at Tula and vicinity.

The entire northeastern section of the state is said to have been laid waste. Railroad and telegraphic communication was destroyed and the population of Tula, some 7,000 persons, was cut off from the rest of the nation for four days. It will be six or eight months before the highways can be restored. Thirty bodies have been recovered and many bodies of shepherds and mountaineers are being washed down into the valley below.

ROBBED MAILS WHOLESALE.

Man and Woman Caught in Chicago Head Big Gang.

Chicago, Sept. 7.—In the arrest of Allen Posner, 26 years old, and a young woman giving her name as Emily Snyder, 20 years old, who are in custody at the Harrison street police station, Postoffice Inspector Stuart believes he has part of a gang of mail thieves who have been operating in Chicago and other cities. Two men are being sought as accomplices of Posner and the Snyder girl in the theft of letters and cashing of checks found in stolen mail. Posner and a man named Gray and another man whose name is being kept secret are said to be under indictment in New York for a \$1,000 theft of jewelry. The Snyder girl is said to have come to Chicago with Posner four months ago.

It is charged that the pair operated by stealing letters from residence mail boxes after delivery by letter carriers. Posner is declared to have admitted cashing a number of stolen checks. According to the postal authorities, Posner and his associates stole \$1,000 worth of jewelry and other valuables which were brought to Chicago.

TUBERCULOSIS INCREASES

Nathan Straus Says Plague is Gaining Against Fight.

Budapest, Sept. 7.—Nathan Straus, the New York philanthropist, who on Tuesday appealed to the International Medical congress to stop the spreading of disease that results from the use of infected milk, today submitted detailed figures to that body to prove that tuberculosis, instead of being conquered, is on the increase.

He cited the official vital statistics of New York city, which was credited by Dr. Robert Koch with leading the whole world in the fight against tuberculosis. He showed that the increasing skill of the physicians in treating tuberculosis had reduced the death rate from this disease in proportion to the population from 2.42 per 1,000 in 1902 to 2.39 per 1,000 in 1907, and 2.29 in 1908, but he showed that the number of deaths from tuberculosis in proportion to the total number of deaths from all causes had increased from 13.04 per cent. in 1902 to 13.90 in 1908.

Cholera Loses Terrors.

Paris, Sept. 7.—Serum and vaccine for treatment of cholera has been discovered by Dr. Salambini, working under the direction of Professor Metchnikoff and Dr. Pierre Roux. Their serum has been tried in Russia in desperate cases and reduced the death rate, which was 50 per cent, to below 23 per cent. The vaccine is prepared by taking bacilli from the body of a cholera patient and making a culture thereof, which is injected subcutaneously into healthy persons. Local infection follows and immunity results.

Tornado Wipes Out Town.

Catania, Sicily, Sept. 7.—The village of Scordia was about wiped out today by a tornado. Five persons were killed and 50 injured. One hundred houses were completely demolished and many others unroofed. The tornado was accompanied by a torrential rain. The population took refuge in houses on the Quarter Santa Maria, where the statue of Santa Maria Magliore fell, adding terror to the superstitious element.

Tennessee Stays Dry.

Chattanooga, Tenn., Sept. 7.—The legislative act prohibiting wholesale as well as retail sale of liquor in the state was upheld except as regards sales for shipment outside of the state, in an opinion handed down in Chancery court today by Chancellor T. M. McConnell.

PEARY SUCCESSFUL

Flashes News of Discovery of Most Northern Point.

AMERICAN FLAG NAILED TO POLE

Brief Message Announces Success After Lifetime of Effort—No Trace of Cook.

New York, Sept. 7.—Peary has reached the North Pole. It has been doubly discovered. From the bleak coast of Labrador Commander Peary yesterday flashed the news that he had attained his goal in the Far North, while at the same moment in Denmark Dr. Frederick A. Cook was being dined and lionized by royalty for the same achievement.

Yankee grit has conquered the frozen North and there has been created a coincidence such as the world will never see again.

Two Americans have planted the flag of their country in the land of ice, which man has sought to penetrate for four centuries; and each, ignorant of the other's conquest, has sent within a period of five days, a laconic message of success.

A dispatch from St. Johns, N. F., says that Peary found no trace of Dr. Cook. This news reached here last night through Captain Robert Bartlett, of the Roosevelt, Peary's ship.

While Peary does not expressly repudiate Dr. Cook's contention in so many words, his statement may have an important bearing upon determining the extent of Dr. Cook's explorations.

The Roosevelt was in good condition and the crew all right, Captain Bartlett wired, and he reported that the schooner Jeannie, carrying supplies for the expedition, had met them off the coast of Greenland.

RAILROADS IN WAR.

New Schedules Being Arranged for Pacific Coast Lines.

Chicago, Sept. 7.—When the Hill lines announced five days ago that they would lop ten hours off the fastest time between Chicago and the North Pacific coast points they inaugurated a speed war that has now spread over the entire transcontinental railway map. In the Southwest territory, the fight is on for the mail contracts, but to get these, the roads must put on faster and better trains. The Santa Fe proposes to cut ten hours off its time between Kansas City and Los Angeles and its rivals are scurrying in every direction and ordering their experts to "string" new schedules, get equipment in the topmost condition and be ready to meet the time of the Santa Fe.

The fight started when the Hill lines apparently sought to forestall the St. Paul road, which, with its Puget sound extension, will soon be in a position to make trouble in regard to rates and mail contracts.

Both of these moves took the competitors of the Burlington by surprise and caused no end of scurrying and consultation.

CANADA WANTS OWN NAVY.

Three Shipbuilders Consider Locating Yards in Dominion.

Ottawa, Ont., Sept. 7.—Canada is extremely anxious to possess a war fleet of its own and efforts are being put forth to induce British shipbuilders to locate plants on Canadian soil. It is said three world famous shipbuilders are now considering proposals to locate branch yards in the Dominion and have been assured that the Canadian government will grant every concession in the way of tariff or in any other line possible.

While the Canadian ministers at the London conference on naval defense have kept the government here advised on the different steps of the negotiations, an official account of what has been agreed upon has not yet been received.

Americans Are in Flood.

Monterey, Mex., Sept. 7.—General Trevino, commanding the military zone, received a dispatch tonight from Tampico, stating that Soto La Marina and the surrounding country, in which are many American oil men, had been overwhelmed by a tidal wave. The dispatch states that the inhabitants of Soto La Marina had taken refuge in the hills and were destitute. The town of Tula, in the state of Tamaulipas, was swept by another flood Sunday, houses being carried away and rich plantations destroyed.

Wireless Across Ocean.

Paris, Sept. 7.—Wireless messages from New York are now received or intercepted almost daily by the military station on the Eiffel tower. Occasionally radio telegrams have also been received from Canada, which it is believed form a record in wireless.