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Perhaps.

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Of a sulphurous torch,
Some day and somewhere,
The scorchers will scorch!

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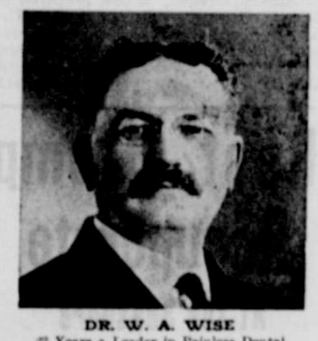

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The Pirate of Alastair

By RUPERT SARGENT HOLLAND

Author of "The Count at Harvard," etc.

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CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

Motionless, we listened, and caught the regular breathing of a sleeping man, then distinguished that of another, and finally heard some one turn and grunt. In some inexplicable way, these men had happened to camp just above the spot chosen by Duponceau to hide his chest.

I scarce dared turn and crawl away from fear of waking the sleepers, and so lay still, wondering if by any chance they could have already found the treasure, or if there might yet be an opportunity for us to remove it. Suddenly I felt Rodney grip my arm. "Listen," he breathed.

Off in the distance, clear and long, rose the osprey call. Duponceau was in some danger.

We wriggled away from the hemlock, crawled back through the woods, and stood erect only when we reached the edge. There we swept the beach and what we could see of the Ship for signs of men, but the shore was still empty as the desert.

"Shall we run for it?" I asked.

"No," said Rodney; "if there are any men there, they're between us and the boat, or on the boat; we'd best keep close to the Cliff until we get our bearings."

The advice was good; like Indians we made the fringe of the woods, keeping in shadow. When we were forced to leave this shelter we skirted the cliff, ready to crouch back at a call or to rush forward. As we neared the shadow of the headland we saw figures climb over the rocks of the little inland sea and head up the beach—four men, silhoutted black against the white sand, and not one of them as tall as Duponceau.

"They haven't got him," I whispered; "at least, he is not with them."

"That's queer," said Rodney. "I haven't heard a shot fired. They must have boarded the Ship."

We crossed the causeway, running lightly, and climbed on board. The deck was as empty as the beach had been when we first crossed it. I rushed below and poked in all the bunks, but not a trace of Duponceau was to be found. Rodney and I stood in the bow and peered across the rocks. We could see nothing save the woods and the sky.

"Well," said Islip at last, "that takes the cake. He's vamoosed, vanished, cleared out, and I dare say we'll never see hide or hair of him again. This thing's getting positively spooky, Selden. Are you sure that the man was flesh and blood?"

"I certainly thought so," I answered. "But he came in the middle of the night, and he's gone at the same time. Strange! Where on earth could he go?"

"Search me," said Rodney. "I thought the adventure was almost too real to be true. Such things don't happen, you know—that is, not consecutively—within a day's ride of New York." He considered the matter gravely. "But what will Barbara say if she finds we haven't kept by him?"

"I was thinking of that myself," I answered, looking blankly at him.

Islip broke into a laugh—such an infectious laugh that I couldn't help joining him. "I dare say we're different in most ways, Selden," he said, "but we're alike in one. Well, here's how!" and he held out his hand to me.

We shook hands, half seriously, half in jest, and I took back all the unkind things I had ever thought about him.

We turned and went down the deck on the outer side of the mast. I heard Rodney exclaim and saw him stop and look at the rail where his hand rested. A small gold chain was fastened to the edge. He peered over the side, and then, to my utter amazement, began to throw off his clothes.

"What on earth——" I began, but Rodney only chuckled, and finished undressing. Then from somewhere out in the sea came the osprey's cry, clear, quavering to a minor cadence. Islip slipped over the side, crossed the rocks, and dived into the waves.

I pulled on the chain and up came a bundle of clothes wrapped in Duponceau's cloak. Then I understood, and followed Rodney's example.

Never have I known such a swim as that, in the mystery of starlight, through a sea that seemed made of silver. We found Duponceau by his cry and followed him, resting now and then to float on the silver surface, and again racing hand over hand out through the mystery. We were no longer men, but free sea creatures, in our own element, undismayed.

We swam in a great circle, and at last Duponceau led us back to the Ship. Day was breaking far out, beyond the Shifting Shoal. "I saw them coming," he said, "and so I hung my clothes from the side and took to the waves. They found nothing; perchance now they think me a ghost."

We told him our experience in searching for the chest, and he showed a great deal of perturbation, but finally came to the wise conclusion that we could do nothing in regard to it then.

It was my turn below, and I fell asleep, in a glorious glow from the swim, just as the sky was shading pink.

CHAPTER XIII.

When I awoke I found Rodney seated on the cabin table.

"Morning, Selden!" he exclaimed. "By the way, who is Monsieur Duponceau?"

I shook my head. "I gave that question us some time ago. How about breakfast?"

"I was thinking of that myself," said Rodney. "I don't mind being a hero, but I prefer to play the part on a full stomach."

"I'll signal Charles." I went up on deck, and found that the sun was high up, and shining on a glorious summer world. I fastened a napkin to the broken stump of the mast.

Fifteen minutes later we saw my canoe steal cautiously about the point of the cliff beyond my house and poke its nose in the direction of the Ship. Charles brought the tiny craft alongside of us.

"They're watching the house closely, Mr. Felix," he said. "It was all I could do to get down to the river without their following."

The canoe had brought us hot coffee, eggs and rolls. We breakfasted in state in the cabin, with Charles to wait upon us. He had little news, beyond the fact that the pines were patrolled by a number of men.

After breakfast we passed the time as best we could, but the morning went slowly, and we were glad when lunch was ready. This was a meagre meal, made up of the scraps of the provisions Barbara had brought us. I told Charles that I preferred to have him stay with us, as there was no telling when we should need every able-bodied man we could find, and so he brought the canoe on board, stowed her on the after-deck, and devoted himself to the small duties on his new housekeeping.

Duponceau and Islip had slept little the night before, and shortly after lunch they took up their bunks to nap. I was on guard on the forward deck when I heard a voice call, "Ship ahoy!" and looked up to see Barbara on the cliff.

I called to Charles to take my place for a few moments and sallied forth to shore. Barbara joined me at the foot of the headland.

"Well?" she asked eagerly.

I told her the adventures of the previous night, and when I came to the early morning swim her eyes danced as she clapped her hands with delight. "Oh, I wish I had been out there with you!" she cried. "I've always wanted to try a swim in the dark."

"It's just as well you weren't," I answered sagely.

She looked somewhat longingly out to sea. "What a beautiful afternoon! And are the rest of the crew working?"

"The rest of the crew are sleeping. They had too much coffee for dinner last night, and it kept them awake."

"And what is Charles doing?"

I pointed to the deck. "He's on guard. That's the reason I'm here."

"Oh, that's it, is it? I thought you came to see me."

"And so I did. Suppose we sit here at the foot of the cliff, where we can look out to sea and can't be seen. There's a little nook I know of."

I found the place that I sought—a secret crevice in the rocks—and there we sat and watched the tide do its best to reach us as it bounded landward. The afternoon drifted past, and we, borne on its tranquillity, were now talkative, now silent. Barbara rolled her sleeves above her elbows, and played with the water in a little pool beside our ledge of rocks. Her dreaming eyes brooded over the ocean. I watched her, tried to turn my eyes seaward, felt the irresistible call, and came back to watching her. The time had come when I could think only the one thought.

The sun was low, Barbara was humming a little French song. The whole world was adorable.

"Barbara, I love you!"

The words were out, spoken without volition, all of themselves.

She looked up; her singing stopped, and the deep blush-rose crept into her face, while her eyes shrank.

"Barbara, I love you. I have loved you since I first found you on the Ship, and I shall go on loving you until I die. I can't help it; it's not only conscious, it's partly unconscious; it's just you calling to me. Barbara dear, you are all my hope in the world. You are the world. Will you marry me?"

I was leaning forward, thinking only of that sweet, that infinitely sweet face opposite.

She smiled, her eyes turning to watch the waves, and I waited spellbound for her answer.

"I haven't known you very long," she added, her voice low; "and what do you know of me?"

"Everything. All I could ever know—that you are the one woman in the world."

"But it's summer, and it's easy to say such things in summer. It's all part of the setting. I told you once you were a dreamer. Dreamers are apt to romance, and that is probably why you are now in love with the waves and the sunshine and—with me." The last words were just a whisper. She raised her eyes to mine for a fleeting second, then dropped her lashes.

"Believe me, Barbara, it's not that; it's the truth—the truest thing in the world."

She played with the water in the pool at her side.

"I like you—but, then, I like many. There's Rodney I like also. Perhaps I like you better because I have never seen you in town, nor anywhere but in your chosen country. But I can't forget that there are other treasures in the sea—how can you be sure you won't come upon another and a finer? Then, too, I like men who do things, men who fight and win out—and so you see," she finished, with a slight smile, "it's not that I like any one in particular less, but the infinite possibilities more."

"Then," I said stubbornly, "I will wait, and prove my meaning to you."

She raised her eyes frankly to mine. "I like that," she said.

After a time we walked back to her path and said good-by. The beach was empty. Islip was sitting on the Ship's deck, and Barbara waved to him and he waved back. I felt sorry for him, somehow, for now I knew what he must feel. No wonder he couldn't go back to his beloved Wall Street.

"Good-by again," she said, and then, that the parting might not be too abrupt, she added, "I think I am growing almost as fond as you of your little kingdom. Rule it well."

"I shall. I have a great deal to prove now."

She smiled. "Felix of Alastair;" then she turned up the path.

I went back to the Ship mighty with resolves; I thirsted for great deeds to do. When I came on board I found plans for such deeds brewing.

CHAPTER XIV.

Duponceau had been brooding all day over the possibility of losing the contents of his precious chest, and so, after some argument, Rodney and he had decided to make the effort to move it to the Ship that night. I pointed out the fact that in all probability the enemy knew nothing whatever of the chest's position, and had simply happened to camp in the neighborhood of that particular hemlock; but Duponceau's fears were aroused, and it was evident that he would be satisfied with nothing short of having the strong-box under his eyes.

"What the deuce do you suppose those papers are, that he should be so fearful about them?" I asked Rodney when we were alone.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Heaven knows! The man isn't crazy, for I've been studying him closely all day, and some experience with Wall Street has put me wise on cranks. No, there's a real, live mystery somewhere, and our friend Pierre is a somebody, though whether the Wandering Jew or the lost Napoleon I can't say. Suffice it, he's got a treasure chest, and it's up to us to sit on it so tight that none of its pieces-of-eight can filter through."

Fortunately the night was cloudy, and about eleven we were ready to start. I had never felt so completely the desperado before. We were all three armed with revolvers, I carried a coil of rope wound about my waist, and Rodney a dark lantern which Charles had found in the cottage. Duponceau was the least excited. He took command of our expedition with the assurance of a born leader, and, in fact, it was only his overweening confidence that gave the scheme the least prospect of success.

Just before we left the Ship Charles joined us with two spades, and so, a party of four, we stole over the beach and into the dunes. Duponceau led us to the pine, thence we crawled inward, lying silent after each cracking twig, straining our eyes and ears for news. When we came to the hemlock we lay four abreast and so peered over at the tent that loomed vaguely white ahead. The only sound was a loud and resonant snore.

Duponceau crawled forward on one side of the tent, and then beckoned to me to do the same on the opposite side. When I had wriggled forward some ten feet I could look in at the tent, the sides of which were open to the summer breezes. One man lay within, sleeping. It was clear that the enemy had not expected us.

Duponceau stole to his feet, I did likewise. He entered the tent from one side, and I from the other. With a swift movement he was over the sleeping man, and had pinned him to the bed, while he thrust a handkerchief into his mouth. The sleeper started, struggled, moaned, and lay still; I had held my revolver in his face. In a twinkling we had him bound and gagged, rolled from his bed of boughs, and laid at a little distance. While we did this Islip and Charles cut the guide-ropes, and the house of our enemies fell, collapsing like a great white balloon when the gas escapes. We cleared it away, and the place where the chest was hidden lay before us.

Then followed a strange scene for those unhistoric pines of Alastair. With ears keen for the slightest alarm, Duponceau and I dug, Rodney holding his black lantern so as to aid us, Charles keeping watch. A foot down and my spade struck wood. In five minutes the chest was uncovered. Carefully we raised it and placed it on the ground. As his hand touched the unbroken lock I thought that Duponceau gave a little sigh of relief.

(To be continued.)

Coming Home in the Dark.

The tunnel was dark, the tunnel was long,
And the lights had all gone out.
The temptation was assuredly strong—
Of that there could be no doubt.
She has sitting by me, a portly miss
Of thirty summers, or less;
When a notion struck me that I would kiss
That vision of loveliness!
Though the risk was great, I thought it worth while,
For I was full of romance,
And to steal a kiss in a furtive style
The pleasure could but enhance!
So when we had come to the darkest part
I gave her a silent smack,
When—I didn't expect it—bless my heart!
If she didn't kiss me back!
We gazed at each other in shy surprise,
When from the tunnel we sped,
The other passengers must have got wise,
For our cheeks were burning red.
At the same depot we left the train,
When I lost my charmer fair,
I thought I should never see her again,
For which I didn't much care,
But, when I got home, there was the maid,
And she gave me such a look,
"Who is that, mother?" I asked. She said,
"Why, Bobby, that's our new cook!"
—New York Times.

Sounded Romantic.

"There was one time in my life," said the fussy old bachelor, "when I really wanted a better half."

"Tell me about it," cooed the sentimental widow.

"Oh, there isn't much to tell," answered the f. o. b. "Some chap stuck me with a bad 50-cent piece."

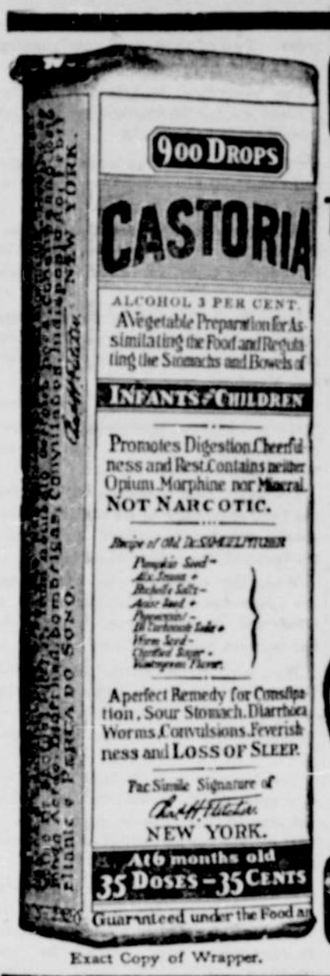
Saving the Pieces.

"Every little fragment of time should be saved," said the home-grown philosopher.

"Sure it should," rejoined the cynical person. "The moment the day breaks it's up to us to begin saving the pieces."

His Choice of Evils.

Shall I forever from her part,
Or wed her for better or worse?
The former's sure to break her heart—
The latter to break her purse.



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"You want to divorce your husband? You say you cannot agree? What evidence can you give of incompatibility of temper?"

"Why, I want a divorce and he doesn't."—Rire.

Could Not Tell Sooner.

"What, Suzanne, going to leave me?" exclaimed the lady to her French maid, who was "invaluable." "Going to get married? This is most unexpected."

"Oui, madame, but eet ees not my fault," responded the maid, apologetically. "Eet was only last night zat your son proposed to me!"—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Asking Too Much.

Letter Carrier — Rainy weather, farmer.

Farmer—Yes; our boarders are all kickin'.

L. C.—They can't blame you for the weather.

F.—Can't, eh? Gosh, some of 'em seem to think I ought to furnish moonlight nights.—Boston Transcript.

Hateful.

Mrs. Church—My husband didn't go to his club for two months after we were married.

Mrs. Gotham—Mine went the day after we were married.

"Oh, well, I didn't do my own cooking, you know."—Yonkers Statesman.

Special Offering at New York Store.

Clerk—Here is something new in chafing dishes.

Customer—What is its special feature?

Clerk—It produces only nightmares that are perfectly gentle.—Judge.

He Knew.

"My boy, here's the place for you. Hours from 10 to 2; Saturdays from 10 to 12; work genteel and light; experience unnecessary; salary, $100 per week. How does that suit you?"

"G'wan! I ain't got no $50,000 to invest in the business."—Houston Chronicle.

To Cover a Large Hole.

"Waiter, get me a newspaper so I can hide my yawns; this concert is so stupid."

"Yes, miss; I'll bring the largest I can find."—Fliegende Blaetter.

Mothers will find Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup the best remedy to use for their children during the toothing period.

This Is a Libel.

"Why do so many women rest their chins on their hands when they are trying to think?"

"To hold their mouths shut so that they won't disturb themselves."—Cleveland Leader.

Pettit's Eye Salve for 25c.
Relieves tired eyes, quickly stops eye aches, congested, inflamed and common sore eyes. All druggists or Howard Bros., Buffalo, N. Y.

But Not in a Salon.

"You know the artist we met last summer who boasted so of his family connections? Were any of his pictures hung?"

"No, but his grandfather was."—Baltimore American.

A little bottle of Hamlins Wizard Oil is a medicine chest in itself. It can be applied in a larger number of painful ailments than any other remedy known.

On Hers.

"Tommy," asked the teacher of the geography class, "what do you understand by the 'corn belt'?"

"I never heard of one, ma'am," answered Tommy Tucker. "Maw always uses a plaster."

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Allen's Foot-Ease is a certain cure for hot, sweating, callus, and swollen, aching feet. Sold by all Druggists. Price 25c. Don't accept any substitute. Trial package FREE. Address Allen S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

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is constantly increasing. The big creamery companies are constantly on the lookout and are offering good prices. A great many dairymen are buying more cows instead of trying to get all the profits possible out of those they now have. They seem to think about all that they can do is to run the milk through a cream separator, never stopping to consider whether the cream separator is doing its duty as it should. If its an old-fashioned, out-of-date or cheap machine it can't get all the butterfat—it wasn't intended to. Your dairy profits can be increased from 5 to 25 per cent by the use of

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