

# THE IRON PIRATE

A Plain Tale of Strange  
Happenings on the Sea

By MAX PEMBERTON

## CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

"That, Mister Black," he said, putting a miniature of exquisite finish against the white fur on the floor, "is a portrait of the Emperor Napoleon, sometime in the possession of the Empress Josephine; that is a gold chain—he was eighteen carat—once the property of Don Carlos; here is the pen with which Francis Drake wrote his last letter to the Queen Elizabeth—beautiful goods as ever was, and cost moosh money!"

"To the dead with your much money," said the Captain with an angry gesture, as he snatched the trinkets from him, and eyed them to my vast surprise with the air of a practiced connoisseur; "let's handle the stuff, and don't gibber. How much for this?" He held up the miniature, and admiration betrayed itself in his eyes.

"He was painted by Sir William Ross, and I sell him for two hundred pounds, my Captain. Not a penny less, or I'm a ruined man!"

"The Jew a ruined man! Hark at him! Four-Eyes"—this to a great lanky fellow who lay asleep in the corner—"the little Jew can't sell 'em under two hundred, I reckon; oh, certainly not; why, of course. Here you, Splinters, pay him for a thick-skinned, thieving shark, and give him a hundred for the others."

The boy Splinters, who was a black lad, seemingly about 12 years old, came up at the word, and took a great canvas bag from a hook on the wall. "He counted three hundred gold pieces on the floor—pieces of all coinages in Europe and America, as they appeared to be by their faces, and Hall picked them up."

"Mister Captain," he said, "I shall have waiting for me at Plymouth to-morrow a relic of the great John Hawkins, which, as I'm alive, you shouldn't miss. I have heard them say that it is the very sword with which he cut the Spaniards' beards. Since you have told me that you sail to-morrow, I have thought, if you put me on your ship across to Plymouth, I could show you the goods, and you shall have them cheap—beautiful goods, if I lose by them."

Now, instead of answering this appeal as he had done the others, with his great guffaw and banter, Captain Black turned upon Hall, and his face lit up with passion. I saw that his eyes gave one fiery look, while he clenched his fist as though to strike the man as he sat, but then he restrained himself.

"You want to come aboard my boat, do you?" drawled the Captain, as he softened his voice to a fine tone of sarcasm. "The dealer wants a cheap passage; so, what do you say, Four-Eyes; shall we take the man aboard?"

Four-Eyes sat up deliberately, and struck himself on the chest several times as though to knock the sleep out of him. He seemed to be a brawny, thick-set Irishman, gigantic in limb, with a more honest countenance than his fellows. I thought him a man of some deliberation, for he stared at the Captain and at Hall before he answered the question put to him. When he did give reply, it was in a rich, rolling voice, which would have given ornament to the veriest commonplace.

"Oid take him aboard," he shouted, leaning back as though he had spoken wisdom, and then he nodded to the Captain, and the Captain nodded to him.

"We sail at midnight, tide serving," said the Captain, as he picked up the miniature and the other things; "you can come aboard when you like—here, boy, lock these in the chest."

The boy put out his hand to take the things, but in his fear or his clumsiness, he dropped the miniature, and it cracked upon the floor. As the lad stood quivering and terror-struck, Black turned upon him, almost foaming at the lips.

"You clumsy young cub, what d'ye mean by that?" he asked; and then, as the boy fell on his knees to beg for mercy, casting one pitiful look towards me—he kicked him with his foot, crying:

"Here, give him a dozen with your strap, one of you."

He had but to say the words, when a colossal brute seized the boy in his grip, and held his head downward to the table board, while another stripped his shirt off and struck him blow after blow with the great buckle, so that the flesh was torn, while the blood trickled upon the floor.

When the lad fainted they gave him a few kicks with their heavy boots, and he lay like a log on the floor, until the ruffian named "Roaring John" picked him up and threw him into the next room. The incident was forgotten at once, and Captain Black became quite merry.

Food was put upon the table. It was rich food, stews, with a profuse display of oysters, chickens, boiled, roast, fine French trifles pasties ices. I wished to be away from a place whose atmosphere poisoned me. I whispered this thought to Hall and he said, "Yes," and rose to go, but the Captain pulled him back, crying:

"What, little Jew, you wouldn't eat at other people's cost! Down with it, man, down with it; fill your pockets, stuff 'em to the top. Let's see you laugh, old wizen-face, a great sixty per cent croak coming from your very boots—here, you, John, give the man who hasn't got any money some food."

The men were becoming furiously offensive. One of them held Hall while the others forced food down his throat, and

the man "Roaring John" attempted to pay me a similar compliment, but I struck his hand, and he drew a knife, turning on me. The action was foolish, for in a moment a tumult ensued. I heard fierce cries, the smash of overturned boards and lights, and remembered no more than some terrific blows delivered with my left, a sharp pain in my right shoulder as a knife went home, the voice of Hall crying, "Make for the door—the door," and the great yell of Captain Black above the others. His word, no doubt, saved us from greater harm; for when I had thought that my foolishness had undone us, and that we should never leave the place alive, I found myself in the street with Hall at my side, he torn and bleeding as I was, but from a slight wound only.

"That was near ending badly," he said, looking at the skin-deep cut on my shoulder.

"Hall, what does it mean?" I asked. "Who are these men, and what business carries you amongst them?"

"That you'll learn when you open the papers. Did you hear him ask me to sail with him from Dieppe to-morrow?"

"I did, and I believe you're fool enough to go."

"I must risk that and more, as I have risked it many a time. Once aboard his yacht I shall have the key which will unlock six feet of rope for that man."

It was light with the roseate, warm light of a late summer's dawn as we reached the hotel. Paris slept. I was hungry for sleep, and too tired to think more of the strange dream-like scene I had witnessed; but Hall followed me to my bedroom and had yet a word to say.

"Before we part I want to ask you to do me yet one more service. Your yacht is at Calais. Will you go aboard this morning and take her round to Plymouth? There ask for news of the American's yacht—he has only hired her, and she is called La France. News of the yacht will be news of me, and I shall be glad to think that someone is at my back in this big risk. If you should not hear of me, wait a month; but if you get definite proof of my death, break the seal of the papers you hold and read."

So saying, he left me with a hearty handshake. Poor fellow, I did not know then that I should break the seal of his papers within three days.

## CHAPTER III.

The next morning while I was at breakfast a servant of the hotel entered to tell me that a man who wished to speak with me was waiting outside. I said, "Send the man here," and presently he entered, when to my intense surprise I found him to be no other than one of the ruffians—the one called "Four-Eyes." I had met on the previous evening. He walked into the room with a seaman's lurch. His first words were somewhat unexpected:

"O! was priest's boy in Tipperary," said he, and then he looked round as if that information should put him on good terms with us.

"Will you sit down, please?" was my request as he stood fingering his hat.

"Thanking yer honor, it's meself that ain't aisy on them land craft. I'll be standin', sure, an' gettin' to the writin' which is fur yer honor's ear alone as me instructhuns goes."

He gave me a letter, well written on good paper. I write it here: "Captain Black presents his compliments to Mr. Mark Strong, and hopes that it will be his privilege to receive him on his yacht La France, now lying over against the American vessel Portland, in Dieppe harbor, at 11 to-night."

Now, that was a curious thing, indeed. Not only did it appear that my pretense of being Hall's partner in trade was completely unmasked by this man, but he had my name. Whether such knowledge was good for me I could not then say; but I made up my mind to act with cunning and to shield Hall in so far as was possible.

"Did your master tell you to wait for any answer?" I asked suddenly.

"Is it for the likes of me to be advisin' yer honor? 'Sure,' says he, 'if the gentleman has the moind to wroite he'll wroite, if he has the moind to come aboard, he'll come aboard.'"

"Tell your master, with my compliments," I said, "that I will come another time—I have business in Paris to-day."

He looked at me earnestly, and when he spoke again his voice had a fatherly ring. "If I make bold, it's yer honor's forgiveness I ask—but, if it was me that was in Paris I'd stay there."

When he was gone, the others, who had not spoken, turned to me, their eyes asking for an explanation.

"One of Hall's friends," I said, trying to look unconcerned, "the mate on the yacht La France—the vessel he joins to-day."

Roderick tapped the table with his fingers. Mary was very white, I thought.

"He knows a queer company," I added, with a grim attempt at jocularity, "they're almost as rough as he is."

"Do you still mean to sail to-night?" asked Roderick.

"I must; I have made a promise to reach Plymouth without a moment's delay."

"Then I sail with you," said he, being very wide-awake.

"Oh, but you can't leave Paris; you promised Mary!"

"Yes, and I release him at once," interrupted Mary, the color coming and going in her pretty cheeks. "I shall sail from Calais to-night, with you and Roderick."

"We mean to come," added Roderick. "Go and pack your things, Mary; I have something to say to Mark."

We were alone, he and I, but there was between us the first shadow that had come upon our friendship.

"Well," said he, "how much am I to know? I distrust Hall, who seems to me a perfect madman. He'll drag you into some mess, if you'll let him. I suppose there's no danger yet or you wouldn't let Mary come?"

"There can be no risk now—we are going for a three days' cruise in the Channel, that is all."

I went at once to the office of the police, and laid as much of the case before one of the heads as I thought needful to my purpose. He laughed at me; the yacht La France was known to him as the property of an eccentric American millionaire, and he could not conceive that anyone might be in danger aboard her. As there was no hope from him, I drove to the embassy, where one of the clerks heard my whole story; and while inwardly laughing at my fears, as I could see, promised to telegraph to a friend in Calais, and get a message delivered that might call Hall back to Paris.

I had done all in my power, and I returned to the hotel, but the others had left for the station. Thither I followed them, instructing a servant to come to me if any telegram should be sent; and so reached the train. It was not, however, until the very moment of our departure that a messenger raced to our carriage, and thrust a paper at me; and then I knew that my warning had come too late. The paper said:

"La France has sailed, and your friend with her."

## CHAPTER IV.

It was on the morning of the second day: the wind playing fickle from east by south, and the sea aglow with the light of an August sun. The yacht lay without life in her sails, the flow of the swell beating lazily upon her, and the great mainsail rocking on the boom. We had been out twenty-four hours, and had not made a couple of hundred miles. The delay angered every man aboard the Celsis, since every man aboard knew that it was a matter of concern to me to overtake the American yacht, La France, and that a life might go with long-continued failure.

The morning passed, a long morning, with a sea like a mirror, and the sun as a great circle of red fire in the haze. Hour after hour we walked from the fore-hatch to the tiller, from the tiller to the fore-hatch, varying the exercise with a full inspection of every craft that showed above the horizon. At six bells some dark and dirty clouds rose up from the south, and twenty hands pointed to them. Half an hour later there was a shrill whistling in the shrouds, and the rain began to patter on the deck, while the booms fretted, and we relieved her in part of her press of sail. When the squall struck us at last, the Channel was foaming with long lines of choppy seas; and the sky southward was dark as ink.

During one hour, when we must have made eleven knots, the wind blew strong, and was fresh again after that. Nor did the breeze fall, but stiffened towards night, so that in the first bell, when we came up from dinner, the Celsis was straining and foaming as she bent under her press of canvas, and it needed a sailor's foot to tread her decks. We had hardly come above when we heard Dan hailing:

"Yacht on the port bow."

"What name?" came from twenty throats.

"La France," said Dan, and the words had scarce left his lips when the skipper roared the order:

"Stand by to go about!"

For some minutes the words "bout ship" were not spoken. The schooner held her course, and rapidly drew up with the yacht we had set out to seek. From the first there was no doubt about her name, which she displayed in great letters of gold above her figurehead. When she had made some few hundred yards towards the coast, she jibbed round of a sudden, with an appalling wrench at the horse; and there being, as it appeared, no hand either at the peak halyards or the throat halyards, the mainsail presently showed a great rent near the luff, while the foresail had torn free from the bolt ropes of the stay, and was presenting a sorry spectacle as the yacht went about, and away towards France again.

The obvious fact that the yacht we had sought and run down was without living men upon her decks had taken the ill from the seamen's merry tongues, and a gloom settled on us all. Perhaps it was more than a mere surmise, for an uncanny feeling of something dreadful to come took hold of me.

"Skipper," said I, "order a boat; I'm going aboard her."

"When the wind falls, perhaps; but now!" and he shrugged his shoulders.

As the dark began to fall and the night breeze to blow fresh, while the yacht ahead of us swung here and there, almost making circles about us, we hove to for the time and watched her. I begged Mary to go below, but she received the suggestion with merriment.

"Go below, when the men say there's fun coming! Why should I go below?"

"Because it may be serious fun."

The skipper called presently for a blue flare, which cast a glowing light for many hundred yards, and still left us uncertain. "Flash again," said the skipper, and as the blue light flashed we saw right ahead of us the wanderer we sought; but she was bearing down upon us.

(To be continued.)

He never errs who sacrifices himself.—Bulwer.



## Does What Other Stoves Fail to Do

In almost every house there is a room that the heat from the other stoves or furnace fails to reach. It may be a room on the "weather" side, or one having no heat connection. It may be a cold hallway. No matter in what part of the house—whether room or hallway—it can soon be made snug and cozy with a

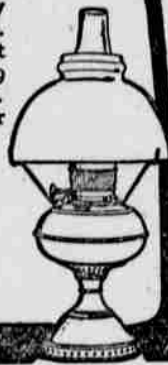
## PERFECTION Oil Heater

(Equipped with Smokeless Device)

Unlike ordinary oil heaters the **Perfection** gives satisfaction always. First and foremost it is absolutely safe—you cannot turn the wick too high or too low. Gives intense heat without smoke or smell because equipped with smokeless device. Can be easily carried from room to room. As easy to operate as a lamp. Ornamental as well as useful. Made in two finishes—nickel and japan. Brass oil fount beautifully embossed. Holds 4 quarts of oil and burns 9 hours. There's real satisfaction in a **Perfection Oil Heater**. Every heater warranted. If not at your dealer's write our nearest agency for descriptive circular.

The **Rayo Lamp**

Improved burner. Made of brass throughout and nickel plated. Every lamp warranted. Suitable for library, dining room, parlor or bedroom. If not at your dealer's write to nearest agency. **STANDARD OIL COMPANY**



### Many a True Word.

When, a few years ago, someone in an idle jest worded an advertisement for a housemaid saying that the advertiser would and could give "references" we all laughed and thought it too funny to be true. But it was prophetic. Recently in the newspaper of a suburban city an advertisement appeared for a cook and a housemaid, and the one in want of the servants added in a manner unmistakably meant to be persuasive "first change in ten years." But who among us feels like laughing now? Rather it is sobering in its effect upon us, since it tells in one more way a story that is vexing and perplexing thousands of housekeepers in the State.—Boston Transcript.

### Beware of Ointments for Catarrh that Contain Mercury

Mercury will surely destroy the sense of smell and completely derange the whole system when entering it through the mucous surfaces. Such articles should never be used except on prescriptions from reputable physicians, as the damage they will do is tenfold to the good you can possibly derive from them. Hall's Catarrh Cure, manufactured by F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, O., contains no mercury, and is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. In buying Hall's Catarrh Cure be sure you get the genuine. It is taken internally, and made in Toledo, Ohio, by F. J. Cheney & Co. Testimonials free.

Sold by druggists, price 75c. per bottle. Hall's Family Pills are the best.

### Confirming the Popular Impression.

"Minnie," said the young man, whose heart was thumping violently, "do you know that everybody—er—says—says—that we—we are engaged?"

"I suppose, Harold," she answered, "everybody thinks that—that we ought to be by this time."

After that it wasn't long until everybody knew it.

In Ireland there are 211,000 widows, as compared with only 88,000 widowers.

### His Own Manufacture.

Sir William Bailey "played this off," as he expressed it, at a dinner at which the late Cardinal Vaughan sat near to him. "Where did you get that bit of history from?" the cardinal asked. "I didn't get it from anywhere," Sir William answered. "I make history as I go on."—Manchester Guardian.

### Worth Knowing.

That Alcock's Plasters are the highest result of medical science and skill and in ingredients and method have never been equaled. That they are the original and genuine porous plasters upon whose reputation imitators trade.

That they never fail to perform their remedial work quickly and effectually.

That for Weak Back, Rheumatism, Colds, Lung Trouble, Strains and all Local Pains they are invaluable.

That when you buy Alcock's Plasters you obtain the best plasters made.

### You Have Seen Them.

First Flat Dweller—Those people over there are always kicking on the meals.

Second Ditto—Then why don't they move?

First Flat Dweller—They're the kind that would rather kick than eat.—Detroit Free Press.

### Bunkoed.

Church—A man recently paid \$60,000 for a seat in the New York Stock Exchange.

Gotham—And did he get it?

"O, yes, he got it."

"That's all right, then. I'll bet I've paid more than that in my lifetime for seats in the street cars that I never got."—Yonkers Statesman.

It is officially reported that the growing of cotton in West Africa has been very successful.

## SKIN DISEASES HUMORS IN THE BLOOD

When the blood is pure, fresh and healthy, the skin will be soft, smooth and free from blemishes, but when some acid humor takes root in the circulation its presence is manifested by a skin eruption or disease. These humors get into the blood, generally because of an inactive or sluggish condition of the members of the body whose duty it is to collect and carry off the waste and refuse matter of the system. This unhealthy matter is left to sour and ferment and soon the circulation becomes charged with the acid poison. The blood begins to throw off the humors and acids through the pores and glands of the skin, producing Eczema, Acne, Tetter, Psoriasis, Salt Rheum and skin eruptions of various kinds. Eczema appears, usually with a slight redness of the skin followed by pustules from which there flows a sticky fluid that dries and forms a crust, and the itching is intense. It is generally on the back, breast, face, arms and legs, though other parts of the body may be affected. In Tetter the skin dries, cracks and bleeds; the acid in the blood dries up the natural oils of the skin, which are intended to keep it soft and pliant, causing a dry, feverish condition and giving it a hard, leathery appearance. Acne makes its appearance on the face in the form of pimples and black heads, while

Psoriasis comes in scaly patches on different parts of the body. One of the worst forms of skin trouble is Salt Rheum; its favorite point of attack is the scalp, sometimes causing baldness. Poison Oak and Ivy are also disagreeable types of skin disease. The humor producing the trouble lies dormant in the blood through the winter to break out and torment the sufferer with the return of Spring. The best treatment for all skin diseases is S. S. S. It neutralizes the acids and removes the humors so that the skin instead of being irritated and diseased, is nourished by a supply of fresh, healthy blood. External applications of salves, washes, lotions, etc., while they soothe the itching caused by skin affections, can never cure the trouble because they do not reach the blood. S. S. S. goes down into the circulation and forces out every particle of foreign matter and restores the blood to its normal, pure condition, thereby permanently curing every form of skin affection. Book on Skin Diseases and any medical advice desired sent free to all who write. S. S. S. is for sale at all first class drug stores.

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## S. S. S.

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