

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 up 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 sweat dropping 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 when the danger does begin in New York I'll see 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?"
"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 accent 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 a 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 was 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 dozing, 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 veriest 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 top 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 fell 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 spoutin' about them as is above me," he said, "but you ask me a fair question. In course, I ain't the party to be thinkin' 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-lyin' in that perticuler 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.)

WHAT IS PE-RU-NA?

Is It a Catarrh Remedy, or a Tonic, or Is It Both?

Some people call Peruna a great tonic. Others refer to Peruna as a great catarrh remedy.

Which of these people are right? Is it more proper to call Peruna a catarrh remedy than to call it a tonic?

Our reply is, that Peruna is both a tonic and a catarrh remedy. Indeed, there can be no effectual catarrh remedy that is not also a tonic.

In order to thoroughly relieve any case of catarrh, a remedy must not only have a specific action on the mucous membranes affected by the catarrh, but it must have a general tonic action on the nervous system.

Catarrh, even in persons who are otherwise strong, is a weakened condition of some mucous membrane. There must be something to strengthen the circulation, to give tone to the arteries, and to raise the vital forces.

Perhaps no vegetable remedy in the world has attracted so much attention from medical writers as HYDRASTIS CANADENSIS. The wonderful efficacy of this herb has been recognized many years, and is growing in its hold upon the medical profession. When joined with CUBEBS and COPAIBA a trio of medical agents is formed in Peruna which constitutes a specific remedy for catarrh that in the present state of medical progress cannot be improved upon. This action, reinforced by such renowned tonics as COLLINSONIA CANADENSIS, CORYDALIS FORMOSA and CEDRON SEED, ought to make this compound an ideal remedy for catarrh in all its stages and locations in the body.

From a theoretical standpoint, therefore, Peruna is beyond criticism. The use of Peruna confirms this opinion. Numberless testimonials from every quarter of the earth furnish ample evidence that this judgment is not over-enthusiastic. When practical experience confirms a well grounded theory the result is a truth that cannot be shaken.

The Only Doubtful Citizen.

"Everybody is telling exactly what you will do if you are elected to office."

"Yes," answered the candidate.

"Well, what will you do?"

"I don't know yet."—Washington Star.

You Can Get Allen's Foot-Ease FREE.

Write Allen S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y., for a free sample of Allen's Foot-Ease. It cures sweating, hot swollen, aching feet. It makes new or tight shoes easy. A certain cure for corns, ingrowing nails and bunions. All druggists sell it. Don't accept any substitute.

A Choice of Evils.

Landlady—Would you advise me to send my daughter to a cooking school or to a music school?

Boarder (reflectively)—Well, I think I'd send her to a cooking school. It may be more fatal in its results, but it isn't anything like so noisy.

Steel rusts seven times as rapidly as iron.

BLOATED WITH DROPSY.

The Heart Was Badly Affected When the Patient Began Using Doan's Kidney Pills.

Mrs. Elizabeth Maxwell, of 415 West Fourth St., Olympia, Wash., says:

"For over three years I suffered with a dropsical condition without being aware that it was due to kidney trouble. The early stages were principally back-ache and bearing down pain, but I went along without worrying much until dropsy set in. My feet and ankles swelled up, my hands puffed and became so tense I could hardly close them. I had great difficulty in breathing, and my heart would flutter with the least exertion. I could not walk far without stopping again and again to rest. Since using four boxes of Doan's Kidney Pills the bloating has gone down and the feelings of distress have disappeared."

Sold by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

RHEUMATISM CAN NOT BE RUBBED AWAY

It is perfectly natural to rub the spot that hurts, and when the muscles, nerves, joints and bones are throbbing and twitching with the pains of Rheumatism the sufferer is apt to turn to the liniment bottle, or some other external application, in an effort to get relief from the disease, by producing counter-irritation on the flesh. Such treatment will quiet the pain temporarily, but can have no direct curative effect on the real disease because it does not reach the blood, where the cause is located. Rheumatism is more than skin deep—it is rooted and grounded in the blood and can only be reached by constitutional treatment—IT CANNOT BE RUBBED AWAY. Rheumatism is due to an excess of uric acid in the blood, brought about by the accumulation in the system of refuse matter which the natural avenues of bodily waste, the Bowels and Kidneys, have failed to carry off. This refuse matter, coming in contact with the different acids of the body, forms uric acid which is absorbed into the blood and distributed to all parts of the body, and Rheumatism gets possession of the system. The aches and pains are only symptoms, and though they may be scattered or relieved for a time by surface treatment, they will reappear at the first exposure to cold or dampness, or after an attack of indigestion or other irregularity. Rheumatism can never be permanently cured while the circulation remains saturated with irritating, pain-producing uric acid poison. The disease will shift from muscle to muscle or joint to joint, settling on the nerves, causing inflammation and swelling and such terrible pains that the nervous system is often shattered, the health undermined, and perhaps the patient becomes deformed and crippled for life. S. S. S. thoroughly cleanses the blood and renovates the circulation by neutralizing the acids and expelling all foreign matter from the system. It warms and invigorates the blood so that instead

S.S.S. PURELY VEGETABLE

of a weak, sour stream, constantly depositing acrid and corrosive matter in the muscles, nerves, joints and bones, the body is fed and nourished by rich, health-sustaining blood which completely and permanently cures Rheumatism. S. S. S. is composed of both purifying and tonic properties—just what is needed in every case of Rheumatism. It contains no potash, alkali or other mineral ingredient, but is made entirely of purifying, healing extracts and juices of roots, herbs and barks. If you are suffering from Rheumatism do not waste valuable time trying to rub a blood disease away, but begin the use of S. S. S. and write us about your case and our physicians will give you any information or advice desired free of charge and will send our special treatise on Rheumatism.

THE SWIFT SPECIFIC CO., ATLANTA, GA.