

THE IRON PIRATE

A Plain Tale of Strange
Happenings on the Sea

By MAX PEMBERTON

CHAPTER IX.

There were two great ships abreast of each other, and they were steaming with so great a pressure of steam that the dark green water was cleaved into two huge waves of foam before their bows; and the spray fell in tons upon their decks.

The more distant of the two ships was long in shape and dark in color; she had two funnels painted white, but marked with the anchor which clearly set her down to be one of the famous Black Anchor fleet. Her decks were dark with the figures of passengers and crew all crowding to the port side, wherefrom the other ship was approaching her.

It was this other ship which drew our gaze. Almost of the same length as the passenger steamer, which she now approached obliquely, she rode the long swell with perfect grace, and many of her deck houses and part of her prow shone with the brightness of pure gold. Full the sun fell upon her in a sheen of shimmering splendor, throwing great reflected lights which dazzled the eye. Every ornament on her seemed to be made of the precious metal, now glowing to exceeding brilliance in the full power of the sunlight.

She was a very big ship, and she had all the shape of a ship of war, while the turrets fore and aft of her capacious funnel showed the muzzles of two big guns. I could see by my glass a whole wealth of armament in the forepart of her short mast forward. There was a great deck erection, with a gallery and a bridge for navigation; but no men showed upon the platform, and, for the matter of that, no soul trod her decks, so far as our observation went. Yet her speed was such as I do not believe any ship achieved before. Now rising majestically on the long roll of the swell, now falling into the concave of the sea, she rushed onward towards the steamer she was evidently pursuing as though driven by all the furies of the deep.

As we watched her the gun in her foremost turret belched out flame and smoke, and we observed the rise and fall of a shell, which cut the water a cable's length ahead of the straining steamer. At that moment she ran up a flag upon her signal mast, and, as I read it with my glass, I saw that it was the flag of the Chilean republic.

It was a matter of satisfaction to me that Mary still slept, and I looked for the appearance of Paolo with some question. But he remained below through it all. The skipper was the first to speak. "That ship yonder," said he, jerking his thumb to starboard, "is it any business of ours?"

"None that I know of," I replied; "but it's a mighty fine sight, skipper, don't you think, a Chilean warship running after a liner in broad daylight? What's your opinion?"

"It's a fine sight enough, but I would give half I'm worth to be a hundred miles away from it; do you want me to get this boat into port again?"

"Of course."

"Then I'm going to put up the helm and sheer off. I'm not a man that loves fighting myself, and with a ship and crew to look after, I've no business in any affair of this sort."

"Hold on a bit, skipper," said Roderick, "as we are, if you please; why, man, it's a sight I wouldn't miss for a fortune."

I had my glass to my eye in a moment and the light was so full upon the vessel, which must have then been a mile and a half away from us. There was now someone moving upon the bridge, and could recognize the shape of a man.

Throughout the strange scene, this vessel of mystery never gave one sign that men worked at her furnaces below. No evidence of that terrible power which was then driving her through the seas at such fearful speed.

But of the activity of her human crew we had speedily further sign; for, there was some belching of flame from her turret, and this time the shell, crashed full upon the forepart of the great liner, and we heard the shout of terror which rose from those on the decks. Then men appeared at the signal-mast of the pursuer, and rapidly made signals in the common code.

Then there was activity on the deck of the nameless ship, and men were swinging off a launch, which dropped presently into the sea and with a crew of some half dozen men. Again I got glass full upon the man who walked the bridge; and I knew him. He was the man I had met at Paris, the one styled Captain Black by my friend Hall.

The last link in the long chain was welded then. The whole truth of that weird document, so fantastical, so seemingly wild, so fearful, was made manifest; the dead man's words were vindicated. There on the great Atlantic waste, I had lived to see one of those terrible pictures which he had conceived in the midst of his long dreaming.

"Mark," said Roderick, "it's time to go; we'll be the next when that ship's at the bottom. Remember we have Mary on board."

Indeed, she stood by us as we spoke, very pale and quiet, looking where the two ships lay motionless, the boat from the one now at the very side of the black

steamer, whose name, the Ocean King, we could plainly read.

"Don't you think you're better below, Mary?" asked Roderick.

"Not until you go; and why should I make any difference? I overheard what you said. Am I to stand between you and those men's lives?"

"I am for standing by to the end," said I; "if we can save one soul."

"Gentlemen," said the skipper, "it's your yacht, and these are your men; if you care to keep them afloat, keep them. If it's your fancy to do the other thing, why, do it. It's a matter of indifference to me."

"Men," I said, "there's ugly work over there, work I can make nothing off; but it's clear that an English ship is running from a foreigner, and may want help. Shall we leave her, or shall we stand by?"

They gave a great shout at this, and the skipper touched the bell, which stopped our engines. Glasses were turned upon us from the decks of the yellow ship, and from the Ocean King, whose men were still busy with the signal flags, and this time, as we made out, in a direct request to us that we should stand by. I watched the captain of the steamer parleying with the men in the launch below him.

While a tall man with fair hair—my glass gave me the impression that he was the fellow known as "Roaring John"—stood in the bows of the launch, and appeared to be gesticulating wildly to the skipper of the Ocean King, the nameless ship set up of a sudden a great shrieking with her deck whistle, which she blew three times with terrific power; and at the third sound of it the launch, which had been holding to the side of the steamer, let go, running rapidly back to the armed vessel, where it was taken aboard again.

The whole thing was done in so short a space of time that our men scarce had opportunity to express surprise when the launch was hanging at the davits again. The great activity that we had observed on the decks of the war vessel ceased as mysteriously as it had begun. She bounded past us at a speed the like to which I had never seen upon the deep.

So remarkable a face-about seemed to dumbfound our men. But the key to the riddle was given, not by one of them, but by Paolo, whom I now found at my elbow.

"Ha!" he cried, "she's American!"

I saw what troubled him. There was a great white steamer coming up at a high speed, and I knew the form of her at once, and of two others that followed her. She was one of the American navy. The secret of the flight was no longer inexplicable; the yellow ship had fled from the trap into which she was so nearly falling.

"You have sharp eyes, Paolo," said I; "I imagine it's lucky for the pair of us."

The nameless ship, of a sudden, ceased her flight, and came almost to a stand some half a mile away on our port bow. As she swung round to head the seas, I saw at once that another cruiser, long and white, and seemingly well armed, had come up upon that side, and now barred her passage.

The nameless ship had now hundreds of men about her decks, and these were at the machine guns and elsewhere active in preparation. The great hull swung round slowly and passed at a moderate speed past the bow of the other. When she was nearly clear, her two great guns were fired almost simultaneously, and, as the shells swept along the deck of the cruiser, they carried men and masts and deck houses with them, in one awful confusion of wreckage and of death. The cruiser was utterly unprepared for the treachery, and lay reeling on the sea as her opponent treated her to the hail of her machine guns.

The battle could have ended but in one way, had not the other American warships now come so close to us that they opened fire with their great guns. The huge shells hissed over our heads, and all about us. The captain of the nameless ship fired twice from his turrets, and then headed off at prodigious speed. In five minutes he was out of gunshot; in ten, the American vessels were taking men from their crippled cruiser, whose antagonists had almost disappeared on the horizon!

Upon our own decks the noise and hubbub were almost deafening. We put out a boat with ease upon the still sea and hailed the passenger steamer after twenty minutes' stout rowing. She was yet a pitiful spectacle. When we got up on her main deck, Captain Ross, her commander, greeted us with great thanks. He took us to his chart room, for he would have all particulars about us.

"Twenty years," he said, with tears of anger in his eyes, "I have crossed the Atlantic, but this is the first time that I ever heard the like! It's piracy on the high seas; and they shall swing, if there's only one rope in Europe. What does it mean? Are we at war? You saw the Chilean flag. Is there no treaty of Paris?"

The first of the American ships came up with us, and the commander of her put out a boat, and having gone aboard the maimed cruiser, he came afterwards to the Black Anchor ship, and joined us in the chart room.

"It's an international question, I

guess," he said; "and if he doesn't pay with his neck for the twenty men dead on my cruiser, to say nothing of the twenty thousand pounds or more of damage to her, I will—why, we'll run him down in four-and-twenty hours."

I heard it agreed between them that the second cruiser of the American fleet should start at once in pursuit, while the Ironclads should accompany us to New York, so making a little convoy for safety's sake.

With this arrangement we left the ship and regained the Celsius. Paolo stood at the top of the ladder as I came on deck, and listened, I thought, to our protestations that the danger was over with something of a sneer on his face. Indeed, I thought that I heard him mutter, but I did not know then how much the laugh was to be against us, and that we should leave the convoy long before we reached New York.

CHAPTER X.

For full five days we steamed with the other vessels, under no stress to keep the sea, with them, since they made no more than twelve knots, for the sake of the cruiser which had been so fearfully maimed in the short action with the nameless ship. On the early morning of the fifth day I found myself unable to sleep and went above at daybreak, to see the white hulls of the American war vessels a mile away and the Black Anchor boat a few cable-lengths ahead of them. Paolo was on the bridge. I heard Dan the other side of the skylight, and he was holding forth with much fine phrase to Roderick's dog, Belle. I called him to me, and had it out with him there and then.

"What's in the wind now, Dan," I asked, "that you're preaching to the dog? Is there any more nonsense amongst the men forward?"

"There's a good deal of talk—maybe more than there should be."

"And what do they talk about? Tell me straight, Dan."

"Well, I've got nothing, for my part, to hide away, and I don't know as they should have; but you know this ship is a dead man's!"

"Who told you that stuff?"

"Plain yarn, Mister Mark, is best told in the fo'castle. I feel more like a father to you gentlemen than if I was nat'ral born to it; and this I do say—what's this trip mean? what's in yer papers? and why ain't it the pleasure vice we struck for? 'Where's it going to end?' says the second mate to the men; 'what is yer wages fo, takin' yer lives where they shouldn't be took?' And what follows?—why, white-livered jawnings, and this man afeard to go here, and that man afeard to go there, and the Old One amongst 'em, so that half of 'em says, 'We was took false,' and the other half, 'Why not 'bout ship and home again?' No, and you ain't done with it, not by a long day, and you won't have done with it until you drop anchor in Yankee-land, if ever you do drop anchor there, which I take leave to give no word upon."

"It's a curious state of things. You mean to say, I suppose, that there's terror amongst them—plain terror, and nothing else?"

"Ay, sure!"

"Then it remains for us to face them." I went to bed at 10 o'clock, and for an hour or two I slept with deep forgetfulness. At what hour Dan awoke me I cannot tell. He shook me twice in the effort, he said, and when I would have turned up the electric light, he seized my hand roughly, muttering in a great whisper, "Hold steady." I knew then that mischief was afoot, and asked him what to do.

"Crawl above," he said, "and lie low a-deck;" and he went up the companion ladder when I got my flannels and rubber shod shoes upon me. But at the topmost step he stood awhile, and then he fell flat on his hands, and backed again down the stairway, so that he came almost on top of me; but I saw what prompted his action, for, as he moved, there was a shadow thrown from the deck light down to where we lay; and then a man stepped upon the stair and descended slowly, his feet naked, but in his hand an iron bar; for he had no other weapon. At the sight of him, we had backed to the foot of the stairway; and, as the man crept down, we lay still. Swiftly and silently he entered the place; and, going to my cabin door, he slipped a wedge under it, serving the other doors around the big cabin in the same way. The success seemed to please him; he chuckled softly, and came again to the ladder, where with a quick motion, Dan brought his pistol butt full upon the fellow's forehead, and he went down like a dead thing at the foot of the swinging table.

There we left him, after we had bound his hands with my scarf; and with a hurried knock got Roderick from his berth. He, in turn, aroused his sister, and in five minutes we all stood in the big saloon and discussed our plan.

Dan's whispered tale was this. The watch was Paolo's, who had persuaded four stokers and six of the forward hands to his opinion. These men, the dupes of the second officer, had determined on this much—that the voyage to New York should be stopped abruptly. We, being locked in our cabins, were to have no voice in the affair; or, if waked, then we should be knocked on the head, and so quieted to reason.

It was a desperate endeavor, wrought of fear; but at that moment the true hands of the fo'castle were battered down, and Dan, who had seen the thing coming, escaped only by his foresight. That night he had felt danger, and had wrapped himself up in a tarpaulin, and lain concealed on deck.

As it was, Paolo stood at the door of the skipper's room; there were three men guarding the fo'castle, and five at the foot of the hurricane deck. One man we had settled with; but we were three, and eight men stood between us and the true hands.

(To be continued.)

GREATEST SIREN OF EARTH.

Costs One Dollar Each Time It Blows and Carries Ten Miles.

East St. Louis now has the biggest steam whistle in the world. It is a remarkable triple machine with three voices—a three-chime whistler, whose capacity for the annihilation of peace is extraordinary. This whistle blows a ten-mile blast at half-steam, and with favorable wind has a disturbing power of twenty miles. It costs a dollar every time it is blown.

But this great whistle is not all noise. It is an idea in economy, a whistle trust, a noise combine. Almost all the little noises, yelps, toots and whines of smaller mechanical throats in East St. Louis are now dumb. The giant whistle trust whistles have to whistle off time to be heard.

Within the range of this whistle are said to be 100,000 people who tell time by it.

This remarkable whistle has been installed by the East St. Louis and Suburban Electric Railway Company, at the Belt power house. Stat- and Twentieth streets, where the company's machine shops and car barns are located.

The greatest modern siren comprises three whistles. The largest is almost six feet in height and nearly as big around as a man. On each side of the main one is a smaller whistle. The three units combine to make one noise, with which even Babanne miles away, across the Mississippi river, in the west end of St. Louis, is well acquainted.

This big triple whistler was also set up at the railway company's electrical generating station "as a feature." It is connected with an electric clock, which is regulated by the government standard time sent out from Washington on the dropping of a ball at exactly noon each day.

The electric clock which connects with the whistle is guaranteed not to vary five seconds in time a year, and the clock's record to date is satisfactory. Almost every man looks at his watch when the first blast is sounded by the big whistle at 7 o'clock in the morning. Almost every housewife in East St. Louis glances at her mantel timepiece when the siren woos noon—the second blast of the day. The third blast is an hour later, and the last is at 6 in the evening.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

OTHER PEOPLE'S WAYS.

About 20,000 people live in the crater of an extinct volcano in Japan. They dwell contentedly in this pit-like town, surrounded by a vertical wall eighty feet high, rarely making a journey into the outer world, and practically forming a little community by themselves.

Residents of England have \$550,000,000 invested in mortgages in foreign countries. These investments annually drain the foreign countries of about \$27,500,000 in gold.

In Russia an unmarried woman remains under the absolute sway of her parents until her death, regardless of her age.

England is to-day the virtual ruler of 3,300,000 square miles of African territory.

A hundred years ago the population of London was just one-fifth of what it is now. The 6,500,000 people in Greater London live in 928,000 houses.

Only two American vessels have entered the harbor of Bordeaux in ten years, and those were private yachts which sought refuge during the Spanish-American war.

Germany is now experimenting with a new automatic repeating rifle capable of firing five shots in ten seconds. If the tests are successful its adoption by the army is considered probable.

After a struggle lasting several years, the respectable portion of the English community in Burnah has succeeded in securing the passage of a law forbidding the employment of women as barmaids. The Lancet hopes that this example will be followed in England.

Motor-boats of all sorts are becoming more and more numerous on the Venetian canals, threatening to displace the old-time gondola. The gondoliers are much disturbed. In a dispute between two of them and two electric launch men the latter were stabbed, one fatally.

Some Polish editors have a hard time. In a parting word to his readers the retiring proprietor of the Polish paper Gornoslazak says that during the five years of the paper's existence the responsible editors have spent four and a half years in prison, while \$3,750 has been paid in fines.

Dangerous.

"Why don't you make more speeches?" asked the friend.

"Because," answered Senator Sorghum, "I am afraid some of my enemies might call me a silver-tongued orator and so get people to paying more attention to my rhetoric than to my opinions."—Washington Star.

It Quiets the Cough

This is one reason why Ayer's Cherry Pectoral is so valuable in consumption. It stops the wear and tear of useless coughing. But it does more—it controls the inflammation, quiets the fever, soothes, and heals. Sold for 60 years.

"Ayer's Cherry Pectoral has been a regular life preserver to me. It brought me through a severe attack of pneumonia, and I feel that I owe my life to its wonderful curative properties."—WILLIAM H. TRUITT, Wawa, Pa.

Made by J. C. Ayer Co., Lowell, Mass. Sole manufacturers of
Ayer's CHERRY PECTORAL PILLS. HAIR VIGOR.

Hasten recovery by keeping the bowels regular with Ayer's Pills.

Bridge Lore.

"What is that poem about the bridge at midnight?" asked Mrs. Flashington. "I don't know," answered Mrs. Dasher; "but the poet knew what he was writing about. Bridge will keep you up till midnight and after if you happen to be loser."—Washington Star.

Rather Instigating.

Gussie Gunn—By George, Miss Tabasco gave me the coldest turndown I ever got in my life, weally.

Gussie Sapp—What did she say, old chap?

Gussie Gunn—Why, I asked if I might call on her and she said the janitor didn't allow children in that apartment house.

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

An Avenue of Escape.

Rival committees were appealing for funds.

"Let's see," said the capitalist, musingly. "If I give \$5,000 to each committee one donation would nullify the other, and so far as I can see, leave both relatively where they started."

Musing a little more, he decided that \$10,000 would just buy the sort of automobile he had in mind.—Philadelphia Ledger.

"Gone."

The red hammock slowly swayed in the gentle night breeze. Two hearts with but a single thought.

"Dearest," she said, dreamily, "we are here to-day and gone to-morrow."

"Not here, my love," whispered the ardent suitor.

"And why not?"

"Because I am 'gone' now without waiting for to-morrow."

And then only the chirping of the crickets disturbed the blissful stillness.

FITS St. Vitus' Dance and all Nervous Diseases permanently cured by Dr. Kline's Great Nerve Restorer. Send for FREE 32 trial bottle and treatise. Dr. R. H. Kline, Ltd., 361 Arch St., Phila., Pa.

He'd Find It "O. K."

The Philadelphian was staying at a hotel in a Georgia town. He rang for an attendant, whom he asked if bath tubs were provided.

"Yessuh," answered the negro, "we've got some nice tubs," and he presently returned bearing on his shoulders a coffin with silver-plated handles and lid all complete.

"What do you mean by bringing me that?" demanded the traveler.

"Dat's de bathtub, suh."

"The bathtub?"

"Yessuh. You see, suh, de lanlode he used to be in de undertakin' business, an' he had a lot o' coffins on han'; an' when he sol' out an' took dis hotel he brought all de coffins de new man didn't want. His son is in de tinsmf business, suh, so he done had de coffins lined wif tin, an' dey make nice bathtubs. Jes' you try an' you'll find dis one all right."—Success Magazine.

UTTERLY WORN OUT

Vitality Sapped by Years of Suffering With Kidney Trouble.

Capt. J. W. Hogn, former postmaster of Indianola, now living at Austin, Texas, writes: "I

was afflicted for years with pains across the loins and in the hips and shoulders. I had headache also and neuralgia. My right eye, from pain, was of little use to me for years. The constant flow of urine kept my system depleted, causing nervous chills and night sweats. After trying seven different climates and using all kinds of medicine I had the good fortune to hear of Doan's Kidney Pills. This remedy has cured me. I am as well today as I was twenty years ago, and my eyesight is perfect."

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

