

THE IRON PIRATE

A Plain Tale of Strange
Happenings on the Sea

By MAX PEMBERTON

CHAPTER XV.

During some days I saw no more of the doctor, or of anyone about the ship save an old negro, who became my servant. He was not an unkindly looking man, being of great age, and somewhat feeble in his actions; but he never opened his lips when I questioned him, and gave a plain "Yes" or "No" to any demand.

It must have been on the fourth day after my capture that the nameless ship, which hitherto had not been speeding at an abnormal pace, began to go very fast. Finally, by the consciousness that the ship had stopped, and that there was much agitation on deck, I looked from my window and observed the cause of the confusion, for there, ahead of us a mile or more, was one of the largest icebergs I have ever seen. I watched intently, hoping to see other bergs that should tell me how far we had gone towards the North, but the night fell suddenly. I had a notion that Captain Black was running to hiding; and his hiding place lay to the north, far above the course even of Canadian-bound vessels.

The time passed, the weather growing colder day by day, the bergs more frequent about my windows; until on the evening of the seventh day the ship stopped suddenly. The work of mooring was not a long one. On the next morning I got up at daybreak, and looked eagerly from my spying place; but I could discern only a blank cliff of rock, the ship being now moored against the very side of it. The negro brought a note with my breakfast; and I read an invitation to dine with Captain Black that evening. I welcomed the prospect of change, when the old man threw open the door and said, "The Master waits!"

He led the way up the companion ladder, which was, in fact, a broad staircase, elaborately lit with the electric light; and so brought me to the deck, where there was darkness save in one spot above the fore-turret. There a lantern threw a great volume of white light which spread out upon the sea, and showed me at once that we were in a cove of some breadth, surrounded by prodigiously high cliffs; and the light being focussed straight across the bay, disclosed a cleft in these rocks leading apparently to a further cove beyond. I had scarce time to get other than a rough idea of the whole situation, for a boat was waiting at the gangway. The men gave way at once, keeping in the course of the searchlight, and rowing straight to the cleft in the cliffs, through which they passed; and so left the light and entered a narrower fjord. This second cove opened after a while into a lake, above whose shores I observed many twinkling lights, which seemed to come from windows far up the face of the cliff. There was a rough landing stage, cut in the rock, and an iron stairway led thence to the chambers which evidently existed above.

When we had come to shore, and had been received there by several men who held lanterns, the negro pointed to the iron stairway and told me to mount; he following me to the summit, where there was a platform and an iron door. The door opened as we arrived before it, and there standing by it I found the young doctor.

"Come in," he said, "they're waiting for you."

We were in a broad passage lit by the electric light—a passage cut in a crystal like rock, whose surface had almost the lustre of a mirror. The passage led up to a second door—this one built of fine American walnut; and we passed through it at once into a room where I was astounded to see indisputable evidence of civilization and of refinement. The whole chamber was hung round with superb skins, the white fur of the polar bear predominating; but there were couches cushioned with deep brown seal; and the same glossy skin was laid upon the floor in so many layers that the footfall was noiseless and pleasantly luxuriant. The furniture otherwise was both modern and artistic.

The room had a solitary occupant. One glance assured me that I was face to face with Captain Black—the Captain Black I had seen in Paris; but yet not the same, for all the bravado and rough speech which which then fell from his lips was wanting. When he stepped forward and held out his hand to me, I had the mind almost to draw back from him, for I knew that the man had crime heavy upon him; but a second thought convinced me of the folly of making a scene at such a moment; so I took the great hand and looked him full in the face.

"I am glad to see you," said he; "dinner waits us;" and with that we passed into another chamber containing a dining table laid for four persons in a very elegant manner. The only servant was a giant black, and the guests of the Captain were the young doctor, the Scotsman known as Dick the Ranter, and myself.

The captain made no attempt to conceal information from me. The first occasion of his speaking during dinner was in answer to a remark of mine that I found the room very pleasantly warm.

"Yes," he said, "you must feel the change. You know where you are, of course. This is the west coast of Greenland, and there is a Danish settlement not fifty miles from you—although we don't

leave cards on our neighbors. Well, I won't have you hurried, and you're my guest until I put a certain straight question to you. When that happens you won't think twice about the answer."

"This pleasant party must disperse," he said to me later; "you can go to the quarters we have provided for you, unless you would like to see more of us."

"I should like to see everything you can show me," I replied, being aflame with curiosity to know all that the strange situation could teach me; and then he made a motion for the others to follow, and we passed from the room.

The way from the dining room was through a long passage lighted with arc lamps at intervals, and having the doors of many rooms on the right-hand side of it. Several of these doors were open; and I saw the interiors of well-furnished bedrooms, of smaller sitting rooms, and of a beautifully furnished billiard room. At the end of the passage we descended a flight of stairs to another landing. This proved the way to a small stretch of beach, and here I found several substantial buildings of stone, evidently for the use of Black's company. The largest of the houses seemed to be a kind of hall, well lighted by arc lamps. Into this we passed, lifting a heavy curtain of skins; and seated there, on all sorts of rough lounges and benches were the men I had seen in Paris, with fifty or sixty others, no less ferocious looking.

"Men," said Black, "I want to tell you that we've got a stranger with us; but he's here to stay, and he's my charge."

"Has he joined?" asked a blue-eyed man, who had eyed me with much curiosity; but the captain answered:

"That's my affair, and you keep your tongue still if you don't want me to cut it out; he'll join us by-and-by."

"That's agen rules," said Roaring John.

"Agen what?" asked Black in a tone of thunder.

"Agen rules," replied Roaring John; "his man broke my jaw, and I'll pay him, or you guess."

"Maybe you're right. No stranger stays here unless he joins, except them from the mines—but I've my own ideas on that, and when the time comes I'll abide by what's done. If any man will like to dictate to me, let him step out."

The fellow slunk away under the threat. Black was master beyond all question, and he protected me.

We went back with him to the long passage where I had seen the doors of bed chambers, and there he bade me good-night. The doctor showed me into a room cut in the solid rock, but with windows towards the sea. But first he said:

"You must have been born under a lucky star; you're the first man to whom Black ever gave an hour's grace."

CHAPTER XVI.

The bed in which I lay was wondrous soft and downy; and the cold gave me deep sleep, so that I awoke at a late hour to find the sun streaming through my rock window, and the negro telling me that my bath was ready. When we returned to my sleeping place, I found the bed curtained off, leaving a commodious apartment, with books, armchairs, a writing table and a fireplace, in which a coal fire burned brightly. But the greater surprise was the view from my window over a sunlit fjord, away to mountain peaks, snow-capped and shining; and between them to a vista of an endless snow plain, white and dazzling.

The doctor came to me while I was at breakfast. "The captain sends you his compliments," he said. "The men are inclined to resent the exception that has been made in your case. I am afraid it will lead to trouble unless you choose to close with the offer that Black makes to you."

"How has an exception been made in my case, and what is the offer?"

"Captain Black has brought thirty or forty Englishmen of your position to this place within the last three years; not one of them has lived twenty hours from the time he set foot in the rock house. The time will come when you must sign an agreement such as I have signed, and these men have signed—and I don't believe that you will refuse."

"You lay it all down very clearly," I replied, "but you can have my answer now if you like."

"Black won't hurry you. You can't do better than take things easy, and see the place."

The idea of inspecting the place pleased me. I followed Doctor Osburt to the beach. The coast-line was lofty and awe-inspiring. I stood entranced with the vigor born of the life-giving breeze. At last he touched me upon the shoulder, and pointed to where the nameless ship lay snugly moored.

"Look," he said, "at the instrument of our power. Is not she magnificent? With her we defy the world. Aboard her, we are superior to fleets and nations; we laugh at the fastest cruisers and the biggest warships."

He spoke with extraordinary enthusiasm. The great ship was indeed a beautiful object, lying there golden, yet swan-like, the guns uncovered as the men worked at them.

"She is a wonderful ship," said I, "and built of metal I never met with."

"Her hull is constructed of phosphor-bronze," he answered, "and she is driven by gas. It was one of Black's inspirations to choose Greenland for his hole; it is one of the few comparatively uninhabited countries in the world where coal is to be had."

"Who are your miners?" I asked. "Honest British seamen whose voyages have been interrupted. We give them the alternative of work in the mine, or their liberty on the snow yonder."

"But how can they live in such a place?" "They don't live," said he. "They die like vermin."

CHAPTER XVII.

For some days I saw no more of Doctor Osburt or of Captain Black. Once or twice I saw the man "Four-Eyes," and from him gained a few answers to my questions. He told me that Captain Black kept up communication with Europe by two small screw steamers disguised as whalers.

There were fifty prisoners in the mines. If fifty men were to be turned free, then surely I could count on fifty allies; and fifty-one strong hands could at least make some show even against the ruffians of the rock house. Give them arms, and a chance of surprise, and who knows? I said.

It might have been a mad hope, but yet it was a hope. Unless the man "Four-Eyes" deliberately deceived me, Black would connive at the murder of fifty British seamen before another twenty-four hours had sped. These men would have all the anger of desperation to drive them to the attack; and I felt sure that if I could get some arms into their hands, the attempt would at least be justifiable.

During the remaining hours of the day I engaged myself in searching the houses on the beach; but, although I looked into many of them, I found no sign of armory. Then I remembered that Black had a stand of Winchester rifles in his study. I had hopes that they would suffice, with knives and any revolvers I might lay hands upon, to hold a ring of men against the company. This thought I hugged to me all day, going often to the iron platform above the creek to know if there were any sign of the release of the miners, or of preparation for getting rid of them.

Towards evening, when I was weary with the watching, there was the sound of a gunshot below in the creek; and I went to my window, and saw the whole of a cruel scene. Some twenty of these seamen, black as they had come from the coal shaft, were going ashore from a longboat, while an electric launch was bringing twenty more from the outer creek where the nameless ship lay. But the men who had first landed were surrounded by the others of Black's company; and were being driven towards the hills, and so to the great desolate plain of snow where no human thing could long retain life. The pirates hit lustily with the butt ends of their pistols; the honest fellows used their fists, and many a man they laid his length upon the rock. Inch by inch they gave way, were driven towards the ravines and the countless miles of snow plain; and as the battle raged, the armed began to shoot with murderous purpose. Death at last was added to the horrors, and as body after body rolled down the rocky slope and fell splashing into the water, those unwounded took panic at the sight and fled with all possible speed away up the side of the glacier mount, and so to their death in that frozen refuge beyond.

At 7 o'clock I dined as usual I closed my own door, and for three hours or more I paced my chamber, the fever of anticipation and of design burning me as with fire.

Of the doors about, the majority were closed; but the Doctor's was open. I began to feel my way in the blinding dark. My first proceeding was to run upon some slight article of furniture and to overturn it. Twice I went round the room, and could not put my hand upon the rifles; but at the third attempt I found them, and gave a sigh of relief. Then an overwhelming terror struck me chill and powerless. My sigh was echoed from the corner by the window; and a low chuckle of laughter followed it. I stood as a man petrified, my hand upon a gun, but my nerves strained to a tension that was horrible to bear.

In another moment the electric light flooded the chamber, and I saw Black sitting at his writing table, observing me, a jeer upon his lips, and all the terrible malice of his nature written in his keen and mocking eyes. He had a revolver cocked at his left hand, but a pen in his right; while manuscript lay before him, so that he must have been in the room for some time, and had extinguished his light only at my coming. He leaned over the table, and drew near to it a lounge on which the skin of a polar bear was spread.

"Sit here," he said, and at the bluff word my nerve came back to me. "You're a smart boy, and have ideas, but, like all little boys, your ideas don't go far enough. I was just the same when I was your age, always trying to climb perpendicular places, and always falling down again. Silly lad, to put your head into a business which never concerned you."

"I came here to-night to stop your murdering fifty innocent men," I said, but he started up at the words and raved like a maniac.

"And who made you judge? Who set you to watch me, or give your opinions on what I do or what I don't do? Who asked you whether you liked it or didn't like it?"

(To be continued.)

Talking Shop.

"It took you years to learn all about the business in which you were so successful."

"Yes," answered Mr. Cumrox, "and mother and the girls say it is going to take me years more to forget about it."—Washington Star.

HURT, BRUISE OR SPRAIN

ST. JACOBS OIL

THE OLD-MONK-CURE RELIEVES FROM PAIN

Price 25c and 50c

IRRIGATION IN CANADA.

Alberta Country Fast Coming to the Front.

The Canadian Pacific Railway company is now engaged in a great irrigation work, just east of Calgary, that will eventually bring under water 1,500,000 acres of as fine land as there is in all of Canada. They have just thrown open to settlement the first block of 110,000 acres, which they are selling at from \$15.00 to \$25.00 per acre. In connection with this irrigated land they are selling non-irrigable lands at from \$12.00 to \$15.00 per acre, which cannot be surpassed for grazing purposes, and affords a range where stock may graze throughout the entire year without shelter.

The future of Western Canada, and particularly the southern portion of Alberta province, is assured. Calgary, its metropolis, a city of 20,000 inhabitants, composed largely of Americans, is a live, up-to-date city. Its retail business is in the hands of bright, progressive business men, who handle enormous stocks. There are a number of jobbing houses located there, and a home market for stock is afforded by a large packing house. Along the line of the Canadian Pacific railway in Southern Alberta, there have been twenty elevators established the past year, to be followed by thirty more next year, so that there will be no shortage for the immense crops produced in this section.

In pulling down the old cathedral of Metz a strong box has been found containing coins and watches valued at \$120,000.

Caution.

Imitations have been placed upon the market so closely resembling Allecock's Plasters in general appearance as to be well calculated to deceive. It is however, in general appearance only that they compare with Allecock's, for they are not only lacking in the best elements which have made Allecock's so efficient, but are often harmful in their effects. Remember that Allecock's are the original and only genuine porous plasters—the best external remedy known—and when purchasing plasters the only safe way is to always insist upon having Allecock's.

Uncle Allen.

"Let me see," mused Uncle Allen Sparks, "in the old days, when we couldn't charge it up to 'grip,' what was it we used to call this rocky sort of feeling we all have just after the Christmas festivities?"

TO CURE A COLD IN ONE DAY

Take LAXATIVE BROMO QUININE Tablets. Druggists refund money if it fails to cure. E. W. GROVE'S signature is on each box. 25c.

Valid Excuse.

Indignant Matron (in crowded car)—Sir, when so many elderly women are standing up why don't you rise and offer one of them your seat?

Seated Passenger (with dignity)—You are laboring under a mistake, madam. I am the Bearded Lady.

Conclusive Reasoning.

A little elderly German who keeps a stationer's shop amuses and interests himself by making up stories about his customers and telling them to his family.

"Dat young lady who has de pink cheeks, she be married soon, I t'ink," he announced one night.

"Now, my Carl, you know nottings of her whateffer, is it not so?" and his wife tried to look as if she did not think him a wonderfully clever man.

"It is like dis," said the stationer, solemnly. "I observe, and I know. At first she buy paper and envelopes de same; later she buy twice as more paper, and den five times as more paper as envelopes. So I know she is become betrothed."

"And to-day," he said, beaming with pleasure, "to-day she buy only one half-dozen envelopes and five times as more paper; and when I tell her she get dem cheaper if she buy many, she say to me, 'I have no need of more t'ank you,' so I know de friend he comes soon, and so comes de marriage on quickly."

Deafness Cannot Be Cured

by local applications as they cannot reach the diseased portion of the ear. There is only one way to cure deafness, and that is by constitutional remedies. Deafness is caused by an inflamed condition of the mucous lining of the Eustachian Tube. When this tube is inflamed you have a rumbling sound or imperfect hearing, and when it is entirely closed, deafness is the result, and unless the inflammation can be taken out and this tube restored to its normal condition, hearing will be destroyed forever; nine cases out of ten are caused by Catarrh, which is nothing but an inflamed condition of the mucous surfaces.

We will give One Hundred Dollars for any case of Deafness (caused by catarrh) that cannot be cured by Hall's Catarrh Cure. Send for circulars, free.

F. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, O. Sold by Druggists, 75c. Hall's Family Pills are the best.

The Best of References.

The new servant had presented her references and the mistress read them over, declares a writer in Answers, with a doubtful eye.

"I am not quite satisfied with your references, Jane," she said.

"Nayther am I, mum," responded the stalwart maid, "but they're the best I could get."

Economy.

"What's the matter with that man?" asked the dealer, after the customer had gone out. "He got mad when I tried to sell him a Christmas tree."

"That's Uppem," said one of his neighbors. "He's rich and proud, but stingy. He hangs all his Christmas presents on his family tree."—Chicago Tribune.

Impending.

Reporter—Colonel, you have read what Senator Gottlieb says about the country facing an industrial crisis. Do you think his fears are justified?

Eminent Statesman—So far as he is concerned, young man, they are. He is face to face with the dreadful alternative of going to work at something or starving to death.

BAD BLOOD

THE SOURCE OF ALL DISEASE

Every part of the body is dependent on the blood for nourishment and strength. When this life stream is flowing through the system in a state of purity and richness we are assured of perfect and uninterrupted health; because pure blood is nature's safe-guard against disease. When, however, the body is fed on weak, impure or polluted blood, the system is deprived of its strength, disease germs collect, and the trouble is manifested in various ways. Pustular eruptions, pimples, rashes and the different skin affections show that the blood is in a feverish and diseased condition as a result of too much acid or the presence of some irritating humor. Sores and Ulcers are the result of morbid, unhealthy matter in the blood, and Rheumatism, Catarrh, Scrofula, Contagious Blood Poison, etc., are all deep-seated blood disorders that will continue to grow worse as long as the poison remains. These impurities and poisons find their way into the blood in various ways. Often a sluggish, inactive condition of the system, and torpid state of the avenues of bodily waste, leaves the refuse and waste matters to sour and form uric and other acids, which are taken up by the blood and distributed throughout the circulation. Coming in contact with contagious diseases is another cause for the poisoning of the blood; we also breathe the germs and microbes of Malaria into our lungs, and when these get into the blood in sufficient quantity it becomes a carrier of disease instead of health. Some are so unfortunate as to inherit bad blood, perhaps the dregs of some old constitutional disease of ancestors is handed down to them and they are constantly annoyed and troubled with it. Bad blood is the source of all disease, and until this vital fluid is cleansed and purified the body is sure to suffer in some way. For blood troubles of any character S. S. S. is the best remedy ever discovered. It goes down into the circulation and removes any and all poisons, supplies the healthful properties it needs, and completely

S.S.S.

PURELY VEGETABLE

and permanently cures blood diseases of every kind. The action of S. S. S. is so thorough that hereditary taints are removed and weak, diseased blood made strong and healthy so that disease cannot remain. It cures Rheumatism, Catarrh, Scrofula, Sores and Ulcers, Skin Diseases, Contagious Blood Poison, etc., and does not leave the slightest trace of the trouble for future outbreaks. The whole volume of blood is renewed and cleansed after a course of S. S. S. It is also nature's greatest tonic, made entirely of roots, herbs and barks, and is absolutely harmless to any part of the system. S. S. S. is for sale at all first class drug stores. Book on the blood and any medical advice free to all who write.

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