

# THE IRON PIRATE

A Plain Tale of Strange  
Happenings on the Sea

By MAX PEMBERTON

## CHAPTER XX.

It was later that Captain Black, Doctor Osbart and myself entered the 7:30 train from Ramsgate; leaving the screw tender, now disguised, with the man John and eight of the most turbulent among the crew of the nameless ship aboard her. We had come without hindrance through the crowded waters of the Channel; and, styling ourselves a Norwegian whaler in ballast, had gained the difficult harbor without arousing suspicion. At the first, Black had thought to leave me on the steamer; but I gave him solemn word that I would not seek to quit him, that I would not in any way betray him while the truce lasted, and that I would return, wherever I was, to the tender in the harbor at the end of a week.

I will not pause to tell you my own thoughts when I set foot on shore again. I could not help but carry my memory to the last occasion when, with Roderick and Mary, I had come to London in the very hope of getting tidings of this man who now sat with me in a Kent Coast express. Where were the others then—the girl who had been as a sister to me, and the man as a brother; how far had the fear of my death made that childish face which had known such little sadness in its sixteen years of life? It was odd to think that Mary might be then returned to London, and that I, whom perchance she thought dead, was near to her, and yet, in a sense, more cut off from her than in the grave itself.

It was after 10 o'clock that the ride terminated, and, following Black and Osbart into a closed carriage, I was driven from the station. We drove for fifteen minutes, staying at last before a house in a narrow street, where we went upstairs to a suite of rooms reserved for us. After an excellent supper Osbart left us, but Black took me to a double-bedded room, saying that he could not let me out of his sight.

"Boy, if you make one attempt to play me false," said he, "I'll blow your brains out."

On the next morning Black quitted the house at an early hour after breakfast, but he locked the door of the room upon Osbart and myself. "Not," as he said, "because I can't take your word, but because I don't want anyone fooling in here." He returned in the evening at 7 o'clock, and found me as he had left me, reading a novel.

The following day was Thursday. I shall always remember it, for I regard it as one of the most memorable days in my life. Black went out as usual early in the morning; his object being, as on the preceding day, to find out, if he could, what the Admiralty were doing in view of the robbery of the Bellonic. We had been left thus about the space of an hour when there came a telegram for the doctor, who read it with a fierce exclamation.

"The captain wants me urgently," said he, "and there's nothing to do but to leave you here. You must put up with the indignity of being locked in. The man who owns this house is one of us."

I was in the very throes of a mental struggle when the strange event of the day happened. I chanced to look up from the book I had been trying to read, and I saw a remarkable object upon the leads outside my window. It was the figure of a man, looking into my room; and presently, when he had given me innumerable nods and winks, he took a knife from his pocket, and opened the catch, stepping into the chamber with the nimble foot of a goat upon a crag path. Then he drew a chair up to mine, slapped me upon the knee and said:

"In the name of the law! I take you by surprise; but business, Mr. Mark Strong. In the first place I have wired to your friend, Mr. Roderick Stewart, and I expect him from Portsmouth in a couple of hours; in the second, your other friend, the doctor, is under lock and key, on the trifling charge of murder in the Midlands, to begin with. When we have Captain Black, the little party will be complete."

I looked at him, voiceless from the surprise of it, and he went on:

"I needn't tell you who I am; but there's my card. We have six men in the street outside, and another half dozen watching the leads here. You will be sensible enough to follow my instructions absolutely. Black, we know, leaves the country to-night in his steamer. The probability is that he will come to fetch you at 7 o'clock—I have frightened it all out of the people downstairs—if he does, you will go with him. Otherwise, he's pretty sure to send someone for you, and, as you at the moment are our sole link between that unmitigated scoundrel and his arrest, I ask you to risk one step more, and return at any rate as far as the coast, that we may follow him for the last time."

I looked at his card, whereon was the inscription, "Detective Inspector King, Scotland Yard," and I said at once:

"I shall not only go to the coast, but to his tender, for I've given my word. What you may do in the meantime is not my affair. I suppose he's made a sensation?"

"Sensation! There isn't another subject talked of in any house in Europe—but, read that; and it's ten thousand in my pocket, any way!"

Detective-Inspector King went as he

had come, passing noiselessly over the leads; but he left me a newspaper, wherein there was column after column concerning the robbery of the Bellonic. At last, the police were on the trail of Captain Black; yet I saw at once that, lacking my help, he would elude them.

It was half past six when at last a man unlocked the door of my room and entered. He was one of Black's negroes.

"Sar will come quick," said he, "and leave his luggage. The master waits."

## CHAPTER XXI.

We drove rapidly and took a train for Tibury. The journey was accomplished in something under an hour; and when we alighted and got upon the bank of the river, I saw a steam launch with the man John in the bows of her. I entered the launch and we started immediately, going at a great pace towards Sheerness; and reached the Nore after some buffet with the seas in the open. At this point we sighted the tender, and went aboard her, when we made full speed towards the North Foreland.

Black had made a colossal mistake, from his point of view, in setting foot in England; but the crowning blunder of his life was that fatal act of folly by which he had sought to shield me from the men. Now the object of letting Black reach his vessel again was as clear as daylight; it was not so much the man as his ship which they wished to take.

But were we followed? I had seen nothing to lead me to that conclusion as I came down the Thames; and now, favored by an intensely dark night, we promised, if nothing should intervene, to gain the Atlantic in two days, and to be aboard that strange citadel which was our stronghold against the nations. There was no sign of any warship pursuing; no indication whatever that the tender, then steaming at thirteen knots towards Dover, was watched or observed by any living being.

I was dead worn out and slept twelve hours at the least, for it was afternoon when I awoke. Black was not in the cabin, and I went above to him on the bridge. There was no land then to be seen; but the clear play of sparkling waves shone away to the horizon over a tumbling sea, upon which were a few ships. Upon one of the he constantly turned his glass.

By and by all the crew began to observe Black's anxiety and to crowd to the starboard side; but he told them nothing, although he never left the bridge. It was somewhat perplexing to me to observe that, while the great ship was undoubtedly following us, she did not gain a yard upon us.

This strange pursuit lasted three days and into the third night; when I was awakened from a snatch of sleep by the firing of a gun above my head. I got on deck, where my eyes were almost blinded by a great volume of light which spread over the sea from a point some two miles away on our starboard bow. We had been in the Atlantic then for twenty-four hours, and I did not doubt for a moment that we had reached the nameless ship. Had there been any uncertainty, the wild joy of the men would have banished it.

I heard the voice of Black singing, "Hands, stand by to lower boats!" At that moment the cruiser showed her teeth. Suddenly there was a rush of flame from her bows, and a shell hissed above us—the first sign of her attempt to stop us joining our own ship.

We were no more than a quarter of a mile from safety, but the run was full of peril, and, as the launch stood out, the nameless ship of a sudden shut off her light, if possible to shield us in the dark.

But the pursuer instantly flooded us with her own arc, and, following it with quick shots, she hit the jolly-boat at the third. Of the eight men there, only two rose when the hull had disappeared.

"Fire away!" cried Black, shaking his fist, and mad with passion; "and get your hands in; you'll want all the bark you've got just now."

But we had hauled the men aboard as he spoke, and, though two shells foamed in the sea and wetted us to the skin in the passage, we were at the ladder of the nameless ship without other harm, and with fierce shouts the men gained the decks.

For them it was a glorious moment. They had weathered the perils of a city, and stood where they could best face the crisis of the pursuit. It was a spectacle to move the most stolid apathy; the sight of a couple of hundred demoniacal figures lighted by the great white wave of light from the enemy's ship, their faces upturned as they waited Black's orders, their hands flourishing knives and cutlasses, their hunger for the contest betrayed in every gesture.

"Boys," cried Black, "yonder's a government ship. You know me, that I don't run after war scum every day, for that's not my business. But we're short of oil, and the cylinders are heating. Boys, it's swing or take that ship and the oil aboard her."

"Look out aft—the torpedo!"

A tiny line of foam was just visible for a second in the way of the light; but, the moment the cruiser had shot it from her tube, she extinguished her arc, leaving us to light the waters with our own.

There was no difficulty whatever in following the line of the deadly message.

"Full speed astern!" roared Black, and the nameless ship moved backwards, faster and yet faster. But the black death-bearing followed her, as a shark follows a death ship; we seemed even to have backed into its course—it came on as though to strike us full amidships, but the great ship swung round with a majestic sweep, and as we waited breathlessly, the torpedo passed right under our bow, missing the ram by a hair's breadth.

We fired at the cruiser, hitting her right under the funnel, and a second time near her fore gun. Nor did she answer our firing, but rolled to the swell apparently out of action.

"Skipper, are you going aboard her now?" asked the man "Roaring John." "She's done by her looks, and you'll get no oil if ye delay. Karl, there, he isn't as comfortable as if he were in his bed." "You're quite sure she's done, John?" he asked, turning to the big man.

"She's done, I guess, or why don't she spit?"

The words had scarce left his lips when the cruiser's aft guns thundered out almost together, and one shell passed through the very center of our group. It cut the man John in half as he might have been cut by a sword, and his blood and flesh splashed us, while the other half of him stood up like a bust upon the deck, and during one horrible moment his arms moved wildly, and there was a horrid quivering of the muscles of his face. The second shot struck the roof of the turret obliquely, and glanced from it into the sea. The destruction seemed to move Black as no more than a rain shower. He simply cried: "All hands to cover; I'm going to give 'em a taste of the machine guns;" and we re-entered the conning tower. Then, as we began to move again, I swept the horizon with our light; but this time, far away over the black waste of water, the signal was answered.

"Number two!" said Black, quite calmly, when I told him, "and this time a battleship. Well, boy, if we don't take that oil yonder in ten minutes you may say your prayers."

## CHAPTER XXII.

The nameless ship bounded forward into the night, and soon was not fifty yards away from her opponent. Never have I known anything akin to the episode when bullets rang upon our decks in hundreds, and the dead and the living in the other ship lay huddled together, in a seething, struggling, moaning mass. We had opened fire upon her before such of her men as could be spared had got below.

"Let 'em digest that!" cried Black, as he watched the havoc.

I, who had not ceased to watch that distant light which marked another warship on the horizon, knew that a second light had shone out as a star away over the sea; and now, when I looked again, I saw a third light. We were being surrounded. The searchlights of the distant ships were clearer to my view every moment. Black saw them, and took a sight from the glass.

"Boy," he said, "you should have told me of this. I see three lights, and that means a fleet."

"Are you going to run for it?" I asked.

"Run for it, with two engines, yes; but it's a poor business. And we'll have to fight!"

I saw the foremost ironclad but two miles away from us, and the others were sweeping round to cut us off if we attempted flight. We lay with but two engines working, and a speed of sixteen knots at the best. Nor did we know from minute to minute when another engine would break down. At that moment there came a horrible sound of grating and tearing from the engine room, and it was succeeded by a moment of dead and chilling silence.

"The second engine's gone!" said a man above, quite calmly.

We found the crew sullen and muttering, but Friedrich, the engineer's eldest son, sat at the top of the engine room ladder, and tears rolled down his face. The great ship still trembled under the shock of the breakdown and was not showing ten knots. The foremost ironclad crept up minute by minute; and before we had realized the whole extent of the mishap, she was within gunshot of us; but her colleagues were some miles away, she outpacing them all through it.

"She signals to us to let her come aboard," said "Four-Eyes."

"Answer that we'll see in chips first," said Black, and he called for Karl and made signs to him.

Those on the battleship made quite sure of us now, for they steamed on and came within three hundred yards of us. Black watched them as a beast watches the unsuspecting prey. He stood, his face knit in savage lines, his hand upon the bell. I looked from the glass, and saw that no man was visible upon our decks, that our engines had ceased to move. We were motionless. Then in a second the bells rang out. There was again that frightful grating and tearing in the engine room. The nameless ship came round to her helm with a mighty sweep; she foamed and plunged in the sea; she turned her ram straight at the other; and, groaning as a great stricken wounded beast, she roared onward to the voyage of death. I knew then the fearful truth; Black meant to sink the cruiser with his ram. I shall never forget that moment of terror, that grinding of heated steel, that plunge into the sea. I waited for the crash, and in the suspense hours seemed to pass. As last there was under the sea a mighty clap of submarine thunder. Dashed headlong from my post, I lay bruised and wounded upon the floor of steel. The roof above me rocked; the walls shook and were bent; my ears rang with the deafening roar in their ears; seas of foam mounted; shrieks and the sound of awful rending and tearing drowned other shouts of men going to their death. And through all was the hysterical yelling of Black, his defiance, his elation.

(To be continued.)

# 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 acid 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.

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### The Subtle Difference.

An earnest defender of things Irish asserts that the traditional bull of Ireland is not, as is commonly supposed, the expression of a blundering intelligence, but, on the contrary, shows the exquisite feeling of the Irish for fine shades of meaning. The trouble lies in the ears that hear it.

"If ye were to be killed crossing a fence ye'd be all right," said a looker-on to a fox-hunter whose horse had turned head over heels in the middle of a level pasture. "But if ye were killed on the flat o' th' field ye'd never hold up your head again!"

### Will Do It Then.

"I travel on your road a good deal," said the caller, "and I'd travel on it a good deal oftener if it wasn't for its sharp curves."

"What's the matter with the curves?" asked the elevated railway magnate.

"They ought to be provided with a strong railing or something of that kind."

### What for?

"So a train couldn't run off the track when it gets whizzing and grinding around one of them, and fall to the street below."

"You've never heard of that happening, have you?"

### No—not yet.

"Well, when it does happen we'll put something around those curves. Good day."—Chicago Tribune.

### Nothing Doing.

It was an imposing building, but the man with the square valise did not hesitate.

"Madam," he said to the matron who appeared, "I should like to show you a copy of our book, 'The Quiet Life,' which is making such a—"

"Sir," she interrupted, "this is an institution for the deaf and dumb."—Chicago Tribune.

In Boston there are one and a half electric lights for each person.

Siberia exported 90,250,000 pounds of butter last year.

### The Howling Old Blizzard.

How dear to my heart is the fierce howling blizzard.

Which comes from the north like a wolf on the fold, Predicted by Foster or some other wizard, The charger of snow and the demon of cold;

How sweet to be caught in its grasp like a feather,

And find yourself wrapped round a telegraph pole;

Oh, how we adore, in this wild wintry weather,

This blizzard that comes when you're clear out of coal—

This wild, whirling blizzard, the razor-edged blizzard,

The loud-howling blizzard fresh from the North Pole.

—Lincoln Journal.

### TO CURE A COLD IN ONE DAY

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### Wrong Man.

While Dooly was holding court in Washington County, Georgia, a certain General Hanson came in and sat down at the side of the Judge, and began to tell him about the vast amounts of property he owned.

"Stop just a moment, general," said Dooly. "Mr. Sheriff, call in Jones, the receiver of tax returns."

In a few moments that worthy appeared.

"Mr. Receiver," said the Judge, "come up here and make an inventory of General Hanson's property. He had mistaken me for you."—Sunday Magazine.

### Consideration of a Motorist.

We hold no brief for the motorist, the Bystander says, but "honor where honor is due." On a country road the other day we saw a motorist deliberately avoid running over an animal on the highway! To be exact, it was a circus elephant.—St. James Gazette.

# CASTORIA

The Kind You Have Always Bought has borne the signature of Chas. H. Fletcher, and has been made under his personal supervision for over 30 years. Allow no one to deceive you in this. Counterfeits, Imitations and "Just-as-good" are but Experiments, and endanger the health of Children—Experience against Experiment.

## What is CASTORIA

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