

The Pirate of Alastair

RUPERT SARGENT HOLLAND

Author of "The Count at Harvard," etc.

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CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)

I followed his directions to the porch... I followed his directions to the porch...

"Oh," she said, "How good of you to bring it! I discovered it was gone and was afraid I might not be able to find it after the storm. Thank you so much, Mr. Seiden."

I felt singularly cold and haughty, and seemed to detect a certain reserve also in her manner. The air of the Penguin Club was not conducive to informality. I had intended to call her attention to the fact that the letter was open when I came upon it, but could not bring myself to do so in the face of the chill that seemed to have settled down upon us.

"Won't you sit down and talk to me?" she said, but I shook my head.

"I must be getting back. The storm is getting worse every minute. The wood road will soon be a swollen river."

There came a great flash of thunder, and a flash of vivid lightning. Miss Graham scarcely moved a muscle. "I love storms," she said, "but I don't blame you for wanting to get home as soon as you can. You must be soaked even in those clothes."

I looked at my rough attire, and then at the dainty white evening gown she wore, and laughed a little sharply at the contrast.

"It's lucky I don't often come to the club," I said. "They would probably warn me from the premises as a scare-crow of ill omen."

Hodney Islip came on to the porch, in evening dress, as though to emphasize his own incongruity.

"Will you dance, Barbara?" he said. "They're playing one of your favorite waltzes." Then he discovered me. "Hello, old chap," said he. "How the deuce came you here? You don't mean to tell me you rode through the thick of that storm?"

Petty resentment got the better of me; I barely noticed him, and bowed to the girl.

"Don't let me keep you, Miss Graham. My mission is over. Good night."

She held out her hand; I barely touched it. I was at the door when Hodney spoke. "I say, old man, have you seen the evening papers? Terrible times in France, more trouble on the market; let me get you the news." He was so full of the stock exchange himself that he thought we must all be interested.

"No, I thank you," I answered, bluntly, and went out, seeing myself for my rudeness to this chap whose only fault lay in the fact that Miss Graham cared much about him. I was still more scornful of this rudeness to him in the days to come.

I stood in the shadow while they danced, and then I stole back to the covered porch and looked in for a moment at the dancing. I watched Islip and Miss Graham on to the floor and away with her, and I caught sight of my locker hanging on its chain about the throat. She looked very fair in her white gown, with her neck bare, and Islip looked very happy as he danced with her. I looked again at my own rough, un-couth gear. This was no place for me. Suddenly I hated the Penguin Club and all it contained, all its civilization, all its clothes and dances. I would be off to my little hut in the dunes, with no one but Charles by, and he my very humble servant.

Nero was ready, and I swung myself up and plunged off again into the night. Flashes of lightning showed me the depth of the water in the woods. I ploughed my way homeward, caring nothing what happened, riding as though a legion of devils pursued.

I paid no attention to Charles' fire and the hot dog that he had ready. I flung off my sodden clothing and went to bed, finding my one satisfaction in the crashing zuns of the thunder that seemed to bombard Alastair from the sky. It was certainly the night for any mysterious deed, I remember thinking as I fell asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

I must have been asleep for some time when a sudden sky-cracking crash of thunder brought me wide awake. An instinctive movement made me jump out of bed and go to the front window which looks out upon the sea. The blackness of the pit, and only the roar of the waves against the cliff! Then while I peered into the night came a flash of lightning, revealing the beach and the waves and the open sea with startling clearness. The scene was over in the time it takes to tell it, but I had seen something—a long ship's boat, one-hundred and fifty feet long, with a black hull and a white superstructure, was moving straight for the beach as fast as the waves and the ocean could drive her.

Another lifting of night, and I saw a tall man—seemed strange, uncannily tall—half standing, half stooping in the storm sheets, the end of a cape flying past him in the gale.

When I could see again the long boat was making ready for the dash into the roaring surf. The oarsmen—there were some twelve—were laboring to keep the bow straight on. The tall man was standing up to see where he should go, and I caught sight of his white and storm-distorted face. I could not move, I could not utter a cry. I stood transfixed, scarce breathing, my body taut, waiting to see what would happen next.

Seconds passed in the darkness, then a flash, and I saw that the boat had weathered the worst of the surf, and was grinding on the shore. Four of the men had leaped out and were hauling hard at the sides; the steersman, gaunt and black, still clutched the tiller, half crouching, and was shouting. Succeeding darkness gave me a chance to wonder what manner of men were these making for Alastair, deserting their ship on the coast, and landing where there was no harbor, and only a single beach. Light again, and I stood dumfounded, transfixed, for I saw a little procession marching up the beach to the pines east of me: first the tall man in the long, black, flapping cloak, then two men bearing a good-sized box between them, and then two others, carrying what looked to me like a bundle of darkness, a terrible roar of thunder, and I pinched myself to make sure that I was awake.

I struck a match and held it behind my hand in order that no signal should be given. My watch told me the hour was half past one. I found that I was shivering from the cold, and slipped into my coat. At every flash of light I was back on the beach, raking the beach with my eyes. I saw nothing but the grounded boat, with a number of men standing by, and far off the tossing lull of the schooner.

I did not even dare step into the hall to call Charles, so afraid was I of losing something of this remarkable sight. Minutes passed. I kept my watch in my hand. Flash succeeded flash at greater intervals, but the scene was still the same; the boat evidently waiting, the farther reaches of the beach empty.

Half an hour had gone when my patience appeared from the pines, minus only—so far as I could see—the box that two of them had carried. There was a long interval of blackness, and then I saw the long boat plunging again through the breakers, and the crew struggling to keep her right on with their oars. I could see the boat was sharp at either end, and the men no novices at the dangerous work of beaching. They were gone, going back to their schooner, and I felt that the spirit of mystery was lifting from Alastair.

Still I waited, and in time the scene lighted, and I saw that the boat had left something: the tall, cloaked man still stood upon the beach, gazing seaward as though to catch the last of his mates. I saw nothing but even in that brief instant I felt there was something strange about him, something fantastic, something out of keeping with the New England shore.

Darkness shut in, the roar of thunder lessened, the lightning passed; the outer world only sent me the deep, distant booming of the sea upon the cliff. I started back to bed and pulled the clothes about me, full of wonder at what my eyes had seen.

I lay there for a long time, thinking, conjecturing what all this strange matter meant. Somehow, my quiet beach had been transformed; the space between the cliffs now shadowed forth a mystery, and yet, preposterous as the idea seemed, I felt in some way that I had always expected to find something to happen, my dreams in some way to come true, for Alastair was no common place and was fit for some surprising history.

In time I dropped asleep, to dream of queer things.

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CHAPTER VIII.

When I awoke in the morning I was more than half of the mind that I had dreamed of the lightning's singular pictures, or at least that, being suddenly startled from sound sleep and dazzled by successive flashes and stung by the roar of thunder, my imagination had played some trick on me. Anything else seemed too remarkable to be believed. Yet I could not quite convince myself that I had not seen the tormented schooner, the landing on the beach of the long boat, the march into the pines, and the final picture of that tall, gaunt figure gazing seaward. I could not believe that my imagination or my dreams could be so vivid as my remembrance of those scenes.

I questioned Charles closely at breakfast as to how he had passed the night. It seemed that he had slept solidly through all the uproar. Even had he not, he would probably have seen nothing, for his room was at the back of the house.

The storm continued, though with lessened violence. After breakfast I ventured out, dressed for a wetting, and went first to the place where, as I remembered, the long boat had been beached. The waves had done away with all traces of the keel. Then I followed as nearly as I could the path which the strangers had taken to the pines; but the wind and rain had obliterated the footprints, if there had ever been any there. I poked into the pines, only to be drenched by waterfalls for my pains. The mystery was as deep as ever when I finally desisted and went back to shelter.

After some thought, I determined to keep my eyes myself. Charles would approve of my statement, but I would without further evidence he would be only too apt, taking the facts in conjunction with my mysterious ride to the club in the evening, to believe I had dreamed it all. What would a schooner's crew be doing on our lonely beach in the height of a midnight storm? A sensible man would naturally be inclined to doubt.

I settled down to work, and shutting my mind both to the mystery and to Miss Graham, succeeded in getting a good deal done by night. The next day I passed in similar fashion, living in quiet comfort so long as the storm lasted.

The third day broke fair, and early in the morning I swept the sea and the beach with my binoculars. Never were sea and land more peaceful; the tempest appeared to have cleared the atmosphere and brought it to a new serenity. My work accomplished, I set out for the little river to the west of the cliff, to see how my catboat had weathered the gale. I found there was some bailing to be done, and then, called by a gentle breeze, I ran up sail and for an hour beat up the channel. The hot sun of noon sent me home, and I sat down to my mid-day dinner.

Charles had brought me papers and a note from the club. I ran through the papers first, to prove to myself how little I cared for the note, but at last I broke its seal.

"I am going to hold you to your invitation for supper in the Ship now that the storm is over. May we have it to-day about 6?"

That was all, without even a signature. I was in two minds as to what to do. I could not disappoint her without seeming more than childish, without writing myself down once and for all as a gentleman, and yet the sight of her note roused much of my sleeping resentment. If I went, I would at least show her that two could play at her game.

I visited the larder and decided on a menu. Then I started Charles half out of his senses, though to his credit he said he never showed it. "You will pack these things," I pointed out certain provisions—"in the wheelbarrow, and take them on to the Ship on the beach. You will also take the folding-table from my study, and two folding-chairs, and set the table on the deck. I am going to take supper there with a lady at 6. You can leave the ice-cream in a bottle. Have the supper ready at a quarter before the hour, and then leave. We will not require any services."

"Yes, Mr. Felix," said Charles, sedately. I frowned as though the whole proceeding bored me, and returned to my work.

As half past 5 I dressed carefully and left the house. As I walked up the beach I could not help but contrast this sunny scene with the night of the storm. Whatever that night had brought to Alastair, it was clear I was not to know much about it.

I waited on the shore until Miss Graham appeared, and crossed the path with her to the Ship. I pulled the stout rope-ladder over the side and helped her on board. We beheld a supper table immaculately set, and places laid.

Miss Graham was delighted, and I could not help relenting a little when I saw how very pleased she was. Moreover, I was the host, and she my guest, and I could not cast a shadow over my own feast. I tried, therefore, as best I could, to forget Islip and the letter, and to think only of what a beautiful late afternoon it was of how fresh the smell of the sea came to the old Ship's deck, and of the beauty of the girl who sat across from me. I think she detected that at first I was making an effort, and so tried to help me, for she was very lively and talkative, making much sport of the supper, all the courses of which were served before us at once, and of our having to wait upon ourselves.

When we had finished supper, I asked Miss Graham's permission to light a cigarette, and pushed my chair a little back from the table. There was a new moon in the sky, and I pointed it out to her. "This is the finest hour of the day," I said. "If only the Ship would up anchor and take us for a sail!"

"If your pirate doesn't come now, just after supper, with a crescent moon hanging right side up, I don't believe he ever will," put in the girl pensively.

Her playful words, combined with the ingenious voice and the far-away, childlike dreaming of her eyes, aroused something of my old resentment. Almost before I knew what I was doing I had fallen a victim to an impulsive temptation, and was leaning on the table with my eyes fixed on her.

(To be continued.)

MAJORITY BILL IN CONGRESS

Methods Adopted to Give Time and to Protect Debitors Party.

This is a big country with big interests and it is manifestly impossible to consider all matters in which all the members are interested in open session of the house, says J. Sloat Fassett in Leslie's Weekly. Rules have been devised for appointing committees and apportioning the work. Only the more important bills can be reported and only the most urgent of these can be considered in the whole house. No rules can be or ought to be devised which would enable every member to take up the time of the house whenever it so pleased him with any bill he might choose. So in the house, as in the world generally, the rule of the majority prevails. The country, by a majority vote in the several congressional districts, selects the political party which it desires to have in control. That majority party, by majority vote, proceeds to organize the house into a working mechanism. The speaker is elected by a majority and is always answerable to that majority. The rules are adopted by a majority and are always responsive to that majority. The rules are made with full provision to protect the rights of each individual and of the minority, but rightly they are framed to enable the responsible majority to exercise the power intrusted to it by the people and for the exercise of which or the failure to exercise which that majority, and that majority alone, is held responsible. If a Democratic minority, by the aid of a small body of insurgent or rebellious Republicans, could obtain possession of the machinery of legislation and prevent the majority from carrying out its pledges the country would not accept the plea of non-possessum. The entire majority would be held responsible for such a breach of trust.

Dr. A. Bullied, who discovered the ancient British lake village at Glastonbury in 1862, has now found another group of lake dwellings at the neighboring village of Mfear. The site of the lake village consists of two fields covered, about twelve acres, and is marked by a number of grassy mounds formed by floors of dwellings. Dr. Bullied has found large quantities of relics, including objects in bronze, bone, horn and pottery. The village is supposed to be of the late Neolithic date. It was probably built between 280 or 400 B. C. and the Roman Conquest.

Cheese must have been a rather dear or scarce article of food in 1502, for, says the Law Times, it is recorded in the "Black Books" of the Honorable Society of Lincoln's Inn that at Easter term, 1502, it was "agreed by the governors and benchers that term that if any one of the society shall hereafter eat cheese immoderately at the time of dinner or supper, or shall give cheese to any servant or to any other, he shall carry it away from the table at any time he shall pay 4 pence for each offense. The butlers of the society shall present such defaulters weekly, under pain of expulsion from office."

Recent investigations show that the umbrella is undoubtedly of high antiquity. It appeared in various forms on the sculptured monuments of Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome. It is not known to any servant or to any other, he shall carry it away from the table at any time he shall pay 4 pence for each offense. The butlers of the society shall present such defaulters weekly, under pain of expulsion from office."

When 20 per cent of cerium is allowed with 20 per cent of iron, the metal thus produced possesses the remarkable property of giving off a shower of sparks when struck by a steel wheel. This substance has been employed for making auto-lighters for gas burners, miners' acetylene lamps and clear lighters. Recently it has been proposed to utilize it for igniting motor headlights, and even as a substitute for electric ignition in the cylinders. Doctor Hill has tried it, for the last named purpose, but he finds that the efficacy of the alloy falls off with use. The cause of this loss of efficacy is supposed to be the presence of oil and dust.

A writer in Nature calls attention to the peculiar weather which accompanied and followed the great Sicilian earthquake. The sudden gale which settled upon the Strait of Messina was paralleled by a heavy mist accompanying the Mexican earthquake of January, 1892, and the earlier aids that rainfall is so frequently reported as the immediate successor of an earthquake that we can no longer verify the hypothesis of a real connection between the two. Professor Wille has suggested that the disturbance of the ground when transmitted to the swirling air may determine precipitation, thus explaining the apparent association of severe earthquakes with mist and rain.

He Couldn't Lose It.

All flushed and breathless, the well-dressed young man picked up the hat he had been clusting down the street, and leaned against a lamp-post to rest. Another, also breathing heavily, came running up and took the hat out of his hand.

"I'm much obliged," he said.

"For what?"

"This is my hat."

"Where's mine, then?"

"Hanging behind you at the end of the string."

Then for the first time the young man remembered his hat-guard.—Success Magazine.

Household Conveniences.

"I have a fireless cooker."

"That's nothing; I've got a smokeless husband."—Baltimore American.

POPULAR SCIENCE

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ASHES OF FUN

Professor—What was Nero's great crime? Bright Pupil—He played the fiddle.

Teacher (during a lesson on fowls)—Mary, what is an egg? Mary—An egg is a chicken not yet.

Recruit—Please, sergeant, I've got a splinter in my 'aud. Sergeant Instructor—Wot yer ben doin' Strokli yer 'ead?—Punch.

Your fiancée seems to have a will of her own. "Yes, and sometimes I half regret that I'm the sole beneficiary."—Philadelphia Press.

Scott—Wherever does Eastly get the idea that his jokes are funny? Mott—Oh, he tells them to young ladies with pretty teeth.—London Answers.

He—Miss Seeland holds her age remarkably well, doesn't she? She—Indeed she does. She has been 20 for at least ten years.—Illustrated Bits.

Dentist (to workman, who has just saved him from drowning)—My dear man, how can I express my gratitude? Come to my house and I'll pull every tooth in your head for nothing.

"So your boy Josh is an inventor?"

"Yes," answered Farmer Courtensel. "He has invented a lot of labor-saving devices." "What are they?" "Excuses for not working."—Washington (D. C.) Star.

"Mother, I've a dreadful thing to confess to you. Last night, when you told me to lie down in bed, I lied down, but after you turned out the gas I grounded my teeth at you in the dark!"

Passenger Agent—Here are some post-card views along our line of railroad. Would you like them? Patron—No, thank you; I rode over the line one day last week and have views of my own on it.

"I strolled into the Globe last night and heard Maxli, and I want to say right here that I think him the greatest monologist in the world." "You do, eh? You never heard my wife."—Boston Courier.

Farmer Honk (musingly)—They say Deacon Klutpheny's wife was a paragon before he married her, and—Mrs. Honk (briskly)—Nothing of the kind! She was a South! I knew the whole family.—Puck.

He was a countryman, and he walked along a busy thoroughfare and read a sign over the door of a manufacturing establishment, "Cast Iron Sinks." It made him mind. He said that any idiot ought to know that.

Invalid Husband—Did the doctor say I was to take all that medicine? Wife—Yes, dear. Invalid Husband—Why, there's enough there to kill a donkey! Wife (anxiously)—Then you'd better not take it all, John.—Tit Bits.

Former Customer (after a long absence)—What has become of the pretty blonde that used to feed the hungry at this lunch counter? Dark Skinned Walter Girl—I'm her. What you goin' to order, sir?—Milwaukee News.

"Mamma, may I play with Johnnie Cross?" "No, George. He's a bad boy. Let him play with the other bad boys." "Well, that's all right, mamma. His mother says I'm the worst boy on the street."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Mrs. Boggs—Mr. Meekman is a splendid example of what a man ought to be. Mr. Boggs—Not on your life. He's a splendid example of what a wife, two sisters, a grown-up daughter and a mother-in-law think a man ought to be.—Puck.

Squire's Daughter—Would you mind throwing your little boy into the pond? I want to see if my dog will rescue him. Villager—Certainly not, Squire's Daughter. I do wish you would. You're the second woman I've asked who has said "No."—Punch.

Little 4-year-old Allen had been given a "Noah's ark" on his birthday. One day he put the animals all in, shut the door and sat silent for some time. "What are you waiting for, Allen?" asked his mother. "Waiting for it to rain," he replied.

"I see you have my pamphlet on your desk," said the economist. "What do you think of it?" "It's betwixt and between," answered the heartless friend. "It's too light as an argument and not heavy enough for a paper weight."—Washington Star.

Barber (to customer)—Razor all right, sir? Customer—My dear man, if you hadn't mentioned it I'd never have known there was a razor on my face. Barber—Thank you, sir. Customer (frowningly)—I thought you were using a file!

Doctor—Why, how is this, my dear sir? You sent me a note stating that you had been attacked with mumps and I had you suffering from rheumatism. Patient—That's all right, doctor. There wasn't a soul in the house that knew how to spell rheumatism.—London Tit Bits.

"What brought you here, my poor man?" inquired the prison visitor. "Well, lady," replied the prisoner, "I reckon my trouble started in attendin' too many exdillins." "Ah! You learned to drink there, or steal, perhaps?" "No, lady; I was always the bride-groom."—Philadelphia Inquirer.

"What is it, madam?" asked the man behind the desk in an intelligence office. "I want a cook," exclaimed the lady, patting the director's knot on the back of her head, "and I want her bad!" "Quite simple, madam," the clerk assured her. "We have no other kind."—New York Herald.

Knew Hee.

Neighbor—Bertie, your mother is calling you.

Bertie—Yes'm, I know it, but I fancy she doesn't want me very badly.

Neighbor—But she has called you seven times already.

Bertie—Yes, I know, but she hasn't called me "Albert" yet.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Every morning a man thinks of how much he will accomplish that day. Every night, at supper, he abuses himself for accomplishing so little.

NEW YORK SPEND \$37.00 TO LIQUIDATE

Its Indebtedness to Her. "Mary Betts must be paid," said Comptroller Metz, today, to his subordinates, according to the Cincinnati Times-Star's New York correspondent. "The books show the city owes her 20 cents. Straighten that account out. What Metz says goes with his clerks. They found the account. Then they found Mary."

"Go long wid yee," said Mary. "I'm a hard workin' woman. I'll not be bothered with 20 cents."

The clerks explained to her that she must be bothered with it. She had to come to the office in person and sign a voucher, so the city's books might be straightened out.

"An' pay tin cents car fare an' lose me time? I will not," said Mary.

So they got an appropriation through one of the side issues of the city for that car fare. A clerk was sent over with it. Mary came to the city hall. The man who had the account in charge wasn't there.

"Ye're jokin' wid me, by'n," said Mary. "I'll crack the dial av th' nixt man that comes bhandarin' about me wid his story of twenty cents."

So all the clerks in the city took a day off and signed affidavits and vouchers and initiated paper and carried on something scandalous, until at last a voucher was mailed to Mary. "Fine," said Metz. "That's business. That's the way the city does its work."

Deputy Comptroller Phillips sniffed one of those long, mooncalf sniffs that sound like a call to battle. "You are right, Mr. Metz," said he, making every syllable count. "That is precisely the way the city does business. It cost \$37.00 to pay Mary's 20 cents."

THE FAMILY DOCTOR

Fighting Tuberculosis. It has always been recognized that in warfare a knowledge of the enemy's weak points confers immense tactical advantage. This was never truer than in the tremendous crusade that mankind is banding together to wage against that dread foe, tuberculosis.

A few decades ago this particular enemy of the human race was not believed to have any vulnerable spots. It was thought by all to be invincible, and that its mere touch meant death. Then it was gradually discovered that, after all, certain weapons were at hand by means of which mankind could give fight; that before sunlight, fresh air and proper food this foe could recoil like Mephistopheles before the crucifix.