

# THE LADY AND THE PIRATE

BY EMERSON HOUGH



Copyright, 1913, by Emerson Hough

last, did so, not cheerfully. I fear, for he was not of good blood.

"Tell me," I demanded then, seeing that the triumph of calm reason had been sufficient in his case, "why did you come here, and why do you try to drive us off, who are only on a peaceful journey as pirates, seeking our fortune?"

"Pirates?" he exclaimed. "Just what I thought. What's the use my leasin' the pearl for a mile along here if anybody can come and camp and go to work, right alongside o' me? If old Farmer Snider, that owns this land, hadn't gone to town I'd have the law on ye. Me payin' my money in and gettin' no protection. Fishin's rotten too!"

I now perceived that we had encountered one of those half nomad characters, a fresh water pearl fisherman, such as those who, for some years, with varying fortune, have combed the sand bars of our inland river for the fresh water mussels which sometimes, like oysters, secrete valuable pearls or nacreous bits known as slugs.

"I know the law," said I. "Farmer Snider can not lease the highway of yonder river where the Sea Rover passes. But I know also the law of the wilderness. One trapper does not intrude on another who has first located his country. We will pass on tomorrow. Meantime, if you don't mind, we will go with you to your camp and see how you do your work. Please forget that we have had any trouble."

He looked at me oddly, evidently thinking my mind touched.

We found that we were upon a little island between two shallow arms of the stream. The camp of the pearl fisher lay at the lower end, and never have I seen or smelled so foul a place for human habitation. The one large tent served as shelter, and a rude awning sheltered the ruder table in the open air. But directly about the tent and all around it in every direction lay heaps of clam shells, most of them opened, some not yet ready for opening. I had smelled the same odor—and had not learned to like it—in faroff Ceylon, at the great pearl fisheries of the orient. The "clammer" seemed immune.

Presently he introduced to us a woman, very old, extraordinarily forbidding of visage and unspeakably profane of speech, who emerged from the tent; his mother, he said. It seemed that they made their living in this way, clamming, as they called it, all the way from Arkansas to the upper waters of the Mississippi.

I explained to Lafitte and L'Olonnois that we were now come into the neighborhood of possible treasure, and the sight of a few pearls, none of very great worth, which the old crone produced from a cracker box was enough to set off Jimmy L'Olonnois, who was all for raiding the place.

"What?" he hissed to me in an aside. "Did we not spare his life? Then the treasure should be ours."

"Wait, brother," said I. "We shall see what we shall see." And I quieted Lafitte also, who was warlike at the very sound of the word pearl. "Them's what they take from the Spanish ships," said he. "Pearls is fitten for ladies fair. And here is pearls."

"Wait, brother," I demanded of him. For I was revolving something in my mind. I presently accosted the clammer.

"Listen," said I; "you say business is bad."

"It certainly and shorely is," assented the old dame, fishing a black pipe out of her pocket and proceeding to feed it from another pocket.

"Well, now, let me make you a proposition," said I, taking a glance at the heap of fresh shells which lay beyond the racks of trolling lines and their twisted wire books, by means of which dragging apparatus the mussels are taken—shutting hard on the wire when it touches them as they lie feeding with open mouths—"you've quite a lot of shell there, now."

"Yes, but what's in it? Button factories all shut down with a strike, and no market, and, as for pearls, they ain't none. Blame me for carryin' a grinch?"

the luck to change."

"The luck's with you," growled the clammer; "it's agin me." Unconsciously he put a finger to his swollen nose.

"What'll you gimme?" he demanded.

"One hundred dollars bonus and \$10 a day," said I promptly, and he seemed to know I would not better that.

"Who are ye?" he queried, "a buyer?"

"No, a pirate."

"I believe ye. I never saw such a outfit."

"Will you trade," I asked, "and how long will it take to open the lot?"

"Nigh all day, even if we set up all night and roasted." He nodded to a wide grating, and the ashes underneath showed that in this way the poor clams, like the Incas of old, were sometimes forced to give up their treasures by the persuasion of a fire under them.

"Very well," I said. "We'll call it a day. That's \$110 for you by this time tomorrow. I invoke the aid of capital and of chance, both, against you. You will very likely lose, but if so it would not be the first time the producer of wealth has lost it. But I make the wager fair, as my reason tells me I should."

"Ye're a crazy bunch, and I think ye're out of the state asylum over yonder," broke in the old woman. "But what do we care whether ye're crazy or not? Ye look like ye had the money. Jake, we'll take him up."

"All right," said Jake. "We'll go ye." "Tomorrow morning, then," said I. And our party rose to return to our camp, where Partial greeted us with warmth, he having assigned to himself the duty of guard. And so, as Peppy would say, to bed, although Lafitte and L'Olonnois scarce could sleep.

## CHAPTER V.

### In Which We Take Much Treasure.

YOU must be awful rich, Black Bart," said L'Olonnois to me as we sat on the grass at breakfast the following morning.

"No, Jimmy," I replied, putting down my coffee cup. "On the contrary, I am very poor."

"But you have all sorts of things back there where you live, and last night you said you would pay that man a hundred dollars just to open a lot of clam shells. Now, a hundred dollars is a awful sight of money."

"That depends, Jimmy," I said.

"And we ought to take them pearls," broke in Lafitte. "Didn't we lick him?"

"We did, yes; twice. And in my ascent I felt again a fierce satisfaction in the first conquest of our invader, that of body to body, eye to eye, rather than in the one where I brought intellect to aid in war. But there are two ways of being a pirate. Let us see if we can not win treasure by taking a chance in logic and so be modern pirates."

"They did not understand me and went mute, but at last Jimmy resumed his catechism. 'Who owns the place where you live, Black Bart?'"

"I do."

"But how much?"

"Some five or six miles."

"Gee! That must be over a hundred acres. I didn't know anybody owned that much land. Where'd you get it?"

"In part from my father."

"What business was he in?"

"He was a pirate, Jimmy, or at least they said he was. But my mother was not. I will tell you," I added suddenly. "My father owned a great deal of timberland long ago and iron and oil and copper, when nobody cared much for them. They say now he stole some of them. I don't know. In those days people weren't so particular. The more he got the more he wanted. He never was a boy like you and me. He educated me as a lawyer so that I could take care of his business and his property, and he trained me in the pirate business the best he could, and I made money, too, all I wanted. You see, my father could never get enough, but I did, perhaps because my mother wasn't a pirate, you see. So when I got enough my father and mother both died, and when I began to see that maybe my father had taken a little more than our share I began trying to do something for people, but I can't talk about that, of course."

"Well, why not?" demanded Lafitte.

"Go on."

"A fellow doesn't like to."

"But what did you do?"

"Very little. I found I could not do very much. I gave some buildings to schools, that sort of thing. No one thanked me much. A good many called me a Socialist."

"What's that—a Socialist?"

"I can't tell you. Nobody knows. But really, I suppose, a Socialist is a man born before the world got used to steam and electricity. Those things made a lot of changes, you see, and in the confusion some people didn't get quite as square a deal as they deserved, or at least they didn't think they had. It takes time, really, as I suppose, to settle down after any great change. It's like moving a house."

"What I like about you, Black Bart," resumed L'Olonnois naively, "is you seem always fair."

I flushed at this, suddenly, and pushed back my plate. "Jimmy," said I at last, "I would rather have heard that from you, than to hear I had made a million dollars from pearls or anything else. For that has always been my great hope and wish—that some day I could teach myself always to be fair—not to deceive anybody, most of all not myself; in short, to be fair. Brother, I thank you, if you really believe I have succeeded to some extent."

We later found our clammer, the young man and his crone of a mother, up betimes and hard at work, as evil looking a pair as ever I saw.

They had already roasted open and examined quite a heap of shells by the time we arrived, and I inquired, pleasantly, if they had found anything. The man answered surlily that they had not, but something made me feel suspicious, since they had made so early a start. I saw him now and then wipe his hands on his overalls, and several times noted that as he did so his middle finger projected down below the others, as though he were touching for something inside his pocket, which lay in front, the overalls being made for a carpenter, with a narrow pocket devised for carrying a folded footrule. But I could see nothing suggested in the pocket.

"That's too bad," I said pleasantly.

"It looks as though I were going to lose my hundred, doesn't it? Still, the day is long."

I busied myself in watching the deft work of the two as they opened the shells started by the heat, sweeping out the fatid contents and feeling in one swift motion of a thumb for any hidden secretion of the nacre. Nothing was found while I was watching, and as I did not much like the odor I drew to one side.

"I think he's holding out on us!" binned Jean Lafitte. "Time and again I seen the varlet make false moves. Let him have a care! The eye of Jean Lafitte is upon him!"

For my own part, I cared little for anything beyond the sport in my pearl venture, but no man likes to be "done," so I joined the guard over the pearl fishing.

They showed me a few pieces they had saved, splinters and slugs of nacre, misshapen and of no luster, and sneered at the net results, worth at most not so much as the day's wages I was paying either. I cared nothing for the results and smiled and nodded as I took them.

Thus the day wore on till mid-afternoon, when, such had been the zeal of the clammer, the heap of bivalves was exhausted. They stood erect, straightening their stiffened backs, and grinned as they looked at me.

"Well," said the old hag, "I reckon ye're satisfied now that we know this business better'n' you do. He told ye there wasn't no pearl in this river."

"No," added her hopeful son, "an' come to think of it, how'd I ever know you had a hundred dollars? I ain't seen it yet. But we've done, so let's see it now."

I quietly opened my pocketbook and took several bills of that yellow backed denomination and selected one for him. He took it at first suspiciously, then greedily, and I saw his eyes go to my wallet. "I forgot," said I, and took out two bills of \$5 each, which I handed to him.

"By golly," said he, "so'd I forgot!"

"Why did you forget about your wages?" I asked, and looked at him keenly. He turned his eyes aside.

"This fresh water pearl fishing," said I, "has many points of likeness to the ocean pearl fishing in Ceylon."

"You been there?" he queried, "and why is it like them?"

"In several ways. It is, in the first place, all a gamble. The pearl merchants buy the oysters as I bought my mussels, by the lump and as a chance, based on the law of average product. They rot the oysters as you do the mussels. The smell is the same, and many other things are the same. For instance, it is almost impossible to keep the diver from stealing pearls, just as it is hard to keep the Kaffirs from stealing the diamonds they find in the mines."

I still was looking at him closely, and now I said to him mildly and in a low tone of voice: "It would be of no use. I should only beat you again, and I would rather spare your mother. You see," I added in a louder tone of voice, "the natives put pearls in their hair, between their toes, in their mouths—although they do not chew tobacco as you do. One who merely put one in the pocket of his overalls, if he wore overalls, would be called very clumsy indeed, especially if he had been seen to do it."

Involuntarily he clapped a hand on his pocket. What would have been his next act I do not know, for at that moment I heard a voice call out sharply: "Halt, villain! Throw up your hands or by heavens you die!" Turning swiftly, I saw Lafitte, his pistol aimed in a very servicable fashion at the heart of the clammer, about the same as when he first accosted me on my stream, glancing along the barrel with an ominous gray eye again gone three cornered.

Before I could even cry out to him his warning was effective. I saw my clam fisher go white and put his hands over his head, the while his mother

ran screaming toward the tent, Jimmy L'Olonnois at her heels, sword in hand, and warning her not to get a gun, else her life's blood would dye the strand.

In a moment or two I restored peace. I held out my hand to the clammer. "I didn't know you seen me," said he simply and placed in my hand three pearls, either of them worth more than all I had paid him, and one of them the largest and best I had ever seen—it is the pearl famous as the "Belle Helene," the finest ever taken in fresh waters in America.

I looked at him quietly, and handed him back all but the one pearl. "I am sorry you were not a better sport," said I, "very sorry. Didn't I play fair with you?"

"No," said he. "Some folks have all the luck. You come along here, rich, with all sorts of things, and you'd rob a man like me out of what little he can make."

I was opening my wallet again. "I



"Halt, villain! Throw up your hands or by heavens you die!"

I am sorry to hear you say that," said I, handing him two bills of a hundred dollars each. "Sorry, because it has cost you \$2,800."

"Heavens, man, what do you mean?" he gasped, even his fingers slow to take both money and contempt.

"That the pearl is worth to me that much, since I have a purpose for it. I have more money than I want, and I favor pearls like this than I want. It would have given me the keenest sort of pleasure to give you and your mother a few thousand dollars, two or three, to set you up with a little launch and an outfit enough to give you a good start—and, perhaps, a good partner. You had a good chance, and like many another man who isn't good enough to deserve success you lost it. Do you know why you failed?"

"It's the luck," said he. "I never had none."

"No," said I, "it is not that. So far as luck goes, you are lucky you are alive. Little do you know our desperate band. Little do you know you have escaped the wrath of Lafitte, of L'Olonnois, of Black Bart. Luck! No, that is not why you failed."

"What then?" he demanded, still covetous, albeit rueful, too, at what he vaguely knew was lost opportunity.

"It was because you did not play the part of a clammer naturally and nobly," I replied. "My friend, I counsel you to read Epictetus, and while you are at that," I added, "I suggest you read also that other classic, the one known as 'The Pirate's Own Book.'"

A moment later the waves were rippling merrily along the sides of the Sea Rover as she headed out boldly into the high seas.

CHAPTER VI.

### In Which I Show My True Colors.

THERE were many lesser adventures in which Lafitte, L'Olonnois and I shared on our voyage through the long waterways leading down to the great river, but of these I make small mention.

Two things grew on me in conviction—first, I loved Helena Emory more and more each day of my life, and, second, that I must see her at the first moment possible in spite of all my resolutions to put her out of my life forever. And these two things being assured, when we saw the rolling yellowish flood of the Father of the Waters at last sweeping before us I realized that, bound as I was in honor to hold on with my faithful band, our craft, the Sea Rover—sixteen feet long she was and well equipped with long tons and deck carronades—would have no chance to overtake the Belle Helene, fastest yacht on the great lakes, which might, so far as I could tell, at that very moment be cleaving through the Chicago canal to enter the great river hundreds of miles ahead of us.

Wherefore, leaving my bold mates in bivouac one day, I made journey to the nearest town. There I sent certain messages to anxious parents and left for them our probable itinerary as tourists traveling by private conveyance. I could not set our future dates and ports more closely together, for before I left town I had purchased a sturdy power boat of our own, capable of doing her ten or twelve miles under her own petrol. I was in no mind to fall farther and farther back of the

# Hupmobile

CAR OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY

## Ask the Garage Man



The garage is a motor car clinic.

All kinds of cars with all kinds of symptoms and diseases come there to be cured.

Ask the surgeon in overalls about the Hupmobile.

He will tell you that many of them come for gas and oil.

"But mighty few," he will add, "for repairs."

"I have no reason to 'boost' Hupmobiles," he will say with a grin. "They don't particularly help my business."

After that admission, listen to what he has to say. He knows cars.

He will tell you that the Hupmobile is a wonder.

He will confirm what you already have come to believe—that the Hupmobile stands up under conditions that would kill a car less sturdy.

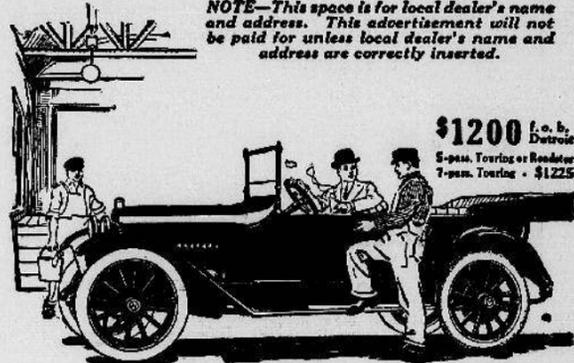
He will tell you that the Hupmobile motor is a wonder—a glutton for hard work.

The garage man is the friend of the Hupmobile in spite of the fact that it does not swell his income.

He is his friend because he loves a good car—and he can't help saying so. He is always a Hupmobile booster.

Let us add to his testimony with a Hupmobile demonstration.

NOTE—This space is for local dealer's name and address. This advertisement will not be paid for unless local dealer's name and address are correctly inserted.



LEVESCONTE & SHADY  
Malta, Montana

# SACO CREAMERY

Highest Prices Paid for Butter Fat.

Large or small lots received.

Malta agent G. W. Kramm. Lovejoy agent Walter Risen

When cream is delivered to Lovejoy it should be done on Monday as it is taken to the creamery on Tuesday of each week.

Poultry and Eggs taken in at the highest market prices at the creamery.

## Saco Creamery Association

# Listen to This!!!

Let this sink in, for you will remember it later.

We want to emphasize the fact that if you are going to do any kind of building

## Now is the Time

YOU SHOULD DO IT WITHOUT DELAY.

Conditions in the lumber trade will never be more favorable than at this moment, nor will they in the other supplies needed.

## The Thompson Lumber Company

Phone 49, Malta, Montana