KATE BONNET

THE ROMANCE OF A PIRATE'S DAUGHTER

By FRANK R. STOCKTON

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CHAPTER XXVI.
CAPTAIN ICHABOD.

KATE BONNET was indeed in a sad case. She had sailed from Kingston with high hopes and a gay heart, and before she left she had written to Master Newcombe to express her joy that her father had given up his unlawful calling and to say how she was going to sail after him, fold him in her forgiving arms, and bring him back to Jamaica, where she and her uncle would see to it that his past sins were forgiven on account of his irresponsible mind, and where, for the rest of his life, he would tread the paths of peace and probity. In this letter she had not yielded to the earnest entreaty which was really the object and soul of Master Newcombe's epistle. Many kind things she said to so kind a friend, but to his offer to make her the queen of his life she made no answer. She knew she was his very queen, but she would not yet consent to be invested with the royal robes and with the crown.

And when she had reached Belize, how proudly happy she had been! She had seen her father, no longer an outlaw, honest though in mean condition, earning his bread by honorable labor. Then, with a still greater pride, she had seen him clad as a noble gentleman and bearing himself with dignity and high complacence. What a figure he would have made among the fine folks who were her uncle's friends in Kingston and in Spanish Town!

But all this was over now. With his own hand he had told her that once again she was a pirate's daughter. She went below to her cabin, where, with wet cheeks, Dame Charter attended her.

Mr. Delaplaine was angry, intensely angry. Such a shameful, wicked trick had never before been played upon a loving daughter. There were no words in which to express his most justifiable wrath. Again he went to the town to learn more, but there was nothing more to learn except that some people said they had reason to believe that Bonnet had gone to follow Blackbeard. From things they had heard they supposed that the vessel which had sailed away in the night had gone to offer herself as a consort to the Revenge; to rob and burn in the company of that notorious ship.

There was no satisfaction in this news for the heart of the good merchant, and when he returned to the brig and sought his niece's cabin he had no words with which to cheer her. All he could do was to tell her the little he had learned and to listen to her supplications.

Mr. Delaplaine sat brooding on the deck. The righteous anger kindled by the conduct of his brother-in-law, and his grief for the poor stricken women, sobbing in the cabin, combined together to throw him into the most dolorous state of mind, which was aggravated by the knowledge that he could do nothing except to wait until the Belinda sailed back to Jamaica and to go to Jamaica in her.

As the unhappy merchant sat thus, his face buried in his hands, a small boat came alongside and a passenger

tional sea-robber, and he did not know exactly how to demean himself; but as his visitor's manner was quiet, and as he came on board alone, it was not to be supposed that his intentions were offensive.

"And you wish to see me, sir?" said he.

"Yes," said Capt. Ichabod, "I thought I'd come over and talk to you. I don't know you, bedad, but I know all about you, and I saw you and your family when you came to town to visit that old fox, bedad, that sugar-planter that Capt. Blackbeard used to call Sir Nightcap. Not a bad joke, either, bedad. I have heard of a good many dirty, mean things that people in my line of business have done, but, bedad, I never did hear of any captain who was dirty and mean to his own family. Fine people, too, who came out to do the right thing by him, after he had been cleaned out, bedad, by one of his 'Brothers of the Coast.' A rare sort of brother, bedad, don't you say so?"

"You are right, sir," said Mr. Delaplaine, "in what you say of the wild conduct of my brother-in-law Bonnet. It pleases me, sir, to know that you condemn it."

"Condemn! I should say so, bedad," answered Capt. Ichabod; "and I came over here to say to you—that is, just to mention, not knowing, of course, what you'd think about it, bedad—that I'm goin' to start on a cruise to-morrow. That is, as soon as I can get in my water and some stores, bedad—water, anyway. And if you and your ladies might happen to fancy it, bedad, I'd be glad to take you along. I've heard that you're in a bad case here, the captain of this brig being unable or quite unwilling to take you where you want to go."

"But where are you going, sir?" in great surprise.

"Anywhere," said Capt. Ichabod, "anywhere you'd like to go. I'm starting out on a cruise, and a cruise with me means anywhere. And my opinion is, sir, that if you want to come up with that crack-brained sugar-planter, you'd better follow Blackbeard; and the best place to find him will be on the Carolina coast; that's his favorite hunting-ground, bedad, and I expect the sugar-planter is with him by this time."

"But will not that be dangerous, sir?" asked Mr. Delaplaine.

"Oh, no," said the other. "I know Blackbeard, and we have played many a game together. You and your family need not have anything to do with it. I'll board the Revenge, and you may wager, bedad, that I'll bring Sir Nightcap back to you by the ear."

"But there's another," said Delaplaine; "there's a young man belonging to my party—"

"Oh, yes, I know," said the other, "the young fellow Blackbeard took away with him. Clapped a cocked hat on him, bedad! That was a good joke! I will bring him, too. One old man, one young man—I'll fetch 'em both. Then I'll take you all where you want to go. That is, as near as I can get to it, bedad. Now, you tell your ladies about this, and I'll have my sloop cleaned up a bit, and as soon as I can get my water on board I'm ready to hoist anchor."

"But look you, sir," exclaimed Mr. Delaplaine, "this is a very important matter, and cannot be decided so quickly."

"Oh, don't mention it, don't mention it," said Capt. Ichabod; "just you tell your ladies all about it, and I'll be ready to sail almost any time to-morrow."

"But, sir—" cried the merchant.

"Very good," said the pirate captain, "you talk it over. I'm going to the town now and I'll row out to you this afternoon and get your instructions."

And with this he got over the side. Mr. Delaplaine said nothing of this visit, but waited on deck until the captain came on board, and then many were the questions he asked about the pirate Ichabod.

"Well, well!" the captain exclaimed, "that's just like him, he's a rare one. Ichabod is not his name, of course, and I'm told he belongs to a good English family—a younger son, and having taken his inheritance he invested it in a sloop and turned pirate. He has had some pretty good fortune, I hear, in that line, but it hasn't profited him much, for he is a terrible gambler, and all that he makes by his prizes he loses at cards, so he is nearly always poor. Blackbeard sometimes helps him, as I have heard—which he ought to do, for the old pirate has won hogsheads of money from him—but he is known to be a good fellow, and to be trusted. I have heard of his sailing a long way back to Bedloe to pay a gambling debt he owed, he having captured a merchantman in the meantime."

"Very honorable, indeed," remarked Mr. Delaplaine.

"As pirates go, a white crow," said the other. "Now, sir, if you and your ladies want to go to Blackbeard, and a rare desire is that, I swear, you cannot do better than let Capt. Ichabod take you. You will be safe, and I am sure of that, and there is every reason to think he will find his man."

When Mr. Delaplaine went below with his extraordinary news, Dame Charter turned pale and screamed.

"Sail in a pirate ship?" she cried. "I've seen the men belonging to one of them, and as to going on board and sailing with them, I'd rather die just where I am."

To the good dame's astonishment and that of Mr. Delaplaine, Kate spoke up very promptly. "But you cannot die here, Dame Charter; and if you ever want to see your son again you have got to go to him. Which is also the case with me and my father. And, as there is no other way for us to go, I say, let us accept this man's offer if he be what my uncle thinks he is. After all, it might be as safe for us on board his ship as to be on a merchantman and be captured by pirates, which would be likely enough in those regions where we are obliged to go; and so I say let us see the man, and if he don't frighten us too much let us sail with him and get my father and Dickory."

"It would be a terrible danger, a terrible danger," said Mr. Delaplaine.

"But, uncle," urged Kate, "everything is a terrible danger in the search we're upon; let us then choose a danger that we know something about, and which may serve our needs, rather than one of which we're ignorant and which cannot possibly be of any good to us."

It was actually the fact that the little party in the cabin had not finished talking over this most momentous subject before they were informed that Capt. Ichabod was on deck. Up they went, Dame Charter ready to faint. But she did not do so. When she saw the visitor she thought it could not be the pirate captain, but some one whom he had sent in his place. He was more soberly dressed than when he first came on board, and his manners were even milder. The mind of Kate Bonnet was so worked up by the trouble that had come upon her that she felt very much as she did when she hung over the side of her father's vessel at Bridgetown, ready to drop into the darkness and the water when the signal should sound. She had an object now, as she had had then, and again she must risk everything. On her second look at Capt. Ichabod, which embarrassed him very much, she was ready to trust him.

"Dame Charter," she whispered, "we must do it or never see them again."

So, when they had talked about it for a quarter of an hour, it was agreed that they would sail with Capt. Ichabod.

When the sloop Restless made ready to sail the next day there was a fine flurry in the harbor. Nothing of the kind had ever before happened there. Two ladies and a most respectable old gentleman sailing away under the skull and cross-bones! That was altogether new in the Caribbean sea. To those who talked to him about his quixotic expedition, Capt. Ichabod swore—and at times, as many men knew, he was a great hand at being in earnest—that if he carried not his passengers through their troubles and to a place of safety, the Restless, and all on board of her, should mount to the skies in a thousand bits. Although this alternative would not have been very comforting to said passengers if they had known of it, it came from Capt. Ichabod's heart, and showed what sort of a man he was.

The anchor was weighed, the sails hoisted and, amid shouts and cheers from a dozen small boats containing some of the most terrible and bloody sea-robbers who had ever infested the face of the waters, the Restless sailed away—the only pirate ship which had, perhaps, ever left port followed by blessings and goodwill; goodwill, although the words which expressed it were curses and the men who waved their hats were blasphemers and cutthroats.

Away sailed our gentle and most respectable party, with the Jolly Roger floating boldly high above them. Kate, looking skyward, noticed this and took courage to bewail the fact to Capt. Ichabod.

He smiled. "While we're in sight of my Brethren of the Coast," he said, "our skull and bones must wave, but when we're well out at sea we will run up an English flag, if it please you."

CHAPTER XXVII.
A PROPOSED PIRACY.

CAPT. ICHABOD was in high feather. He whistled, he sang, and he kept his men cleaning things. All that he could do for the comfort of his passengers he did, even going so far as to drop as many of his "bedads" as possible. Whenever he had an opportunity, and these came frequently, he talked to Mr. Delaplaine, addressing a word or two to Kate if he thought she looked anxious. For the first day or two Dame Charter kept below. She was afraid of the men, and did not even want to look at them if she could help it.

"But the poor creature's all wrong," said Capt. Ichabod to Mr. Delaplaine; "my men would not hurt her. They're not the most tremendous kind of pirates, anyway, for I could not afford that sort. I have often thought that I could make more profitable voyages if I had a savager lot of men. I'll tell you, sir, we once tried to board a big Spanish galleon, and the beauty foreigners beat us off, bedad, and we had a hard time of it getting away. There are three or four good fellows in the crew, tough old rascals who came with the sloop when I bought her, but most of my men are but poor knaves, and not to be afraid of."

That afternoon Capt. Ichabod found Kate by herself on deck, and he made bold to sit down by her; and before he knew what he was about, he was telling her his whole story. She listened carefully to what he said. He touched but lightly upon his wickednesses, although they were plain enough to any listener of sense, and bemoaned his fearful passion for gaming, which was sure to bring him to misery one day or another.

"When I have staked my vessel and have lost it," said he, "then there will be an end of me."

"But why don't you sell your vessel before you lose it," said Kate, "and become a farmer?"

His eyes brightened. "I never thought of that," said he. "Bedad—excuse me, Miss—some day when I've got a little together and can pay my men I'll sell this sloop and buy a farm, bedad—I beg your pardon, Miss—I'll buy a farm."

Kate smiled, but it was easy to see that Capt. Ichabod was in earnest.

The next day Capt. Ichabod came to Mr. Delaplaine and took him to one side. "I want to speak to you," he said, "about a bit of business."

"You may have noticed, sir, that we are somewhat short of provisions, and the way of it is this. The night before we sailed, hoping to make a bold stroke at the card-table and thereby fit out my vessel in a manner suitable to the entertainment of a gentleman and ladies, I lost every penny I had. I did hope that our provisions would last us a few days longer, but I am disappointed, sir. That cook of mine, who is a soft-hearted fellow, his neck always ready for the heel of a woman, has thrown overboard even the few stores we had left for you, the good Dame Charter having told him they were not fit to eat. And more, sir, even my men are grumbling. So I thought I would speak to you and explain that it would be necessary for us to overhaul a merchantman and replenish our food supply. It can be done very quietly, sir, and I don't think that even the ladies need be disturbed."

Mr. Delaplaine stared in amazement. "Do you mean to say," he exclaimed, "that you want me to consent to your committing piracy for our benefit?"

"Yes, sir," answered the captain, "that's what I suppose you would call it; but that's my business."

"Now, sir, I wish you to know that I am a Christian and a gentleman," said Mr. Delaplaine.

"That's all very true, bedad," said Capt. Ichabod, "but you're also another thing; you're a human being, and you must eat."

"This is terrible," exclaimed the merchant, "that at my time of life I should consent to a felony at sea, and to profit by it. I cannot bear to think of the wickedness and the disgrace of it."

"Most respected sir," said Ichabod, "if the fellows behave themselves properly and don't offer to fight us, then there'll be no wickedness, bedad. I can make a good enough show of men to frighten any ordinary merchant crew so that not a blow need be struck. And that is what I expect to do, sir. I would not have any disturbance before ladies, you may be sure of that, bedad. We bear down upon a vessel; we order her to surrender; we take what we want, and we let her go. Truly, there's no wickedness in that! And as for the disgrace, we can all better bear that than starve."

Mr. Delaplaine looked at the pirate without a word. He could not comprehend how a man with such a frank and honest face could thus avow his dishonest principles. But as he gazed and wondered the thought of a scheme flashed across the mind of the merchant, a thoroughly business-like scheme. This bold young pirate captain might seize upon such supplies as they were in need of, but he, Felix Delaplaine, of Spanish Town, Jamaica, would pay for them. Thus might their necessities be relieved and their consciences kept clean. But he said nothing of this to Ichabod; the pirate might deem such a proceeding unprofessional and interpose some objection. Payment would be the merchant's part of the business, and he would attend to it himself. A look of resignation now came over Mr. Delaplaine's face.

"Captain," said he, "I must yield to your reason; it is absolutely necessary that we shall not starve."

Ichabod's face shone and he held out his hand. "Bedad, sir," he cried, "I honor you as a bold gentleman and a kind one. I will instantly lay my course somewhat to the eastward, and I promise you, sir, it will not be long before we run across some of these merchant fellows. I beg you, sir, speak to your ladies and tell them that there will be no unpleasant commotion; we may draw our swords and make a fierce show, but, bedad, I don't believe there'll be any fighting. We shall want so little—for I would not attempt to take a regular prize with ladies on board—that the fellows will surely deliver what we demand, the quicker to make an end of it."

"If you are perfectly sure," said Mr. Delaplaine, "that you can restrain your men from violence, I would like to be a member of your boarding party; it would be a rare experience for me."

Now Capt. Ichabod fairly shouted with delight.

"Bravo! Bravo!" he exclaimed; "I didn't dream, sir, that you were a man of such a noble spirit. You shall go with us, sir. Your presence will aid greatly in making our hoped-for capture a most orderly affair; no one can look upon you, bedad, without knowing that you are a high-minded and honorable man, and would not take a box or case from anyone if you did not need it. Now, sir, we shall put about, and by good fortune we may soon sight a merchantman. Even if it be but a coastwise trader, it may serve our purpose."

Mr. Delaplaine, with something of a smile upon his sedate face, hurried to Kate, who was upon the quarter-deck.

"My dear, we are about to introduce a little variety into our dull lives. As soon as we can overhaul a merchantman we shall commit a piracy. But don't turn pale; I have arranged it all."

"You!" exclaimed the wide-eyed Kate.

"Yes," said her uncle, and he told his tale.

"And remember this, my dear," he added; "if we cannot pay, we do not eat. I shall be as relentless as the bloody Blackbeard; if they take not my money, I shall swear to Ichabod that we touch not their goods."

"And are you sure," she said, "that there will be no bloodshed?"

"I vouch for that," said he, "for I shall lead the boarding party."

She took him by both hands. "Why," she said, "it need be no more than laying in goods from a storehouse; and I cannot but be glad, dear uncle, for I am so very, very hungry."

The captain came up, excited. "Even now, bedad," he cried, "there are two sails in sight—one far north, and the other to the eastward, beating up this way. This one we shall make for. We have the wind with us, which is a good thing, for the Restless is a bad sailer and has lost many a prize through that fault. And now, miss," he said, addressing Kate, "I shall have to ask your leave to take down that English flag and run up our Jolly Roger. It will be necessary, for if the fellows fear not our long guns, they may change their course and get away from us."

"That will be right," said Kate; "if we're going to be pirates, we might as well be pirates out and out."

Capt. Ichabod glowed with delight. "What a girl this was, and what an uncle!"

It was not long, for the Restless had a fair wind, before the sail to the eastward came fully into sight. She was, in good truth, a merchantman, and not a large one. Dame Charter, very much excited, wondered what she would have on board.

(CONTINUED IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.)

Getting Acquainted at Home.

A young fellow who had got into the habit of spending all his evenings away from home was brought to his senses in the following way:

One afternoon his father came to him and asked him if had any engagement for the evening. The young man had not.

"Well, I'd like to have you go somewhere with me."

The young man himself tells what happened.

"'All right,' I said, 'where shall I go?'"

"He suggested the Columbia Hotel at 7:30, and I was there. When he appeared he said he wanted me to call with him on a lady. 'One I knew quiet well when I was a young man,' he explained.

"We went out and started straight for home.

"'She is staying at our house,' he said.

"I thought strange that he should have made an appointment for the Columbia under those circumstances, but I said nothing.

"Well, we went in and I was introduced with all due formality to my mother and sister.

"The situation struck me as funny and I started to laugh, but the laugh died away. None of the three even smiled. My mother and sister said she remembered me as a boy, but hadn't seen much of me lately. Then she invited me to be seated.

"It wasn't a bit funny then, although I can laugh over it now. I sat down, and she told me one or two anecdotes of my boyhood, at which we all laughed for a little. Then we four played games for a while. When I finally retired, I was invited to call again. I went upstairs feeling pretty small, and doing a good deal of thinking."

"And then?" asked his companion.

"Then I made up my mind that my mother was an enterprising woman and my sister a bright girl.

"I'm going to call again. I enjoy their company, and intend to cultivate their acquaintance."

Caring For Clothes.

After the walking dress has been removed the skirt should be well brushed and hung in the wardrobe on two hooks by means of two loops. Or, better still, fold it carefully in the seams, pin together at the band and suspend, so pinned, on the hooks. Some wardrobes are now made with movable hangers, which are very useful. Coats should always be stretched upon hangers when not in actual use. Stoles and boas, whether of feathers, chiffon or fur, are always freshened up and benefited by a gentle shaking in front of the fire after wear on a wet day. The feathers become quite crisp again under such treatment, while the chiffon loses the wrinkled, curled look that rain gives it and assumes its normal fluffiness.

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