THE LADY AND THE PIRATE

By EMERSON HOUGH

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CHAPTER XIV.

In Which Is a Pretty Kettle of Fish.

MISS HELENA EMORY had her artichoke for luncheon, and, judging from my own, my boy John never had prepared a better, good as he was with artichokes, but we ate apart, the ladies not coming to our table. It was late afternoon before I saw Helena again, once more come on deck. I did not accost her. I longed for nothing so much as that night or Peterson would come.

He did come at last, late in the afternoon, on an outbound train, and he hurried aboard as rapidly as he might. The first thing he did was to hand me a copy of an afternoon paper. I opened it eagerly enough, already well assured of what news it might carry.

On the front page under a large black head was a dispatch from Baton Rouge relaying other dispatches received at that point, from many points between Plaquimine and Bayou Sara. These, in short, told the story of the most high handed attempt at river piracy known in recent years. The private yacht of Calvin Davidson, a wealthy northern business man on his way south for the winter, had been seized by a band of masked ruffians, who boarded her while the yacht's owner was temporarily absent on important business in the city of Natchez.

"Peterson," said I after digesting this interesting information, "have one or two of the boys go overboard in slings and seem to be painting her sides. That will give the look that we are safe to lie here some time, which is the last thing the Belle Helene really would do or will do. They think we've run past the city already, and they'll be watching at quarantine and along the Lake Borgne canal. Most of the yachts go out that way, headed for Florida. We'll go the other way. It's an adventure, Peterson, and one which any viking, like yourself, ought to relish.

"Frankly, Peterson—and because you have been long in my employ—I'll tell you something. I intend to marry that young lady if she's not already married to Mr. Davidson."

"Lord, Mr. Harry, she ain't, at least not since she come aboard the boat."

"In that case," said I, drawing a long breath, "this is not such a bad world after all."

At last the night fell full, and gladly enough I gave the order for the continuance of our journey. We slipped downstream gently and silently and finally shipped our supplies.

Jean Lafitte proved unable to restrain his curiosity, watching the river, and his habit of close observation was of benefit in an unexpected way.

He pointed in the dim light to a low lying, battered power boat moored in the same slip with us. Something in her look seemed familiar.

I hastily stepped on the wharf and got a closer look in the wavering beams of an arc light at the name on the boat's bows. There in indistinct and shaky but unmistakable characters was the title painted by my young ruffians weeks earlier—Sea Rover!

"Jean Lafitte," I whispered, "you are right, and now indeed we must have a care. Yon varlet has beaten us into New Orleans."

Helena appeared on deck.

"If you took me by New Orleans without supper at Luigi's I should hate you even more," she said.

"Jean—Jean Lafitte!" I called out in a low tone of voice.

"Aye, aye, sir!" he saluted.

"I am going uptown with the captive maiden. Do you stand here on watch. We shall be gone about three hours."

"Hully gee!" ejaculated Jean Lafitte. But at once he saluted again. "'Tis well, Black Bart," said he.

"Tell Captain Peterson to let no one come on board this boat under any pretense, nor must any one leave it until I get back. If any one asks for me say I'm uptown."

"Isn't Aunt Lucinda going, too?" demanded Helena.

"She certainly is not!"

"Is it quite correct for me to go alone with you?"

"That is your part of the adventure, Helena," said I calmly. An instant later I had led her across the dingy warehouse dock, over dusty streets, to a crooked street car line over which I could hear approaching one of the infrequent cars.

Luigi's place, as all men know, is situated upon a small, crooked and very dirty street, yet none the less it is an abode of contentment for those who know good living. When Helena and I entered the door I felt as one again at home. Therefore, as always, I had no occasion for surprise when Jean, my waiter these many years at Luigi's, stepped forward as though it had been but last week and not three years ago when he had seen me. He called me by name, greeted me again to his city and gently aided Helena with her wraps and gloves.

"And m'sieu cannot long remain away from us forever?" said he.

"It has been three years, Jean," said I; "more is the pity. But now I can remain three hours. Will that serve? At the end of that time we must away."

Jean was human, yet discreet. He knew that when last he saw me I was a single man. Now he had doubts. He stood hovering about, a question on his tongue, smitten of admiration much as had been my dog, Partial, at his first sight of Helena. At last he made excuse to step close behind my chair under pretense of finding my napkin.

"Enfin, m'sieu?" said he, smiling.

"Pas encore, Jean!" I replied.

I saw a slow flush on Helena's cheek, but she gave no other sign that she had overheard. So I began forthwith making much ado about ordering our supper, which, as usual, really was much a matter of Jean's taste.

"Harry," Helena said, "I don't like to say anything, but you know—you have been telling me you were so poor. Now, a girl doesn't want to make it difficult"—

"Mademoiselle," said I, bowing, "I am quite able to foot the bill tonight. I had just sold some hay before I started from home."

"Well, I'm awfully hungry," she admitted; "besides, it's such a lark."

"Yes," said I. And presently, as we reached our table again, I showed her the afternoon papers, which as yet she had not seen. She read through the account of our escapade, her lips compressed, but presently she folded the paper and laid it down without comment.

"At any minute, you see," said I, "I may be apprehended and our little supper brought to an end."

"But you will be so nervous you can't enjoy your spread."

"Not in the least, Helena. A nervous man has no business in the trade of piracy; but, ah, the fillet of trout, Helena!"

I Had Led Her Across the Dingy Warehouse Dock.

Soon, happening to look up, I saw some one entering the door.

"Jean, if you please," said I, deliberately pulling the coat rack in front of our table, "mademoiselle perhaps feels a slight draft. Would you fetch a screen?"

He turned. "Helena," said I, after a moment, "now our adventure has come."

"What do you mean?" said she. "Why do you do that?" She nodded at the screen. "Why, I say?"

"I have your parole?"

"Yes."

"I am glad it is yes," said I. "You could break it now and escape so easily. One little move on your part and my punishment is at hand."

"Who was it?" she asked, suspecting.

"No one much," said I, "only our esteemed friend Calvin Davidson, whose waistcoat I am now wearing. Some one is with him—I don't know who it is—a very nice looking lady, next to the most beautiful woman in this room, I must say."

"Let me see," said she. And I allowed her to look through the crack in the screen.

"She certainly is very stunning," said I, "is she not—tall, dark, a trifle superb? I wonder—I wonder sometimes, Helena, if Cal Davidson is true to Poll?"

"Nonsense!" was her retort; "but, as you say, here is our adventure, or at least yours. How do you propose to get out of it?"

"I don't know yet," said I. "Just at present I do not wish this canvasback to get cold. We have remaining before us two hours or more, ample time to make any plan which may be needed."

Her eyes still were sparkling. "I'm rather glad I came," said she.

"So am I, and I shall be glad when we are back. But meantime I trust you, Helena, absolutely. I will even tell you more. Davidson's boat, the one which we left him instead of the Belle Helene, is lying in the same slip with ours, rubbing noses with our yacht yonder, as I showed you. Our men have talked with his. They do not yet suspect that we are the vessel which everybody wants to find. I learned there at the wharf that Cal Davidson was downtown at his club. He seems to have departed long enough to find excellent company, as usual. I am glad that he has done so, for in all likelihood he will not return to his own boat before tomorrow morning. And by that time I hope to be far away."

"Does he know who you are—does he know who it was that took the Belle Helene?"

"I think not; but, very stupidly, being so anxious to see the original, I left a photograph of yourself on our old boat, the Sea Rover. Item, one cigarette case with my initials. Of course Cal Davidson may guess the simple truth, or he may make a mystery of these things. It seems he prefers to make a mystery, and I am sure that suits me much better."

"But knowing these things—knowing that his boat was lying right at the dock alongside of us—why did you stop?"

"I thought it was you, Helena, who suggested this little adventure at Luigi's. And I promise you I am enjoying it very much. It seems so much like old times."

"Let me see," said she.

"But that can't ever be over again, Harry."

"Naturally not. But often new times are quite as good as old ones. I can conceive of such thing in our case. No; I shall use this privilege of your society to the limit, Helena, fearing I may not see you soon again after once I have put you back in your hatbox. You coaxed me to leave the boat, and I shall tell you when to return. At 12 o'clock. Not earlier."

"And you propose sitting here with me till then?"

"I could imagine no better pastime were I condemned to die at sunrise. Tell me, do you wish me to call Mr. Davidson?"

"Of course I do not, since I gave you my word. Besides, I know that girl with him. It's Sally Byington. Some call her good looking, but I am sure I don't know why."

"Fie upon you! She is superb. In short, Helena, I am not sure but she is finer looking than yourself."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Cal Davidson, whatever may be his taste in neckties or waistcoats, seems to me excellent in this other regard—perhaps just a trifle flamboyant for Luigi's, but certainly stunning."

"Our relations are not such as to lead me to discuss our friends," she rejoined haughtily. "And, as you say, our duck is getting cold. I adore these canvasbacks. I would like to come back tomorrow and have another." She cut savagely into her fowl.

"Alas, Helena, tomorrow you will be far away! In time I hope to reconcile you to the simple life of piracy. Indeed, unless all plans go wrong, we may very likely have canvasbacks on the boat. All good buccaneers use their fair captives well."

"Indeed! And why do you not ask Sally Byington into your list of prisoners since you fancy her so much?"

"Nay, say not so, Helena. I find one fair captive quite enough to make me abundant trouble."

She pushed back her chair. "I am sorry," said she, "but I want to go back to the boat."

"Back to the boat! You astonish me. I thought escape from the Belle Helene was the one wish of your heart these days."

"And so it is."

"Then, Helena, why not escape here and now?"

"What do you mean?"

"I do not mean for you to break your parole. I know you too well for that. But give me additional parole, my dear girl. Give me your word. Say that one word. Then we can rise here and announce to Mr. Davidson and all the world and its newspapers that no crime has been done and only a honeymoon has been begun. Come, Helena, all the world loves a lover. All New Orleans will love us if you will raise your finger and say the word."

I looked toward her. Her head was bent and tears were dropping from her eyes, tears faithfully concealed by her kerchief. But she said no word to me, and at her silence my own heart sank—sank until my courage was quite gone, until I felt the return of a cold brutality. Still I endeavored to be gentle with one who deserved naught of gentleness.

"Do not hurry, Helena," I said. "We can return when you like. But the salad—and the coffee! And see, you have not touched your wine."

"Take me back," she said, her voice low. "I hate you. Till the end of the world I'll hate you."

"If I could believe that, Helena, it would matter nothing to me to go a mile farther on any voyage, a foot farther to shield myself or you."

"Take me back," she said to me again. "I want to go to Aunt Lucinda."

CHAPTER XV.

In Which We Burn All Bridges.

I WHISPERED as we came to the wharf: "Yonder, one step, and your parole is over. Here it is not. That boat, just astern, is the one in which Cal Davidson chased us all the way from Natchez, in which I chased him all the way from Dubuque. His men do not know we are here, nor does he as yet. Now, what is it that you wish to do?"

She stood silent for some time, tightening her wrap at the throat against the river damp, and made no answer, though her gaze took in the dark hull of the low lying craft made fast below us. When at last:

"One thing," she began, "I will not do."

"What is it?" I asked. We spoke low, but I well knew my men were aware of our coming.

"I shall ask no favor of you." And as she spoke she stepped lightly on the rubbered deck of the Belle Helene.

"Halt! Who goes there?" called the hoarse voice of Jean Lafitte, the faithful, and I knew the joy of the commander feeling that loyalty is his.

"'Tis I, Black Bart," I answered, full and clear. "Cast off, my friends!"

At once the Belle Helene was full of activity.

And now, revealed full in the flood of light as she stood at the side portal, Helena did what I had not planned. Freed of her parole she was—and she had asked no favor of me—so she had right to make attempt to escape, and I gently stepped before her even as Jean cast off and sprang on board and as I heard L'Olonnois' voice imperatively demanding silence of the pounding at the after cabin door. All at once I heard what Helena heard—the rattle of wheels on the stone flagging of the street beyond. And then I saw her fling back her cloak and stand with cupped hands. Her voice was high, clear and unwavering, such voice as a pirate's bride should have—fearless and bold.

"Ahoy, there! Help, help!" she cried.

Some sort of shout came from the street, we knew not from whom. A noise of an opening hatch came from the Sea Rover at our stern, and a man's tousled head came into view.

"What's goin' on here?" he demanded as quaveringly as querulously.

I made no answer, but saw our bows crawl out and away, felt the sob of the screws, the arm of the river also and knew a vast and pleasing content with life.

"L'Olonnois!" I called through the megaphone.

"Aye, aye, sir!" I heard his piping rejoinder.

"Cast loose the stern chaser and fire her at yon varlet if he makes a move." I knew our deck cannon was loaded with nothing more deadly than newspapers, but I also knew that valor feeds on action, not that I had given orders to fire on the world in general. So, I confess, I was somewhat surprised soon after the shout of approval which greeted my command to hear the air rent by the astonishing reverberation of our long tom, which rolled like thunder all along the river front, breaking into a thousand echoes in the night.

I heard the patter of feet along the deck and had sight of Jean Lafitte tugging at a halyard. Not content with our defiance of law and order he must needs break out the Jolly Rover with its skull and crossbones. And as we swung swiftly out into midstream, ablaze in light from bow to stern, ghostlike in our swiftness and the silence of our splendid engines, I had reason to understand all the descriptive writing which, as I later learned, greeted the defiant departure of this pirate craft and its ruffian crew. Thus I bade all the world come and take from me what I had taken for my own.

"Ahoy, there! Help, help!" she cried.

I turned now to find Helena and met L'Olonnois, his face beaming.

"Wasn't that a peach of a shot?" said he. "It would of blew yon varlet out of the water if I'd had anything to load with except just them marbles. Are you looking for Auntie Helen? She has just went below."

* * * * * * *

My boy had ironed my trousers—that is to say, the trousers I had given him the year previous and which he now had loaned to me, my extremity being greater than his own. He had laundered my collars—a most useful boy, my China boy. I had, moreover, delving in Cal Davidson's wardrobe, discovered yet another waistcoat, if possible more radiant even than the one with pink stripes, for that it was crosshatched with bars of pale pea green and mauve. I know not from what looms he obtained these wondrous fabrics. Thus bravely attired after breakfast, just before luncheon, indeed, it was, I felt emboldened to call upon the captive ladies once more.

I knocked, and there appeared the august visage of Auntie Lucinda herself.

"Well, sir-r-r-r!" said she after a time, regarding me sternly. I can by no means reproduce the awfulness of her "r's."

"Yes, madam?" I replied mildly, holding my nose, which had been smitten by the door.

She made no answer, but stood, a basilisk in mien.

"I just came, my dear Mrs. Daniver," I began, "to ask you"—

"And time you did, sir-r-r-r! I was just coming to ask you"—

"And time you did, my dear Mrs. Daniver. I have missed you so much these several days, so I just called to ask for your health."

"You need not trouble about my health!"

"But I do, I do, madam. I give you my word I was awake all night thinking of—of your neuralgia. Neuralgia is something—something fierce, in a manner of speech—if one has it in the morning, my dear Mrs. Daniver."

"Don't 'dear Mrs. Daniver' me! I'm not your dear Mrs. Daniver at all."

Then Helena appeared.

"A very good orange," said Helena after she had tasted the one I handed her.

"Yes," said her aunt promptly. "I'm sure we ought to thank Mr. Davidson for them. He was such a good provider!"

"Except in waistcoats," I protested, casually indicating his latest contribution to my wardrobe. "Quantity, yes, I grant that, but as to quality, never! But why speak ill of the absent, especially regarding matters of an earlier and bygone day? Yon varlet no longer exists for us—we no longer exist for him. We have passed, as two ships pass yonder in the channel. I know not what he may be doing now, unless carrying roses to Miss Sally Byington. Certainly he cannot know that I, his hated rival, am safe from all pursuit behind the Timballer shoals and carrying oranges to a young lady in my belief almost as beautiful as the beautiful Sally."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

MARKET REPORT.

CORRECTED Nov. 9, 1915

New Wheat No. 1	90
" " No. 2	87
" " No. 3	83
Flour, Compass, 100 lb	2 95—3 25
" Patent "	2 80—3 10
" Family "	2 90—3 00
" Bakers "	2 30—2 60
" Graham "	2 50—2 95
" Rye "	2 70—2 95
Shorts "	1 20
Bran "	1 15
Oats	30
Barley	36—46
Rye	85
Flax	1 78
Corn	55
Chickenfeed	70
Potatoes	40 50
Butter per lb.	32
Eggs, per dozen	24 1-2
Cows and Heifers 100 lb.	4 00—5 00
Steers	5 00—6 00
Calves	7 00—7 25
Sheep	3 00—4 00
Lambs	4 50—5 00
Hogs	6 00—6 30

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No. 110—Ex. Sunday.....8:45 p. m.
St. Paul, Mpls. to New Ulm. Passgr.
No. 28—Ex. Sunday.....12:25 p. m.
To Storm Lake.

NORTH BOUND.

No. 123—Ex. Sunday.....5:15 a. m.
Leave New Ulm to St. Paul and Mpls.
No. 29—Ex. Sunday.....1:00 p. m.
To St. Paul, Mpls. Watertown, connect at Winthrop.
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No 514—Daily, new line.....3.39 p m
Thro to Twin Cities and the East
No 24—Daily, old line.....3.41 p m
No 14—Ex Sunday, new line..6.55 p m
Connects at Mankato for points South on Omaha

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Thro from Twin Cities and the East
No 13—Ex Sunday, old line..8:12 a m
Thro to Tracy
No 503—Daily, new line.....1:39 p m
Thro from Twin Cities and the East
No 23—Daily, old line.....1:35 p m
No 27—Ex Sunday, old line..8:50 p m
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