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THE PURSUIT OF THE HOUSE-BOAT

by John Kendrick Bangs

CHAPTER I: THE ASSOCIATED SHADES TAKE ACTION

The House-boat of the Associated Shades, formerly located upon the

River Styx, as the reader may possibly remember, had been torn from

its moorings and navigated out into unknown seas by that vengeful

pirate Captain Kidd, aided and abetted by some of the most ruffianly

inhabitants of Hades. Like a thief in the night had they come, and

for no better reason than that the Captain had been unanimously voted

a shade too shady to associate with self-respecting spirits had they

made off with the happy floating club-house of their betters; and

worst of all, with them, by force of circumstances over which they

had no control, had sailed also the fair Queen Elizabeth, the

spirited Xanthippe, and every other strong-minded and beautiful woman

of Erebean society, whereby the men thereof were rendered desolate.

"I can't stand it!" cried Raleigh, desperately, as with his

accustomed grace he presided over a special meeting of the club,

called on the bank of the inky Stygian stream, at the point where the

missing boat had been moored. "Think of it, gentlemen, Elizabeth of

England, Calpurnia of Rome, Ophelia of Denmark, and every precious

jewel in our social diadem gone, vanished completely; and with whom?

Kidd, of all men in the universe! Kidd, the pirate, the ruffian--"

"Don't take on so, my dear Sir Walter," said Socrates, cheerfully.

"What's the use of going into hysterics? You are not a woman, and

should eschew that luxury. Xanthippe is with them, and I'll warrant

you that when that cherished spouse of mine has recovered from the

effects of the sea, say the third day out, Kidd and his crew will be

walking the plank, and voluntarily at that."

"But the House-boat itself," murmured Noah, sadly. "That was my

delight. It reminded me in some respects of the Ark."

"The law of compensation enters in there, my dear Commodore,"

retorted Socrates. "For me, with Xanthippe abroad I do not need a

club to go to; I can stay at home and take my hemlock in peace and

straight. Xanthippe always compelled me to dilute it at the rate of

one quart of water to the finger."

"Well, we didn't all marry Xanthippe," put in Caesar firmly,

"therefore we are not all satisfied with the situation. I, for one,

quite agree with Sir Walter that something must be done, and quickly.

Are we to sit here and do nothing, allowing that fiend to kidnap our

wives with impunity?"

"Not at all," interposed Bonaparte. "The time for action has

arrived. All things considered, he is welcome to Marie Louise, but

the idea of Josephine going off on a cruise of that kind breaks my

heart."

"No question about it," observed Dr. Johnson. "We've got to do

something if it is only for the sake of appearances. The question

really is, what shall be done first?"

"I am in favor of taking a drink as the first step, and considering

the matter of further action afterwards," suggested Shakespeare, and

it was this suggestion that made the members unanimous upon the

necessity for immediate action, for when the assembled spirits called

for their various favorite beverages it was found that there were

none to be had, it being Sunday, and all the establishments wherein

liquid refreshments were licensed to be sold being closed--for at the

time of writing the local government of Hades was in the hands of the

reform party.

"What!" cried Socrates. "Nothing but Styx water and vitriol,

Sundays? Then the House-boat must be recovered whether Xanthippe

comes with it or not. Sir Walter, I am for immediate action, after

all. This ruffian should be captured at once and made an example

of."

"Excuse me, Socrates," put in Lindley Murray, "but, ah--pray speak in

Greek hereafter, will you, please? When you attempt English you have

a beastly way of working up to climatic prepositions which are

offensive to the ear of a purist."

"This is no time to discuss style, Murray," interposed Sir Walter.

"Socrates may speak and spell like Chaucer if he pleases; he may even

part his infinitives in the middle, for all I care. We have affairs

of greater moment in hand."

"We must ransack the earth," cried Socrates, "until we find that

boat. I'm dry as a fish."

"There he goes again!" growled Murray. "Dry as a fish! What fish,

I'd like to know, is dry?"

"Red herrings," retorted Socrates; and there was a great laugh at the

expense of the purist, in which even Hamlet, who had grown more and

more melancholy and morbid since the abduction of Ophelia, joined.

"Then it is settled," said Raleigh; "something must be done. And now

the point is, what?"

"Relief expeditions have a way of finding things," suggested Dr.

Livingstone. "Or rather of being found by the things they go out to

relieve. I propose that we send out a number of them. I will take

Africa; Bonaparte can lead an expedition into Europe; General

Washington may have North America; and--"

"I beg pardon," put in Dr. Johnson, "but have you any idea, Dr.

Livingstone, that Captain Kidd has put wheels on this House-boat of

ours, and is having it dragged across the Sahara by mules or camels?"

"No such absurd idea ever entered my head," retorted the Doctor.

"Do you, then, believe that he has put runners on it, and is engaged

in the pleasurable pastime of taking the ladies tobogganing down the

Alps?" persisted the philosopher.

"Not at all. Why do you ask?" queried the African explorer,

irritably.

"Because I wish to know," said Johnson. "That is always my motive in

asking questions. You propose to go looking for a house-boat in

Central Africa; you suggest that Bonaparte lead an expedition in

search of it through Europe--all of which strikes me as nonsense.

This search is the work of sea-dogs, not of landlubbers. You might

as well ask Confucius to look for it in the heart of China. What

earthly use there is in ransacking the earth I fail to see. What we

need is a navel expedition to scour the sea, unless it is pretty well

understood in advance that we believe Kidd has hauled the boat out of

the water, and is now using it for a roller-skating rink or a bicycle

academy in Ohio, or for some other purpose for which neither he nor

it was designed."

"Dr. Johnson's point is well taken," said a stranger who had been

sitting upon the string-piece of the pier, quietly, but with very

evident interest, listening to the discussion. He was a tall and

excessively slender shade, "like a spirt of steam out of a teapot,"

as Johnson put it afterwards, so slight he seemed. "I have not the

honor of being a member of this association," the stranger continued,

"but, like all well-ordered shades, I aspire to the distinction, and

I hold myself and my talents at the disposal of this club. I fancy

it will not take us long to establish our initial point, which is

that the gross person who has so foully appropriated your property to

his own base uses does not contemplate removing it from its keel and

placing it somewhere inland. All the evidence in hand points to a

radically different conclusion, which is my sole reason for doubting

the value of that conclusion. Captain Kidd is a seafarer by

instinct, not a landsman. The House-boat is not a house, but a boat;

therefore the place to look for it is not, as Dr. Johnson so well

says, in the Sahara Desert, or on the Alps, or in the State of Ohio,

but upon the high sea, or upon the waterfront of some one of the

world's great cities."

"And what, then, would be your plan?" asked Sir Walter, impressed by

the stranger's manner as well as by the very manifest reason in all

that he had said.

"The chartering of a suitable vessel, fully armed and equipped for

the purpose of pursuit. Ascertain whither the House-boat has sailed,

for what port, and start at once. Have you a model of the House-boat

within reach?" returned the stranger.

"I think not; we have the architect's plans, however," said the

chairman.

"We had, Mr. Chairman," said Demosthenes, who was secretary of the

House Committee, rising, "but they are gone with the House-boat

itself. They were kept in the safe in the hold."

A look of annoyance came into the face of the stranger.

"That's too bad," he said. "It was a most important part of my plan

that we should know about how fast the House-boat was."

"Humph!" ejaculated Socrates, with ill-concealed sarcasm. "If you'll

take Xanthippe's word for it, the House-boat was the fastest yacht

afloat."

"I refer to the matter of speed in sailing," returned the stranger,

quietly. "The question of its ethical speed has nothing to do with

it."

"The designer of the craft is here," said Sir Walter, fixing his eyes

upon Sir Christopher Wren. "It is possible that he may be of

assistance in settling that point."

"What has all this got to do with the question, anyhow, Mr.

Chairman?" asked Solomon, rising impatiently and addressing Sir

Walter. "We aren't preparing for a yacht-race, that I know of.

Nobody's after a cup, or a championship of any kind. What we do want

is to get our wives back. The Captain hasn't taken more than half of

mine along with him, but I am interested none the less. The Queen of

Sheba is on board, and I am somewhat interested in her fate. So I

ask you what earthly or unearthly use there is in discussing this

question of speed in the House-boat. It strikes me as a woful waste

of time, and rather unprecedented too, that we should suspend all

rules and listen to the talk of an entire stranger."

"I do not venture to doubt the wisdom of Solomon," said Johnson,

dryly, "but I must say that the gentleman's remarks rather interest

me."

"Of course they do," ejaculated Solomon. "He agreed with you. That

ought to make him interesting to everybody. Freaks usually are."

"That is not the reason at all," retorted Dr. Johnson. "Cold water

agrees with me, but it doesn't interest me. What I do think,

however, is that our unknown friend seems to have a grasp on the

situation by which we are confronted, and he's going at the matter in

hand in a very comprehensive fashion. I move, therefore, that

Solomon be laid on the table, and that the privileges of the--ah--of

the wharf be extended indefinitely to our friend on the string-

piece."

The motion, having been seconded, was duly carried, and the stranger

resumed.

"I will explain for the benefit of his Majesty King Solomon, whose

wisdom I have always admired, and whose endurance as the husband of

three hundred wives has filled me with wonder," he said, "that before

starting in pursuit of the stolen vessel we must select a craft of

some sort for the purpose, and that in selecting the pursuer it is

quite essential that we should choose a vessel of greater speed than

the one we desire to overtake. It would hardly be proper, I think,

if the House-boat can sail four knots an hour to attempt to overhaul

her with a launch, or other nautical craft, with a maximum speed of

two knots an hour."

"Hear! hear!" ejaculated Caesar.

"That is my reason, your Majesty, for inquiring as to the speed of

your late club-house," said the stranger, bowing courteously to

Solomon. "Now, if Sir Christopher Wren can give me her measurements,

we can very soon determine at about what rate she is leaving us

behind under favorable circumstances."

"'Tisn't necessary for Sir Christopher to do anything of the sort,"

said Noah, rising and manifesting somewhat more heat than the

occasion seemed to require. "As long as we are discussing the

question I will take the liberty of stating what I have never

mentioned before, that the designer of the House-boat merely

appropriated the lines of the Ark. Shem, Ham, and Japhet will bear

testimony to the truth of that statement."

"There can be no quarrel on that score, Mr. Chairman," assented Sir

Christopher, with cutting frigidity. "I am perfectly willing to

admit that practically the two vessels were built on the same lines,

but with modifications which would enable my boat to sail twenty

miles to windward and back in six days' less time than it would have

taken the Ark to cover the same distance, and it could have taken all

the wash of the excursion steamers into the bargain."

"Bosh!" ejaculated Noah, angrily. "Strip your old tub down to a

flying balloon-jib and a marline-spike, and ballast the Ark with

elephants until every inch of her reeked with ivory and peanuts, and

she'd outfoot you on every leg, in a cyclone or a zephyr. Give me

the Ark and a breeze, and your House-boat wouldn't be within hailing

distance of her five minutes after the start if she had 40,000 square

yards of canvas spread before a gale."

"This discussion is waxing very unprofitable," observed Confucius.

"If these gentlemen cannot be made to confine themselves to the

subject that is agitating this body, I move we call in the

authorities and have them confined in the bottomless pit."

"I did not precipitate the quarrel," said Noah. "I was merely trying

to assist our friend on the string-piece. I was going to say that as

the Ark was probably a hundred times faster than Sir Christopher

Wren's--tub, which he himself says can take care of all the wash of

the excursion boats, thereby becoming on his own admission a wash-

tub--"

"Order! order!" cried Sir Christopher.

"I was going to say that this wash-tub could be overhauled by a

launch or any other craft with a speed of thirty knots a mouth,"

continued Noah, ignoring the interruption.

"Took him forty days to get to Mount Ararat!" sneered Sir

Christopher.

"Well, your boat would have got there two weeks sooner, I'll admit,"

retorted Noah, "if she'd sprung a leak at the right time."

"Granting the truth of Noah's statement," said Sir Walter, motioning

to the angry architect to be quiet--"not that we take any side in the

issue between the two gentlemen, but merely for the sake of argument-

-I wish to ask the stranger who has been good enough to interest

himself in our trouble what he proposes to do--how can you establish

your course in case a boat were provided?"

"Also vot vill be dher gost, if any?" put in Shylock.

A murmur of disapprobation greeted this remark.

"The cost need not trouble you, sir," said Sir Walter, indignantly,

addressing the stranger; "you will have carte blanche."

"Den ve are ruint!" cried Shylock, displaying his palms, and showing

by that act a select assortment of diamond rings.

"Oh," laughed the stranger, "that is a simple matter. Captain Kidd

has gone to London."

"To London!" cried several members at once. "How do you know that?"

"By this," said the stranger, holding up the tiny stub end of a

cigar.

"Tut-tut!" ejaculated Solomon. "What child's play is this!"

"No, your Majesty," observed the stranger, "it is not child's play;

it is fact. That cigar end was thrown aside here on the wharf by

Captain Kidd just before he stepped on board the House-boat."

"How do you know that?" demanded Raleigh. "And granting the truth of

the assertion, what does it prove?"

"I will tell you," said the stranger. And he at once proceeded as

follows.

CHAPTER II: THE STRANGER UNRAVELS A MYSTERY AND REVEALS HIMSELF

"I have made a hobby of the study of cigar ends," said the stranger,

as the Associated Shades settled back to hear his account of himself.

"From my earliest youth, when I used surreptitiously to remove the

unsmoked ends of my father's cigars and break them up, and, in

hiding, smoke them in an old clay pipe which I had presented to me by

an ancient sea-captain of my acquaintance, I have been interested in

tobacco in all forms, even including these self-same despised

unsmoked ends; for they convey to my mind messages, sentiments,

farces, comedies, and tragedies which to your minds would never

become manifest through their agency."

The company drew closer together and formed themselves in a more

compact mass about the speaker. It was evident that they were

beginning to feel an unusual interest in this extraordinary person,

who had come among them unheralded and unknown. Even Shylock stopped

calculating percentages for an instant to listen.

"Do you mean to tell us," demanded Shakespeare, "that the unsmoked

stub of a cigar will suggest the story of him who smoked it to your

mind?"

"I do," replied the stranger, with a confident smile. "Take this

one, for instance, that I have picked up here upon the wharf; it

tells me the whole story of the intentions of Captain Kidd at the

moment when, in utter disregard of your rights, he stepped aboard

your House-boat, and, in his usual piratical fashion, made off with

it into unknown seas."

"But how do you know he smoked it?" asked Solomon, who deemed it the

part of wisdom to be suspicious of the stranger.

"There are two curious indentations in it which prove that. The

marks of two teeth, with a hiatus between, which you will see if you

look closely," said the stranger, handing the small bit of tobacco to

Sir Walter, "make that point evident beyond peradventure. The

Captain lost an eye-tooth in one of his later raids; it was knocked

out by a marine-spike which had been hurled at him by one of the crew

of the treasure-ship he and his followers had attacked. The adjacent

teeth were broken, but not removed. The cigar end bears the marks of

those two jagged molars, with the hiatus, which, as I have indicated,

is due to the destruction of the eye-tooth between them. It is not

likely that there was another man in the pirate's crew with teeth

exactly like the commander's, therefore I say there can be no doubt

that the cigar end was that of the Captain himself."

"Very interesting indeed," observed Blackstone, removing his wig and

fanning himself with it; "but I must confess, Mr. Chairman, that in

any properly constituted law court this evidence would long since

have been ruled out as irrelevant and absurd. The idea of two or

three hundred dignified spirits like ourselves, gathered together to

devise a means for the recovery of our property and the rescue of our

wives, yielding the floor to the delivering of a lecture by an entire

stranger on 'Cigar Ends He Has Met,' strikes me as ridiculous in the

extreme. Of what earthly interest is it to us to know that this or

that cigar was smoked by Captain Kidd?"

"Merely that it will help us on, your honor, to discover the

whereabouts of the said Kidd," interposed the stranger. "It is by

trifles, seeming trifles, that the greatest detective work is done.

My friends Le Coq, Hawkshaw, and Old Sleuth will bear me out in this,

I think, however much in other respects our methods may have

differed. They left no stone unturned in the pursuit of a criminal;

no detail, however trifling, uncared for. No more should we in the

present instance overlook the minutest bit of evidence, however

irrelevant and absurd at first blush it may appear to be. The truth

of what I say was very effectually proven in the strange case of the

Brokedale tiara, in which I figured somewhat conspicuously, but which

have never made public, because it involves a secret affecting the

integrity of one of the noblest families in the British Empire. I

really believe that mystery was solved easily and at once because I

happened to remember that the number of my watch was 86507B. How

trivial and yet how important it was, to what then transpired, you

will realize when I tell you the incident."

The stranger's manner was so impressive that there was a unanimous

and simultaneous movement upon the part of all present to get up

closer, so as the more readily to hear what he said, as a result of

which poor old Boswell was pushed overboard, and fell, with a loud

splash into the Styx. Fortunately, however, one of Charon's

pleasure-boats was close at hand, and in a short while the dripping,

sputtering spirit was drawn into it, wrung out, and sent home to dry.

The excitement attending this diversion having subsided, Solomon

asked:

"What was the incident of the lost tiara?"

"I am about to tell you," returned the stranger; "and it must be

understood that you are told in the strictest confidence, for, as I

say, the incident involves a state secret of great magnitude. In

life--in the mortal life--gentlemen, I was a detective by profession,

and, if I do say it, who perhaps should not, I was one of the most

interesting for purely literary purposes that has ever been known. I

did not find it necessary to go about saying 'Ha! ha!' as M. Le Coq

was accustomed to do to advertise his cleverness; neither did I

disguise myself as a drum-major and hide under a kitchen-table for

the purpose of solving a mystery involving the abduction of a parlor

stove, after the manner of the talented Hawkshaw. By mental

concentration alone, without fireworks or orchestral accompaniment of

any sort whatsoever, did I go about my business, and for that very

reason many of my fellow-sleuths were forced to go out of real

detective work into that line of the business with which the stage

has familiarized the most of us--a line in which nothing but

stupidity, luck, and a yellow wig is required of him who pursues it."

"This man is an impostor," whispered Le Coq to Hawkshaw.

"I've known that all along by the mole on his left wrist," returned

Hawkshaw, contemptuously.

"I suspected it the minute I saw he was not disguised," returned Le

Coq, knowingly. "I have observed that the greatest villains latterly

have discarded disguises, as being too easily penetrated, and

therefore of no avail, and merely a useless expense."

"Silence!" cried Confucius, impatiently. "How can the gentleman

proceed, with all this conversation going on in the rear?"

Hawkshaw and Le Coq immediately subsided, and the stranger went on.

"It was in this way that I treated the strange case of the lost

tiara," resumed the stranger. "Mental concentration upon seemingly

insignificant details alone enabled me to bring about the desired

results in that instance. A brief outline of the case is as follows:

It was late one evening in the early spring of 1894. The London

season was at its height. Dances, fetes of all kinds, opera, and the

theatres were in full blast, when all of a sudden society was

paralyzed by a most audacious robbery. A diamond tiara valued at

50,000 pounds sterling had been stolen from the Duchess of Brokedale,

and under circumstances which threw society itself and every

individual in it under suspicion--even his Royal Highness the Prince

himself, for he had danced frequently with the Duchess, and was known

to be a great admirer of her tiara. It was at half-past eleven

o'clock at night that the news of the robbery first came to my ears.

I had been spending the evening alone in my library making notes for

a second volume of my memoirs, and, feeling somewhat depressed, I was

on the point of going out for my usual midnight walk on Hampstead

Heath, when one of my servants, hastily entering, informed me of the

robbery. I changed my mind in respect to my midnight walk

immediately upon receipt of the news, for I knew that before one

o'clock some one would call upon me at my lodgings with reference to

this robbery. It could not be otherwise. Any mystery of such

magnitude could no more be taken to another bureau than elephants

could fly--"

"They used to," said Adam. "I once had a whole aviary full of winged

elephants. They flew from flower to flower, and thrusting their

probabilities deep into--"

"Their what?" queried Johnson, with a frown.

"Probabilities--isn't that the word? Their trunks," said Adam.

"Probosces, I imagine you mean," suggested Johnson.

"Yes--that was it. Their probosces," said Adam. "They were great

honey-gatherers, those elephants--far better than the bees, because

they could make so much more of it in a given time."

Munchausen shook his head sadly. "I'm afraid I'm outclassed by these

antediluvians," he said.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried Sir Walter. "These interruptions are

inexcusable!"

"That's what I think," said the stranger, with some asperity. "I'm

having about as hard a time getting this story out as I would if it

were a serial. Of course, if you gentlemen do not wish to hear it, I

can stop; but it must be understood that when I do stop I stop

finally, once and for all, because the tale has not a sufficiency of

dramatic climaxes to warrant its prolongation over the usual magazine

period of twelve months."

"Go on! go on!" cried some.

"Shut up!" cried others--addressing the interrupting members, of

course.

"As I was saying," resumed the stranger, "I felt confident that

within an hour, in some way or other, that case would be placed in my

hands. It would be mine either positively or negatively--that is to

say, either the person robbed would employ me to ferret out the

mystery and recover the diamonds, or the robber himself, actuated by

motives of self-preservation, would endeavor to direct my energies

into other channels until he should have the time to dispose of his

ill-gotten booty. A mental discussion of the probabilities inclined

me to believe that the latter would be the case. I reasoned in this

fashion: The person robbed is of exalted rank. She cannot move

rapidly because she is so. Great bodies move slowly. It is probable

that it will be a week before, according to the etiquette by which

she is hedged about, she can communicate with me. In the first

place, she must inform one of her attendants that she has been

robbed. He must communicate the news to the functionary in charge of

her residence, who will communicate with the Home Secretary, and from

him will issue the orders to the police, who, baffled at every step,

will finally address themselves to me. 'I'll give that side two

weeks,' I said. On the other hand, the robber: will he allow

himself to be lulled into a false sense of security by counting on

this delay, or will he not, noting my habit of occasionally entering

upon detective enterprises of this nature of my own volition, come to

me at once and set me to work ferreting out some crime that has never

been committed? My feeling was that this would happen, and I pulled

out my watch to see if it were not nearly time for him to arrive.

The robbery had taken place at a state ball at the Buckingham Palace.

'H'm!' I mused. 'He has had an hour and forty minutes to get here.

It is now twelve-twenty. He should be here by twelve-forty-five. I

will wait.' And hastily swallowing a cocaine tablet to nerve myself

up for the meeting, I sat down and began to read my Schopenhauer.

Hardly had I perused a page when there came a tap upon my door. I

rose with a smile, for I thought I knew what was to happen, opened

the door, and there stood, much to my surprise, the husband of the

lady whose tiara was missing. It was the Duke of Brokedale himself.

It is true he was disguised. His beard was powdered until it looked

like snow, and he wore a wig and a pair of green goggles; but I

recognized him at once by his lack of manners, which is an

unmistakable sign of nobility. As I opened the door, he began:

"'You are Mr.--'

"'I am,' I replied. 'Come in. You have come to see me about your

stolen watch. It is a gold hunting-case watch with a Swiss movement;

loses five minutes a day; stem-winder; and the back cover, which does

not bear any inscription, has upon it the indentations made by the

molars of your son Willie when that interesting youth was cutting his

teeth upon it.'"

"Wonderful!" cried Johnson.

"May I ask how you knew all that?" asked Solomon, deeply impressed.

"Such penetration strikes me as marvellous."

"I didn't know it," replied the stranger, with a smile. "What I said

was intended to be jocular, and to put Brokedale at his ease. The

Americans present, with their usual astuteness, would term it bluff.

It was. I merely rattled on. I simply did not wish to offend the

gentleman by letting him know that I had penetrated his disguise.

Imagine my surprise, however, when his eye brightened as I spoke, and

he entered my room with such alacrity that half the powder which he

thought disguised his beard was shaken off on to the floor. Sitting

down in the chair I had just vacated, he quietly remarked:

"'You are a wonderful man, sir. How did you know that I had lost my

watch?'

"For a moment I was nonplussed; more than that, I was completely

staggered. I had expected him to say at once that he had not lost

his watch, but had come to see me about the tiara; and to have him

take my words seriously was entirely unexpected and overwhelmingly

surprising. However, in view of his rank, I deemed it well to fall

in with his humour. 'Oh, as for that,' I replied, 'that is a part of

my business. It is the detective's place to know everything; and

generally, if he reveals the machinery by means of which he reaches

his conclusions, he is a fool, since his method is his secret, and

his secret his stock-in-trade. I do not mind telling you, however,

that I knew your watch was stolen by your anxious glance at my clock,

which showed that you wished to know the time. Now most rich

Americans have watches for that purpose, and have no hesitation about

showing them. If you'd had a watch, you'd have looked at it, not at

my clock.'

"My visitor laughed, and repeated what he had said about my being a

wonderful man.

"'And the dents which my son made cutting his teeth?' he added.

"'Invariably go with an American's watch. Rubber or ivory rings

aren't good enough for American babies to chew on,' said I. 'They

must have gold watches or nothing.'

"'And finally, how did you know I was a rich American?' he asked.

"'Because no other can afford to stop at hotels like the Savoy in the

height of the season,' I replied, thinking that the jest would end

there, and that he would now reveal his identity and speak of the

tiara. To my surprise, however, he did nothing of the sort.

"'You have an almost supernatural gift,' he said. 'My name is

Bunker. I am stopping at the Savoy. I AM an American. I WAS rich

when I arrived here, but I'm not quite so bloated with wealth as I

was, now that I have paid my first week's bill. I HAVE lost my

watch; such a watch, too, as you describe, even to the dents. Your

only mistake was that the dents were made by my son John, and not

Willie; but even there I cannot but wonder at you, for John and

Willie are twins, and so much alike that it sometimes baffles even

their mother to tell them apart. The watch has no very great value

intrinsically, but the associations are such that I want it back, and

I will pay 200 pounds for its recovery. I have no clew as to who

took it. It was numbered--'

"Here a happy thought struck me. In all my description of the watch

I had merely described my own, a very cheap affair which I had won at

a raffle. My visitor was deceiving me, though for what purpose I did

not on the instant divine. No one would like to suspect him of

having purloined his wife's tiara. Why should I not deceive him, and

at the same time get rid of my poor chronometer for a sum that

exceeded its value a hundredfold?"

"Good business!" cried Shylock.

The stranger smiled and bowed.

"Excellent," he said. "I took the words right out of his mouth. 'It

was numbered 86507B!' I cried, giving, of course, the number of my

own watch.

"He gazed at me narrowly for a moment, and then he smiled. 'You grow

more marvellous at every step. That was indeed the number. Are you

a demon?'

"'No,' I replied. 'Only something of a mind-reader.'

"Well, to be brief, the bargain was struck. I was to look for a

watch that I knew he hadn't lost, and was to receive 200 pounds if I

found it. It seemed to him to be a very good bargain, as, indeed, it

was, from his point of view, feeling, as he did, that there never

having been any such watch, it could not be recovered, and little

suspecting that two could play at his little game of deception, and

that under any circumstances I could foist a ten-shilling watch upon

him for two hundred pounds. This business concluded, he started to

go.

"'Won't you have a little Scotch?' I asked, as he started, feeling,

with all that prospective profit in view, I could well afford the

expense. 'It is a stormy night.'

"'Thanks, I will,' said he, returning and seating himself by my

table--still, to my surprise, keeping his hat on.

"'Let me take your hat,' I said, little thinking that my courtesy

would reveal the true state of affairs. The mere mention of the word

hat brought about a terrible change in my visitor; his knees

trembled, his face grew ghastly, and he clutched the brim of his

beaver until it cracked. He then nervously removed it, and I noticed

a dull red mark running about his forehead, just as there would be on

the forehead of a man whose hat fitted too tightly; and that mark,

gentlemen, had the undulating outline of nothing more nor less than a

tiara, and on the apex of the uttermost extremity was a deep

indentation about the size of a shilling, that could have been made

only by some adamantine substance! The mystery was solved! The

robber of the Duchess of Brokedale stood before me."

A suppressed murmur of excitement went through the assembled spirits,

and even Messrs. Hawkshaw and Le Coq were silent in the presence of

such genius.

"My plan of action was immediately formulated. The man was

completely at my mercy. He had stolen the tiara, and had it

concealed in the lining of his hat. I rose and locked the door. My

visitor sank with a groan into my chair.

"'Why did you do that?' he stammered, as I turned the key in the

lock.

"'To keep my Scotch whiskey from evaporating,' I said, dryly. 'Now,

my lord,' I added, 'it will pay your Grace to let me have your hat.

I know who you are. You are the Duke of Brokedale. The Duchess of

Brokedale has lost a valuable tiara of diamonds, and you have not

lost your watch. Somebody has stolen the diamonds, and it may be

that somewhere there is a Bunker who has lost such a watch as I have

described. The queer part of it all is,' I continued, handing him

the decanter, and taking a couple of loaded six-shooters out of my

escritoire--'the queer part of it all is that I have the watch and

you have the tiara. We'll swap the swag. Hand over the bauble,

please.'

"'But--' he began.

"'We won't have any butting, your Grace,' said I. 'I'll give you the

watch, and you needn't mind the 200 pounds; and you must give me the

tiara, or I'll accompany you forthwith to the police, and have a

search made of your hat. It won't pay you to defy me. Give it up.'

"He gave up the hat at once, and, as I suspected, there lay the

tiara, snugly stowed away behind the head-band.

"'You are a great fellow,' said I, as I held the tiara up to the

light and watched with pleasure the flashing brilliance of its gems.

"'I beg you'll not expose me,' he moaned. 'I was driven to it by

necessity.'

"'Not I,' I replied. 'As long as you play fair it will be all right.

I'm not going to keep this thing. I'm not married, and so have no

use for such a trifle; but what I do intend is simply to wait until

your wife retains me to find it, and then I'll find it and get the

reward. If you keep perfectly still, I'll have it found in such a

fashion that you'll never be suspected. If, on the other hand, you

say a word about to-night's events, I'll hand you over to the

police.'

"'Humph!' he said. 'You couldn't prove a case against me.'

"'I can prove any case against anybody,' I retorted. 'If you don't

believe it, read my book,' I added, and I handed him a copy of my

memoirs.

"'I've read it,' he answered, 'and I ought to have known better than

to come here. I thought you were only a literary success.' And with

a deep-drawn sigh he took the watch and went out. Ten days later I

was retained by the Duchess, and after a pretended search of ten days

more I found the tiara, restored it to the noble lady, and received

the 5000 pounds reward. The Duke kept perfectly quiet about our

little encounter, and afterwards we became stanch friends; for he was

a good fellow, and was driven to his desperate deed only by the

demands of his creditors, and the following Christmas he sent me the

watch I had given him, with the best wishes of the season.

"So, you see, gentlemen, in a moment, by quick wit and a mental

concentration of no mean order, combined with strict observance of

the pettiest details, I ferreted out what bade fair to become a great

diamond mystery; and when I say that this cigar end proves certain

things to my mind, it does not become you to doubt the value of my

conclusions."

"Hear! hear!" cried Raleigh, growing tumultuous with enthusiasm.

"Your name? your name?" came from all parts of the wharf.

The stranger, putting his hand into the folds of his coat, drew forth

a bundle of business cards, which he tossed, as the prestidigitator

tosses playing-cards, out among the audience, and on each of them was

found printed the words:

SHERLOCK HOLMES,

DETECTIVE.

FERRETING DONE HERE.

Plots for Sale.

"I think he made a mistake in not taking the 200 pounds for the

watch. Such carelessness destroys my confidence in him," said

Shylock, who was the first to recover from the surprise of the

revelation.

CHAPTER III: THE SEARCH-PARTY IS ORGANIZED

"Well, Mr. Holmes," said Sir Walter Raleigh, after three rousing

cheers, led by Hamlet, had been given with a will by the assembled

spirits, "after this demonstration in your honor I think it is hardly

necessary for me to assure you of our hearty co-operation in anything

you may venture to suggest. There is still manifest, however, some

desire on the part of the ever-wise King Solomon and my friend

Confucius to know how you deduce that Kidd has sailed for London,

from the cigar end which you hold in your hand."

"I can easily satisfy their curiosity," said Sherlock Holmes,

genially. "I believe I have already proven that it is the end of

Kidd's cigar. The marks of the teeth have shown that. Now observe

how closely it is smoked--there is barely enough of it left for one

to insert between his teeth. Now Captain Kidd would hardly have

risked the edges of his mustache and the comfort of his lips by

smoking a cigar down to the very light if he had had another; nor

would he under any circumstances have smoked it that far unless he

were passionately addicted to this particular brand of the weed.

Therefore I say to you, first, this was his cigar; second, it was the

last one he had; third, he is a confirmed smoker. The result, he has

gone to the one place in the world where these Connecticut hand-

rolled Havana cigars--for I recognize this as one of them--have a

real popularity, and are therefore more certainly obtainable, and

that is at London. You cannot get so vile a cigar as that outside of

a London hotel. If I could have seen a quarter-inch more of it, I

should have been able definitely to locate the hotel itself. The

wrappers unroll to a degree that varies perceptibly as between the

different hotels. The Fortuna cigar can be smoked a quarter through

before its wrapper gives way; the Felix wrapper goes as soon as you

light the cigar; whereas the River, fronting on the Thames, is

surrounded by a moister atmosphere than the others, and, as a

consequence, the wrapper will hold really until most people are

willing to throw the whole thing away."

"It is really a wonderful art!" said Solomon.

"The making of a Connecticut Havana cigar?" laughed Holmes. "Not at

all. Give me a head of lettuce and a straw, and I'll make you a

box."

"I referred to your art--that of detection," said Solomon. "Your

logic is perfect; step by step we have been led to the irresistible

conclusion that Kidd has made for London, and can be found at one of

these hotels."

"And only until next Tuesday, when he will take a house in the

neighborhood of Scotland Yard," put in Holmes, quickly, observing a

sneer on Hawkshaw's lips, and hastening to overwhelm him by further

evidence of his ingenuity. "When he gets his bill he will open his

piratical eyes so wide that he will be seized with jealousy to think

of how much more refined his profession has become since he left it,

and out of mere pique he will leave the hotel, and, to show himself

still cleverer than his modern prototypes, he will leave his account

unpaid, with the result that the affair will be put in the hands of

the police, under which circumstances a house in the immediate

vicinity of the famous police headquarters will be the safest hiding-

place he can find, as was instanced by the remarkable case of the

famous Penstock bond robbery. A certain churchwarden named Hinkley,

having been appointed cashier thereof, robbed the Penstock Imperial

Bank of 1,000,000 pounds in bonds, and, fleeing to London, actually

joined the detective force at Scotland Yard, and was detailed to find

himself, which of course he never did, nor would he ever have been

found had he not crossed my path."

Hawkshaw gazed mournfully off into space, and Le Coq muttered profane

words under his breath.

"We're not in the same class with this fellow, Hawkshaw," said Le

Coq. "You could tap your forehead knowingly eight hours a day

through all eternity with a sledge-hammer without loosening an idea

like that."

"Nevertheless I'll confound him yet," growled the jealous detective.

"I shall myself go to London, and, disguised as Captain Kidd, will

lead this visionary on until he comes there to arrest me, and when

these club members discover that it is Hawkshaw and not Kidd he has

run to earth, we'll have a great laugh on Sherlock Holmes."

"I am anxious to hear how you solved the bond-robbery mystery," said

Socrates, wrapping his toga closely about him and settling back

against one of the spiles of the wharf.

"So are we all," said Sir Walter. "But meantime the House-boat is

getting farther away."

"Not unless she's sailing backwards," sneered Noah, who was still

nursing his resentment against Sir Christopher Wren for his

reflections upon the speed of the Ark

"What's the hurry?" asked Socrates. "I believe in making haste

slowly; and on the admission of our two eminent naval architects, Sir

Christopher and Noah, neither of their vessels can travel more than a

mile a week, and if we charter the Flying Dutchman to go in pursuit

of her we can catch her before she gets out of the Styx into the

Atlantic."

"Jonah might lend us his whale, if the beast is in commission,"

suggested Munchausen, dryly. "I for one would rather take a state-

room in Jonah's whale than go aboard the Flying Dutchman again. I

made one trip on the Dutchman, and she's worse than a dory for

comfort; further--I don't see what good it would do us to charter a

boat that can't land oftener than once in seven years, and spends

most of her time trying to double the Cape of Good Hope."

"My whale is in commission," said Jonah, with dignity. "But Baron

Munchausen need not consider the question of taking a state-room

aboard of her. She doesn't carry second-class passengers. And if I

took any stock in the idea of a trip on the Flying Dutchman amounting

to a seven years' exile, I would cheerfully pay the Baron's expenses

for a round trip."

"We are losing time, gentlemen," suggested Sherlock Holmes. "This is

a moment, I think, when you should lay aside personal differences and

personal preferences for immediate action. I have examined the wake

of the House-boat, and I judge from the condition of what, for want

of a better term, I may call the suds, when she left us the House-

boat was making ten knots a day. Almost any craft we can find

suitably manned ought to be able to do better than that; and if you

could summon Charon and ascertain what boats he has at hand, it would

be for the good of all concerned."

"That's a good plan," said Johnson. "Boswell, see if you can find

Charon."

"I am here already, sir," returned the ferryman, rising. "Most of my

boats have gone into winter quarters, your Honor. The Mayflower went

into dry dock last week to be calked up; the Pinta and the Santa

Maria are slow and cranky; the Monitor and the Merrimac I haven't

really had time to patch up; and the Valkyrie is two months overdue.

I cannot make up my mind whether she is lost or kept back by

excursion steamers. Hence I really don't know what I can lend you.

Any of these boat I have named you could have had for nothing; but my

others are actively employed, and I couldn't let them go without a

serious interference with my business."

The old man blinked sorrowfully across the waters at the opposite

shore. It was quite evident that he realized what a dreadful expense

the club was about to be put to, and while of course there would be

profit in it for him, he was sincerely sorry for them.

"I repeat," he added, "those boats you could have had for nothing,

but the others I'd have to charge you for, though of course I'll give

you a discount."

And he blinked again, as he meditated upon whether that discount

should be an eighth or one-quarter of one per cent.

"The Flying Dutchman," he pursued, "ain't no good for your purposes.

She's too fast. She's built to fly by, not to stop. You'd catch up

with the House-boat in a minute with her, but you'd go right on and

disappear like a visionary; and as for the Ark, she'd never do--with

all respect to Mr. Noah. She's just about as suitable as any other

waterlogged cattle-steamer'd be, and no more--first-rate for

elephants and kangaroos, but no good for cruiser-work, and so slow

she wouldn't make a ripple high enough to drown a gnat going at the

top of her speed. Furthermore, she's got a great big hole in her

bottom, where she was stove in by running afoul of--Mount Arrus-root,

I believe it was called when Captain Noah went cruising with that

menagerie of his."

"That's an unmitigated falsehood!" cried Noah, angrily. "This man

talks like a professional amateur yachtsman. He has no regard for

facts, but simply goes ahead and makes statements with an utter

disregard of the truth. The Ark was not stove in. We beached her

very successfully. I say this in defence of my seamanship, which was

top-notch for my day."

"Couldn't sail six weeks without fouling a mountain-peak!" sneered

Wren, perceiving a chance to get even.

"The hole's there, just the same," said Charon. "Maybe she was a

centreboard, sad that's where you kept the board."

"The hole is there because it was worn there by one of the

elephants," retorted Noah. "You get a beast like the elephant

shuffling one of his fore-feet up and down, up and down, a plank for

twenty-four hours a day for forty days in one of your boats, and see

where your boat would be."

"Thanks," said Charon, calmly. "But the elephants don't patronize my

line. All the elephants I've ever seen in Hades waded over, except

Jumbo, and he reached his trunk across, fastened on to a tree limb

with it, and swung himself over. However, the Ark isn't at all what

you want, unless you are going to man her with a lot of centaurs. If

that's your intention, I'd charter her; the accommodations are just

the thing for a crew of that kind."

"Well, what do you suggest?" asked Raleigh, somewhat impatiently.

"You've told us what we can't do. Now tell us what we can do."

"I'd stay right here," said Charon, "and let the ladies rescue

themselves. That's what I'd do. I've had the honor of bringing 'em

over here, and I think I know 'em pretty well. I've watched 'em

close, and it's my private opinion that before many days you'll see

your club-house sailing back here, with Queen Elizabeth at the

hellum, and the other ladies on the for'ard deck knittin' and

crochetin', and tearin' each other to pieces in a conversational way,

as happy as if there never had been any Captain Kidd and his pirate

crew."

"That suggestion is impossible," said Blackstone, rising. "Whether

the relief expedition amounts to anything or not, it's good to be set

going. The ladies would never forgive us if we sat here inactive,

even if they were capable of rescuing themselves. It is an accepted

principle of law that this climate hath no fury like a woman left to

herself, and we've got enough professional furies hereabouts without

our aiding in augmenting the ranks. We must have a boat."

"It'll cost you a thousand dollars a week," said Charon.

"I'll subscribe fifty," cried Hamlet.

"I'll consult my secretary," said Solomon, "and find out how many of

my wives have been abducted, and I'll pay ten dollars apiece for

their recovery."

"That's liberal," said Hawkshaw. "There are sixty-three of 'em on

board, together with eighty of his fiancees. What's the quotation on

fiancees, King Solomon?"

"Nothing," said Solomon. "They're not mine yet, and it's their

father's business to get 'em back. Not mine."

Other subscriptions came pouring in, and it was not long before

everybody save Shylock had put his name down for something. This

some one of the more quick-witted of the spirits soon observed, and,

with reckless disregard of the feelings of the Merchant of Venice,

began to call, "Shylock! Shylock! How much?"

The Merchant tried to leave the pier, but his path was blocked.

"Subscribe, subscribe!" was the cry. "How much?"

"Order, gentlemen, order!" said Sir Walter, rising and holding a

bottle aloft. "A black person by the name of Friday, a valet of our

friend Mr. Crusoe, has just handed me this bottle, which he picked up

ten minutes ago on the bank of the river a few miles distant. It

contains a bit of paper, and may perhaps give us a clew based upon

something more substantial than even the wonderful theories of our

new brother Holmes."

A deathly silence followed the chairman's words, as Sir Walter drew a

corkscrew from his pocket and opened the bottle. He extracted the

paper, and, as he had surmised, it proved to be a message from the

missing vessel. His face brightening with a smile of relief, Sir

Walter read, aloud:

"Have just emerged into the Atlantic Club in hands of Kidd and forty

ruffians. One hundred and eighty-three ladies on board. Headed for

the Azores. Send aid at once. All well except Xanthippe, who is

seasick in the billiard-room. (Signed) Portia."

"Aha!" cried Hawkshaw. "That shows how valuable the Holmes theory

is."

"Precisely," said Holmes. "No woman knows anything about seafaring,

but Portia is right. The ship is headed for the Azores, which is the

first tack needed in a windward sail for London under the present

conditions."

The reply was greeted with cheers, and when they subsided the cry for

Shylock's subscription began again, but he declined.

"I had intended to put up a thousand ducats," he said, defiantly,

"but with that woman Portia on board I won't give a red obolus!" and

with that he wrapped his cloak about him and stalked off into the

gathering shadows of the wood.

And so the funds were raised without the aid of Shylock, and the

shapely twin-screw steamer the Gehenna was chartered of Charon, and

put under the command of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who, after he had

thanked the company for their confidence, walked abstractedly away,

observing in strictest confidence to himself that he had done well to

prepare that bottle beforehand and bribe Crusoe's man to find it.

"For now," he said, with a chuckle, "I can get back to earth again

free of cost on my own hook, whether my eminent inventor wants me

there or not. I never approved of his killing me off as he did at

the very height of my popularity."

CHAPTER IV: ON BOARD THE HOUSE-BOAT

Meanwhile the ladies were not having such a bad time, after all.

Once having gained possession of the House-boat, they were loath to

think of ever having to give it up again, and it is an open question

in my mind if they would not have made off with it themselves had

Captain Kidd and his men not done it for them.

"I'll never forgive these men for their selfishness in monopolizing

all this," said Elizabeth, with a vicious stroke of a billiard-cue,

which missed the cue-ball and tore a right angle in the cloth. "It

is not right."

"No," said Portia. "It is all wrong; and when we get back home I'm

going to give my beloved Bassanio a piece of my mind; and if he

doesn't give in to me, I'LL reverse my decision in the famous case of

Shylock versus Antonio."

"Then I sincerely hope he doesn't give in," retorted Cleopatra, "for

I swear by all my auburn locks that that was the very worst bit of

injustice ever perpetrated. Mr. Shakespeare confided to me one

night, at one of Mrs. Caesar's card-parties, that he regarded that as

the biggest joke he ever wrote, and Judge Blackstone observed to

Antony that the decision wouldn't have held in any court of equity

outside of Venice. If you owe a man a thousand ducats, and it costs

you three thousand to get them, that's your affair, not his. If it

cost Antonio every drop of his bluest blood to pay the pound of

flesh, it was Antonio's affair, not Shylock's. However, the world

applauds you as a great jurist, when you have nothing more than a

woman's keen instinct for sentimental technicalities."

"It would have made a horrid play, though, if it had gone on,"

shuddered Elizabeth.

"That may be, but, carried out realistically, it would have done away

with a raft of bad actors," said Cleopatra. "I'm half sorry it

didn't go on, and I'm sure it wouldn't have been any worse than

compelling Brutus to fall on his sword until he resembles a chicken

liver en brochette, as is done in that Julius Caesar play."

"Well, I'm very glad I did it," snapped Portia.

"I should think you would be," said Cleopatra. "If you hadn't done

it, you'd never have been known. What was that?"

The boat had given a slight lurch.

"Didn't you hear a shuffling noise up on deck, Portia?" asked the

Egyptian Queen.

"I thought I did, and it seemed as if the vessel had moved a bit,"

returned Portia, nervously; for, like most women in an advanced state

of development, she had become a martyr to her nerves.

"It was merely the wash from one of Charon's new ferry-boats, I

fancy," said Elizabeth, calmly. "It's disgusting, the way that old

fellow allows these modern innovations to be brought in here! As if

the old paddle-boats he used to carry shades in weren't good enough

for the immigrants of this age! Really this Styx River is losing a

great deal of its charm. Sir Walter and I were upset, while out

rowing one day last summer, by the waves kicked up by one of Charon's

excursion steamers going up the river with a party of picnickers from

the city--the Greater Gehenna Chowder Club, I believe it was--on

board of her. One might just as well live in the midst of the

turmoil of a great city as try to get uninterrupted quiet here in the

suburbs in these days. Charon isn't content to get rich slowly; he

must make money by the barrelful, if he has to sacrifice all the

comfort of everybody living on this river. Anybody'd think he was an

American, the way he goes on; and everybody else here is the same

way. The Erebeans are getting to be a race of shopkeepers."

"I think myself," sighed Cleopatra, "that Hades is being spoiled by

the introduction of American ideas--it is getting by far too

democratic for my tastes; and if it isn't stopped, it's my belief

that the best people will stop coming here. Take Madame Recamier's

salon as it is now and compare it with what it used to be! In the

early days, after her arrival here, everybody went because it was the

swell thing, and you'd be sure of meeting the intellectually elect.

On the one hand you'd find Sophocles; on the other, Cicero; across

the room would be Horace chatting gayly with some such person as

myself. Great warriors, from Alexander to Bonaparte, were there, and

glad of the opportunity to be there, too; statesmen like

Macchiavelli; artists like Cellini or Tintoretto. You couldn't move

without stepping on the toes of genius. But now all is different.

The money-getting instinct has been aroused within them all, with the

result that when I invited Mozart to meet a few friends at dinner at

my place last autumn, he sent me a card stating his terms for

dinners. Let me see, I think I have it with me; I've kept it by me

for fear of losing it, it is such a complete revelation of the actual

condition of affairs in this locality. Ah! this is it," she added,

taking a small bit of pasteboard from her card-case. "Read that."

The card was passed about, and all the ladies were much astonished--

and naturally so, for it ran this wise:

NOTICE TO HOSTESSES.

Owing to the very great, constantly growing, and at times vexatious

demands upon his time socially,

HERR WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

takes this method of announcing to his friends that on and after

January 1, 1897, his terms for functions will be as follows:

Dinners with conversation on the Marks

Theory of Music 500

Dinners with conversation on the

Theory of Music, illustrated 750

Dinners without any conversation 300

Receptions, public, with music 1000

" " private, 750

Encores (single) 100

Three encores for 150

Autographs 10

Positively no Invitations for Five-o'Clock Teas or Morning Musicales

considered.

"Well, I declare!" tittered Elizabeth, as she read. "Isn't that

extraordinary? He's got the three-name craze, too!"

"It's perfectly ridiculous," said Cleopatra. "But it's fairer than

Artemus Ward's plan. Mozart gives notice of his intentions to charge

you; but with Ward it's different. He comes, and afterwards sends a

bill for his fun. Why, only last week I got a 'quarterly statement'

from him showing a charge against me of thirty-eight dollars for

humorous remarks made to my guests at a little chafing-dish party I

gave in honor of Balzac, and, worst of all, he had marked it 'Please

remit.' Even Antony, when he wrote a sonnet to my eyebrow, wouldn't

let me have it until he had heard whether or not Boswell wanted it

for publication in the Gossip. With Rubens giving chalk-talks for

pay, Phidias doing 'Five-minute Masterpieces in Putty' for suburban

lyceums, and all the illustrious in other lines turning their genius

to account through the entertainment bureaus, it's impossible to have

a salon now."

"You are indeed right," said Madame Recamier, sadly. "Those were

palmy days when genius was satisfied with chicken salad and lemonade.

I shall never forget those nights when the wit and wisdom of all time

were--ah--were on tap at my house, if I may so speak, at a cost to me

of lights and supper. Now the only people who will come for nothing

are those we used to think of paying to stay away. Boswell is always

ready, but you can't run a salon on Boswell."

"Well," said Portia, "I sincerely hope that you won't give up the

functions altogether, because I have always found them most

delightful. It is still possible to have lights and supper."

"I have a plan for next winter," said Madame Recamier, "but I suppose

I shall be accused of going into the commercial side of it if I adopt

it. The plan is, briefly, to incorporate my salon. That's an idea

worthy of an American, I admit; but if I don't do it I'll have to

give it up entirely, which, as you intimate, would be too bad. An

incorporated salon, however, would be a grand thing, if only because

it would perpetuate the salon. 'The Recamier Salon (Limited)' would

be a most excellent title, and, suitably capitalized would enable us

to pay our lions sufficiently. Private enterprise is powerless under

modern conditions. It's as much as I can afford to pay for a dinner,

without running up an expensive account for guests; and unless we get

up a salon-trust, as it were, the whole affair must go to the wall."

"How would you make it pay?" asked Portia. "I can't see where your

dividends would come from."

"That is simple enough," said Madame Recamier. "We could put up a

large reception-hall with a portion of our capital, and advertise a

series of nights--say one a week throughout the season. These would

be Warriors' Night, Story-tellers' Night, Poets' Night, Chafing-dish

Night under the charge of Brillat-Savarin, and so on. It would be

understood that on these particular evenings the most interesting

people in certain lines would be present, and would mix with

outsiders, who should be admitted only on payment of a certain sum of

money. The commonplace inhabitants of this country could thus meet

the truly great; and if I know them well, as I think I do, they'll

pay readily for the privilege. The obscure love to rub up against

the famous here as well as they do on earth."

"You'd run a sort of Social Zoo?" suggested Elizabeth.

"Precisely; and provide entertainment for private residences too. An

advertisement in Boswell's paper, which everybody buys--"

"And which nobody reads," said Portia.

"They read the advertisements," retorted Madame Recamier. "As I was

saying, an advertisement could be placed in Boswell's paper as

follows: 'Are you giving a Function? Do you want Talent? Get your

Genius at the Recamier Salon (Limited).' It would be simply

magnificent as a business enterprise. The common herd would be

tickled to death if they could get great people at their homes, even

if they had to pay roundly for them."

"It would look well in the society notes, wouldn't it, if Mr. John

Boggs gave a reception, and at the close of the account it said, 'The

supper was furnished by Calizetti, and the genius by the Recamier

Salon (Limited)'?" suggested Elizabeth, scornfully.

"I must admit," replied the French lady, "that you call up an

unpleasant possibility, but I don't really see what else we can do if

we want to preserve the salon idea. Somebody has told these talented

people that they have a commercial value, and they are availing

themselves of the demand."

"It is a sad age!" sighed Elizabeth.

"Well, all I've got to say is just this," put in Xanthippe: "You

people who get up functions have brought this condition of affairs on

yourselves. You were not satisfied to go ahead and indulge your

passion for lions in a moderate fashion. Take the case of

Demosthenes last winter, for instance. His wife told me that he

dined at home three times during the winter. The rest of the time he

was out, here, there, and everywhere, making after-dinner speeches.

The saving on his dinner bills didn't pay his pebble account, much

less remunerate him for his time, and the fearful expense of nervous

energy to which he was subjected. It was as much as she could do,

she said, to keep him from shaving one side of his head, so that he

couldn't go out, the way he used to do in Athens when he was afraid

he would be invited out and couldn't scare up a decent excuse for

refusing."

"Did he do that?" cried Elizabeth, with a roar of laughter.

"So the cyclopaedias say. It's a good plan, too," said Xanthippe.

"Though Socrates never had to do it. When I got the notion Socrates

was going out too much, I used to hide his dress clothes. Then there

was the case of Rubens. He gave a Carbon Talk at the Sforza's

Thursday Night Club, merely to oblige Madame Sforza, and three weeks

later discovered that she had sold his pictures to pay for her gown!

You people simply run it into the ground. You kill the goose that

when taken at the flood leads on to fortune. It advertises you, does

the lion no good, and he is expected to be satisfied with

confectionery, material and theoretical. If they are getting tired

of candy and compliments, it's because you have forced too much of it

upon them."

"They like it, just the same," retorted Recamier. "A genius likes

nothing better than the sound of his own voice, when he feels that it

is falling on aristocratic ears. The social laurel rests pleasantly

on many a noble brow."

"True," said Xanthippe. "But when a man gets a pile of Christmas

wreaths a mile high on his head, he begins to wonder what they will

bring on the market. An occasional wreath is very nice, but by the

ton they are apt to weigh on his mind. Up to a certain point

notoriety is like a woman, and a man is apt to love it; but when it

becomes exacting, demanding instead of permitting itself to be

courted, it loses its charm."

"That is Socratic in its wisdom," smiled Portia.

"But Xanthippic in its origin," returned Xanthippe. "No man ever

gave me my ideas."

As Xanthippe spoke, Lucretia Borgia burst into the room.

"Hurry and save yourselves!" she cried. "The boat has broken loose

from her moorings, and is floating down the stream. If we don't

hurry up and do something, we'll drift out to sea!"

"What!" cried Cleopatra, dropping her cue in terror, and rushing for

the stairs. "I was certain I felt a slight motion. You said it was

the wash from one of Charon's barges, Elizabeth."

"I thought it was," said Elizabeth, following closely after.

"Well, it wasn't," moaned Lucretia Borgia. "Calpurnia just looked

out of the window and discovered that we were in mid-stream."

The ladies crowded anxiously about the stair and attempted to ascend,

Cleopatra in the van; but as the Egyptian Queen reached the doorway

to the upper deck, the door opened, and the hard features of Captain

Kidd were thrust roughly through, and his strident voice rang out

through the gathering gloom. "Pipe my eye for a sardine if we

haven't captured a female seminary!" he cried.

And one by one the ladies, in terror, shrank back into the billiard-

room, while Kidd, overcome by surprise, slammed the door to, and

retreated into the darkness of the forward deck to consult with his

followers as to "what next."

CHAPTER V: A CONFERENCE ON DECK

"Here's a kettle of fish!" said Kidd, pulling his chin whisker in

perplexity as he and his fellow-pirates gathered about the captain to

discuss the situation. "I'm blessed if in all my experience I ever

sailed athwart anything like it afore! Pirating with a lot of low-

down ruffians like you gentlemen is bad enough, but on a craft loaded

to the water's edge with advanced women--I've half a mind to turn

back."

"If you do, you swim--we'll not turn back with you," retorted

Abeuchapeta, whom, in honor of his prowess, Kidd had appointed

executive officer of the House-boat. "I have no desire to be

mutinous, Captain Kidd, but I have not embarked upon this enterprise

for a pleasure sail down the Styx. I am out for business. If you

had thirty thousand women on board, still should I not turn back."

"But what shall we do with 'em?" pleaded Kidd. "Where can we go

without attracting attention? Who's going to feed 'em? Who's going

to dress 'em? Who's going to keep 'em in bonnets? You don't know

anything about these creatures, my dear Abeuchapeta; and, by-the-way,

can't we arbitrate that name of yours? It would be fearful to

remember in the excitement of a fight."

"Call him Ab," suggested Sir Henry Morgan, with an ill-concealed

sneer, for he was deeply jealous of Abeuchapeta's preferral.

"If you do I'll call you Morgue, and change your appearance to fit,"

retorted Abeuchapeta, angrily.

"By the beards of all my sainted Buccaneers," began Morgan, springing

angrily to his feet, "I'll have your life!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen--my noble ruffians!" expostulated Kidd.

"Come, come; this will never do! I must have no quarrelling among my

aides. This is no time for divisions in our councils. An entirely

unexpected element has entered into our affairs, and it behooveth us

to act in concert. It is no light matter--"

"Excuse me, captain," said Abeuchapeta, "but that is where you and I

do not agree. We've got our ship and we've got our crew, and in

addition we find that the Fates have thrown in a hundred or more

women to act as ballast. Now I, for one, do not fear a woman. We

can set them to work. There is plenty for them to do keeping things

tidy; and if we get into a very hard fight, and come out of the melee

somewhat the worse for wear, it will be a blessing to have 'em along

to mend our togas, sew buttons on our uniforms, and darn our

hosiery."

Morgan laughed sarcastically. "When did you flourish, if ever,

colonel?" he asked.

"Do you refer to me?" queried Abeuchapeta, with a frown.

"You have guessed correctly," replied Morgan, icily. "I have quite

forgotten your date; were you a success in the year one, or when?"

"Admiral Abeuchapeta, Sir Henry," interposed Kidd, fearing a further

outbreak of hostilities--"Admiral Abeuchapeta was the terror of the

seas in the seventh century, and what he undertook to do he did, and

his piratical enterprises were carried on on a scale of magnificence

which is without parallel off the comic-opera stage. He never went

forth without at least seventy galleys and a hundred other vessels."

Abeuchapeta drew himself up proudly. "Six-ninety-eight was my great

year," he said.

"That's what I thought," said Morgan. "That is to say, you got your

ideas of women twelve hundred years ago, and the ladies have changed

somewhat since that time. I have great respect for you, sir, as a

ruffian. I have no doubt that as a ruffian you are a complete

success, but when it comes to 'feminology' you are sailing in unknown

waters. The study of women, my dear Abeuchadnezzar--"

"Peta," retorted Abeuchapeta, irritably.

"I stand corrected. The study of women, my dear Peter," said Morgan,

with a wink at Conrad, which fortunately the seventh-century pirate

did not see, else there would have been an open break--"the study of

women is more difficult than that of astronomy; there may be two

stars alike, but all women are unique. Because she was this, that,

or the other thing in your day does not prove that she is any one of

those things in our day--in fact, it proves the contrary. Why, I

venture even to say that no individual woman is alike."

"That's rather a hazy thought," said Kidd, scratching his head in a

puzzled sort of way.

"I mean that she's different from herself at different times," said

Morgan. "What is it the poet called her?--'an infinite variety

show,' or something of that sort; a perpetual vaudeville--a

continuous performance, as it were, from twelve to twelve."

"Morgan is right, admiral!" put in Conrad the corsair, acting

temporarily as bo'sun. "The times are sadly changed, and woman is no

longer what she was. She is hardly what she is, much less what she

was. The Roman Gynaeceum would be an impossibility to-day. You

might as well expect Delilah to open a barber-shop on board this boat

as ask any of these advanced females below-stairs to sew buttons on a

pirate's uniform after a fray, or to keep the fringe on his epaulets

curled. They're no longer sewing-machines--they are Keeley motors

for mystery and perpetual motion. Women have views now they are no

longer content to be looked at merely; they must see for themselves;

and the more they see, the more they wish to domesticate man and

emancipate woman. It's my private opinion that if we are to get

along with them at all the best thing to do is to let 'em alone. I

have always found I was better off in the abstract, and if this

question is going to be settled in a purely democratic fashion by

submitting it to a vote, I'll vote for any measure which involves

leaving them strictly to themselves. They're nothing but a lot of

ghosts anyhow, like ourselves, and we can pretend we don't see them."

"If that could be, it would be excellent," said Morgan; "but it is

impossible. For a pirate of the Byronic order, my dear Conrad, you

are strangely unversed in the ways of the sex which cheers but not

inebriates. We can no more ignore their presence upon this boat than

we can expect whales to spout kerosene. In the first place, it would

be excessively impolite of us to cut them--to decline to speak to

them if they should address us. We may be pirates, ruffians,

cutthroats, but I hope we shall never forget that we are gentlemen."

"The whole situation is rather contrary to etiquette, don't you

think?" suggested Conrad. "There's nobody to introduce us, and I

can't really see how we can do otherwise than ignore them. I

certainly am not going to stand on deck and make eyes at them, to try

and pick up an acquaintance with them, even if I am of a Byronic

strain."

"You forget," said Kidd, "two essential features of the situation.

These women are at present--or shortly will be, when they realize

their situation--in distress, and a true gentleman may always fly to

the rescue of a distressed female; and, the second point, we shall

soon be on the seas, and I understand that on the fashionable

transatlantic lines it is now considered de rigueur to speak to

anybody you choose to. The introduction business isn't going to

stand in my way."

"Well, may I ask," put in Abeuchapeta, "just what it is that is

worrying you? You said something about feeding them, and dressing

them, and keeping them in bonnets. I fancy there's fish enough in

the sea to feed 'em; and as for their gowns and hats, they can make

'em themselves. Every woman is a milliner at heart."

"Exactly, and we'll have to pay the milliners. That is what bothers

me. I was going to lead this expedition to London, Paris, and New

York, admiral. That is where the money is, and to get it you've got

to go ashore, to headquarters. You cannot nowadays find it on the

high seas. Modern civilization," said Kidd, "has ruined the pirate's

business. The latest news from the other world has really opened my

eyes to certain facts that I never dreamed of. The conditions of the

day of which I speak are interestingly shown in the experience of our

friend Hawkins here. Captain Hawkins, would you have any objection

to stating to these gentlemen the condition of affairs which led you

to give up piracy on the high seas?"

"Not the slightest, Captain Kidd," returned Captain Hawkins, who was

a recent arrival in Hades. "It is a sad little story, and it gives

me a pain for to think on it, but none the less I'll tell it, since

you ask me. When I were a mere boy, fellow-pirates, I had but one

ambition, due to my readin', which was confined to stories of a

Sunday-school nater--to become somethin' different from the little

Willies an' the clever Tommies what I read about therein. They was

all good, an' they went to their reward too soon in life for me, who

even in them days regarded death as a stuffy an' unpleasant

diversion. Learnin' at an early period that virtue was its only

reward, an' a-wish-in' others, I says to myself: 'Jim,' says I, 'if

you wishes to become a magnet in this village, be sinful. If so be

as you are a good boy, an' kind to your sister an' all other animals,

you'll end up as a prosperous father with fifteen hundred a year

sure, with never no hope for no public preferment beyond bein' made

the super-intendent of the Sunday-school; but if so be as how you're

bad, you may become famous, an' go to Congress, an' have your picture

in the Sunday noospapers.' So I looks around for books tellin' how

to get 'Famous in Fifty Ways,' an' after due reflection I settles in

my mind that to be a pirate's just the thing for me, seein' as how

it's both profitable an' healthy. Pass-in' over details, let me tell

you that I became a pirate. I ran away to sea, an' by dint of

perseverance, as the Sunday-school book useter say, in my badness I

soon became the centre of a evil lot; an' when I says to 'em, 'Boys,

I wants to be a pirate chief,' they hollers back, loud like, 'Jim,

we're with you,' an' they was. For years I was the terror of the

Venezuelan Gulf, the Spanish Main, an' the Pacific seas, but there

was precious little money into it. The best pay I got was from a

Sunday noospaper which paid me well to sign an article on 'Modern

Piracy' which I didn't write. Finally business got so bad the crew

began to murmur, an' I was at my wits' ends to please 'em; when one

mornin', havin' passed a restless night, I picks up a noospaper and

sees in it that 'Next Saturday's steamer is a weritable treasure-

ship, takin' out twelve million dollars, and the jewels of a certain

prima donna valued at five hundred thousand.' 'Here's my chance,'

says I, an' I goes to sea and lies in wait for the steamer. I

captures her easy, my crew bein' hungry, an' fightin according like.

We steals the box a-hold-in' the jewels an' the bag containin' the

millions, hustles back to our own ship, an' makes for our rondyvoo,

me with two bullets in my leg, four o' my crew killed, and one engin'

of my ship disabled by a shot--but happy. Twelve an' a half millions

at one break is enough to make anybody happy."

"I should say so," said Abeuchapeta, with an ecstatic shake of his

head. "I didn't get that in all my career."

"Nor I," sighed Kidd. "But go on, Hawkins."

"Well, as I says," continued Captain Hawkins, "we goes to the

rondyvoo to look over our booty. 'Captain 'Awkins,' says my valet--

for I was a swell pirate, gents, an' never travelled nowhere without

a man to keep my clothes brushed and the proper wrinkles in my

trousers--'this 'ere twelve millions,' says he, 'is werry light,'

says he, carryin' the bag ashore. 'I don't care how light it is, so

long as it's twelve millions, Henderson,' says I; but my heart sinks

inside o' me at his words, an' the minute we lands I sits down to

investigate right there on the beach. I opens the bag, an' it's the

one I was after--but the twelve millions!"

"Weren't there?" cried Conrad.

"Yes, they was there," sighed Hawkins, "but every bloomin' million

was represented by a certified check, an' payable in London!"

"By Jingo!" cried Morgan. "What fearful luck! But you had the prima

donna's jewels."

"Yes," said Hawkins, with a moan. "But they was like all other prima

donna's jewels--for advertisin' purposes only, an' made o' gum-

arabic!"

"Horrible!" said Abeuchapeta. "And the crew, what did they say?"

"They was a crew of a few words," sighed Hawkins. "Werry few words,

an' not a civil word in the lot--mostly adjectives of a profane kind.

When I told 'em what had happened, they got mad at Fortune for a-

jiltin' of 'em, an'--well, I came here. I was 'sas'inated that werry

night!"

"They killed you?" cried Morgan.

"A dozen times," nodded Hawkins. "They always was a lavish lot. I

met death in all its most horrid forms. First they stabbed me, then

they shot me, then they clubbed me, and so on, endin' up with a

lynchin'--but I didn't mind much after the first, which hurt a bit.

But now that I'm here I'm glad it happened. This life is sort of

less responsible than that other. You can't hurt a ghost by shooting

him, because there ain't nothing to hurt, an' I must say I like bein'

a mere vision what everybody can see through."

"All of which interesting tale proves what?" queried Abeuchapeta.

"That piracy on the sea is not profitable in these days of the check

banking system," said Kidd. "If you can get a chance at real gold

it's all right, but it's of no earthly use to steal checks that

people can stop payment on. Therefore it was my plan to visit the

cities and do a little freebooting there, where solid material wealth

is to be found."

"Well? Can't we do it now?" asked Abeuchapeta.

"Not with these women tagging after us," returned Kidd. "If we went

to London and lifted the whole Bank of England, these women would

have it spent on Regent Street inside of twenty-four hours."

"Then leave them on board," said Abeuchapeta.

"And have them steal the ship!" retorted Kidd. "No. There are but

two things to do. Take 'em back, or land them in Paris. Tell them

to spend a week on shore while we are provisioning. Tell 'em to shop

to their hearts' content, and while they are doing it we can sneak

off and leave them stranded."

"Splendid!" cried Morgan.

"But will they consent?" asked Abeuchapeta.

"Consent! To shop? In Paris? For a week?" cried Morgan.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Hawkins. "Will they consent! Will a duck swim?"

And so it was decided, which was the first incident in the career of

the House-boat upon which the astute Mr. Sherlock Holmes had failed

to count.

CHAPTER VI: A CONFERENCE BELOW-STAIRS

When, with a resounding slam, the door to the upper deck of the

House-boat was shut in the faces of queens Elizabeth and Cleopatra by

the unmannerly Kidd, these ladies turned and gazed at those who

thronged the stairs behind them in blank amazement, and the heart of

Xanthippe, had one chosen to gaze through that diaphanous person's

ribs, could have been seen to beat angrily.

Queen Elizabeth was so excited at this wholly novel attitude towards

her regal self that, having turned, she sat down plump upon the floor

in the most unroyal fashion.

"Well!" she ejaculated. "If this does not surpass everything! The

idea of it! Oh for one hour of my olden power, one hour of the axe,

one hour of the block!"

"Get up," retorted Cleopatra, "and let us all return to the billiard-

room and discuss this matter calmly. It is quite evident that

something has happened of which we wotted little when we came aboard

this craft."

"That is a good idea," said Calpurnia, retreating below. "I can see

through the window that we are in motion. The vessel has left her

moorings, and is making considerable headway down the stream, and the

distinctly masculine voices we have heard are indications to my mind

that the ship is manned, and that this is the result of design rather

than of accident. Let us below."

Elizabeth rose up and readjusted her ruff, which in the excitement of

the moment had been forced to assume a position about her forehead

which gave one the impression that its royal wearer had suddenly

donned a sombrero.

"Very well," she said. "Let us below; but oh, for the axe!"

"Bring the lady an axe," cried Xanthippe, sarcastically. "She wants

to cut somebody."

The sally was not greeted with applause. The situation was regarded

as being too serious to admit of humor, and in silence they filed

back into the billiard-room, and, arranging themselves in groups,

stood about anxiously discussing the situation.

"It's getting rougher every minute," sobbed Ophelia. "Look at those

pool-balls!" These were in very truth chasing each other about the

table in an extraordinary fashion. "And I wish I'd never followed

you horrid new creatures on board!" the poor girl added, in an agony

of despair.

"I believe we've crossed the bar already!" said Cleopatra, gazing out

of the window at a nasty choppy sea that was adding somewhat to the

disquietude of the fair gathering. "If this is merely a joke on the

part of the Associated Shades, it is a mighty poor one, and I think

it is time it should cease."

"Oh, for an axe!" moaned Elizabeth, again.

"Excuse me, your Majesty," put in Xanthippe. "You said that before,

and I must say it is getting tiresome. You couldn't do anything with

an axe. Suppose you had one. What earthly good would it do you, who

were accustomed to doing all your killing by proxy? I don't believe,

if you had the unmannerly person who slammed the door in your face

lying prostrate upon the billiard-table here, you could hit him a

square blow in the neck if you had a hundred axes. Delilah might as

well cry for her scissors, for all the good it would do us in our

predicament. If Cleopatra had her asp with her it might be more to

the purpose. One deadly little snake like that let loose on the

upper deck would doubtless drive these boors into the sea, and even

then our condition would not be bettered, for there isn't any of us

that can sail a boat. There isn't an old salt among us."

"Too bad Mrs. Lot isn't along," giggled Marguerite de Valois, whose

Gallic spirits were by no means overshadowed by the unhappy

predicament in which she found herself.

"I'm here," piped up Mrs. Lot. "But I'm not that kind of a salt."

"I am present," said Mrs. Noah. "Though why I ever came I don't

know, for I vowed the minute I set my foot on Ararat that dry land

was good enough for me, and that I'd never step aboard another boat

as long as I lived. If, however, now that I am here, I can give you

the benefit of my nautical experience, you are all perfectly welcome

to it."

"I'm sure we're very much obliged for the offer," said Portia, "but

in the emergency which has arisen we cannot say how much obliged we

are until we know what your experience amounted to. Before relying

upon you we ought to know how far that reliance can go--not that I

lack confidence in you, my dear madam, but that in an hour of peril

one must take care, to rely upon the oak, not upon the reed."

"The point is properly taken," said Elizabeth, "and I wish to say

here that I am easier in my mind when I realize that we have with us

so level-headed a person as the lady who has just spoken. She has

spoken truly and to the point. If I were to become queen again, I

should make her my attorney-general. We must not go ahead

impulsively, but look at all things in a calm, judicial manner."

"Which is pretty hard work with a sea like this on," remarked

Ophelia, faintly, for she was getting a trifle sallow, as indeed she

might, for the House-boat was beginning to roll tremendously with no

alleviation save an occasional pitch, which was an alleviation only

in the sense that it gave variety to their discomfort. "I don't

believe a chief-justice could look at things calmly and in a judicial

manner if he felt as I do."

"Poor dear!" said the matronly Mrs. Noah, sympathetically. "I know

exactly how you feel. I have been there myself. The fourth day out

I and my whole family were in the same condition, except that Noah,

my husband, was so very far gone that I could not afford to yield. I

nursed him for six days before he got his sea-legs on, and then

succumbed myself."

"But," gasped Ophelia, "that doesn't help me -

"It did my husband," said Mrs. Noah.

"When he heard that the boys were seasick too, he actually laughed

and began to get better right away. There is really only one cure

for the mal de mer, and that is the fun of knowing that somebody else

is suffering too. If some of you ladies would kindly yield to the

seductions of the sea, I think we could get this poor girl on her

feet in an instant."

Unfortunately for poor Ophelia, there was no immediate response to

this appeal, and the unhappy young woman was forced to suffer in

solitude.

"We have no time for untimely diversions of this sort," snapped

Xanthippe, with a scornful glance at the suffering Ophelia, who,

having retired to a comfortable lounge at an end of the room, was

evidently improving. "I have no sympathy with this habit some of my

sex seem to have acquired of succumbing to an immediate sensation of

this nature."

"I hope to be pardoned for interrupting," said Mrs. Noah, with a

great deal of firmness, "but I wish Mrs. Socrates to understand that

it is rather early in the voyage for her to lay down any such broad

principle as that, and for her own sake to-morrow, I think it would

be well if she withdrew the sentiment. There are certain things

about a sea-voyage that are more or less beyond the control of man or

woman, and any one who chides that poor suffering child on yonder

sofa ought to be more confident than Mrs. Socrates can possibly be

that within an hour she will not be as badly off. People who live in

glass houses should not throw dice."

"I shall never yield to anything so undignified as seasickness, let

me tell you that," retorted Xanthippe. "Furthermore, the proverb is

not as the lady has quoted it. 'People who live in glass houses

should not throw stones' is the proper version."

"I was not quoting," returned Mrs. Noah, calmly. "When I said that

people who live in glass houses should not throw dice, I meant

precisely what I said. People who live in glass houses should not

take chances. In assuming with such vainglorious positiveness that

she will not be seasick, the lady who has just spoken is giving

tremendous odds, as the boys used to say on the Ark when we gathered

about the table at night and began to make small wagers on the day's

run."

"I think we had better suspend this discussion," suggested Cleopatra.

"It is of no immediate interest to any one but Ophelia, and I fancy

she does not care to dwell upon it at any great length. It is more

important that we should decide upon our future course of action. In

the first place, the question is who these people up on deck are. If

they are the members of the club, we are all right. They will give

us our scare, and land us safely again at the pier. In that event it

is our womanly duty to manifest no concern, and to seem to be aware

of nothing unusual in the proceeding. It would never do to let them

think that their joke has been a good one. If, on the other hand, as

I fear, we are the victims of some horde of ruffians, who have

pounced upon us unawares, and are going into the business of

abduction on a wholesale basis, we must meet treachery with

treachery, strategy with strategy. I, for one, am perfectly willing

to make every man on board walk the plank; having confidence in the

seawomanship of Mrs. Noah and her ability to steer us into port."

"I am quite in accord with these views," put in Madame Recamier, "and

I move you, Mrs. President, that we organize a series of sub-

committees--one on treachery, with Lucretia Borgia and Delilah as

members; one on strategy, consisting of Portia and Queen Elizabeth;

one on navigation, headed by Mrs. Noah; with a final sub-committee on

reconnoitre, with Cassandra to look forward, and Mrs. Lot to look

aft--all of these subordinated to a central committee of safety

headed by Cleopatra and Calpurnia. The rest of us can then commit

ourselves and our interests unreservedly to these ladies, and proceed

to enjoy ourselves without thought of the morrow."

"I second the motion," said Ophelia, "with the amendment that Madame

Recamier be appointed chair-lady of another sub-committee, on

entertainment."

The amendment was accepted, and the motion put. It was carried with

an enthusiastic aye, and the organization was complete.

The various committees retired to the several corners of the room to

discuss their individual lines of action, when a shadow was observed

to obscure the moonlight which had been streaming in through the

window. The faces of Calpurnia and Cleopatra blanched for an

instant, as, immediately following upon this apparition, a large

bundle was hurled through the open port into the middle of the room,

and the shadow vanished.

"Is it a bomb?" cried several of the ladies at once.

"Nonsense!" said Madame Recamier, jumping lightly forward. "A man

doesn't mind blowing a woman up, but he'll never blow himself up.

We're safe enough in that respect. The thing looks to me like a

bundle of illustrated papers."

"That's what it is," said Cleopatra who had been investigating.

"It's rather a discourteous bit of courtesy, tossing them in through

the window that way, I think, but I presume they mean well. Dear

me," she added, as, having untied the bundle, she held one of the

open papers up before her, "how interesting! All the latest Paris

fashions. Humph! Look at those sleeves, Elizabeth. What an

impregnable fortress you would have been with those sleeves added to

your ruffs!"

"I should think they'd be very becoming," put in Cassandra, standing

on her tip-toes and looking over Cleopatra's shoulder. "That Watteau

isn't bad, either, is it, now?"

"No," remarked Calpurnia. "I wonder how a Watteau back like that

would go on my blue alpaca?"

"Very nicely," said Elizabeth. "How many gores has it?"

"Five," observed Calpurnia. "One more than Caesar's toga. We had to

have our costumes distinct in some way."

"A remarkable hat, that," nodded Mrs. Lot, her eye catching sight of

a Virot creation at the top of the page.

"Reminds me of Eve's description of an autumn scene in the garden,"

smiled Mrs. Noah. "Gorgeous in its foliage, beautiful thing; though

I shouldn't have dared wear one in the Ark, with all those hungry

animals browsing about the upper and lower decks."

"I wonder," remarked Cleopatra, as she cocked her head to one side to

take in the full effect of an attractive summer gown--"I wonder how

that waist would make up in blue crepon, with a yoke of lace and a

stylishly contrasting stock of satin ribbon?"

"It would depend upon how you finished the sleeves," remarked Madame

Recamier. "If you had a few puffs of rich brocaded satin set in with

deeply folded pleats it wouldn't be bad."

"I think it would be very effective," observed Mrs. Noah, "but a

trifle too light for general wear. I should want some kind of a wrap

with it."

"It does need that," assented Elizabeth. "A wrap made of

passementerie and jet, with a mousseline de soie ruche about the neck

held by a chou, would make it fascinating."

"The committee on treachery is ready to report," said Delilah, rising

from her corner, where she and Lucretia Borgia had been having so

animated a discussion that they had failed to observe the others

crowding about Cleopatra and the papers.

"A little sombre," said Cleopatra. "The corsage is effective, but I

don't like those basque terminations. I've never approved of those

full godets--"

"The committee on treachery," remarked Delilah again, raising her

voice, "has a suggestion to make."

"I can't get over those sleeves, though," laughed Helen of Troy.

"What is the use of them?"

"They might be used to get Greeks into Troy," suggested Madame

Recamier.

"The committee on treachery," roared Delilah, thoroughly angered by

the absorption of the chairman and others, "has a suggestion to make.

This is the third and last call."

"Oh, I beg pardon," cried Cleopatra, rapping for order. "I had

forgotten all about our committees. Excuse me, Delilah. I--ah--was

absorbed in other matters. Will you kindly lay your pattern--I

should say your plan--before us?"

"It is briefly this," said Delilah. "It has been suggested that we

invite the crew of this vessel to a chafing-dish party, under the

supervision of Lucretia Borgia, and that she--"

The balance of the plan was not outlined, for at this point the

speaker was interrupted by a loud knocking at the door, its instant

opening, and the appearance in the doorway of that ill-visaged

ruffian Captain Kidd.

"Ladies," he began, "I have come here to explain to you the situation

in which you find yourselves. Have I your permission to speak?"

The ladies started back, but the chairman was equal to the occasion.

"Go on," said Cleopatra, with queenly dignity, turning to the

interloper; and the pirate proceeded to take the second step in the

nefarious plan upon which he and his brother ruffians had agreed, of

which the tossing in through the window of the bundle of fashion

papers was the first.

CHAPTER VII: THE "GEHENNA" IS CHARTERED

It was about twenty-four hours after the events narrated in the

preceding chapters that Mr. Sherlock Holmes assumed command of the

Gehenna, which was nothing more nor less than the shadow of the ill-

starred ocean steamship City of Chicago, which tried some years ago

to reach Liverpool by taking the overland route through Ireland,

fortunately without detriment to her passengers and crew, who had the

pleasure of the experience of shipwreck without any of the

discomforts of drowning. As will be remembered, the obstructionist

nature of the Irish soil prevented the City of Chicago from

proceeding farther inland than was necessary to keep her well

balanced amidships upon a convenient and not too stony bed; and that

after a brief sojourn on the rocks she was finally disposed of to the

Styx Navigation Company, under which title Charon had had himself

incorporated, is a matter of nautical history. The change of name to

the Gehenna was the act of Charon himself, and was prompted, no

doubt, by a desire to soften the jealous prejudices of the residents

of the Stygian capital against the flourishing and ever-growing

metropolis of Illinois.

The Associated Shades had had some trouble in getting this craft.

Charon, through his constant association with life on both sides of

the dark river, had gained a knowledge, more or less intimate, of

modern business methods, and while as janitor of the club he was

subject to the will of the House-boat Committee, and sympathized

deeply with the members of the association in their trouble, as

president of the Styx Navigation Company he was bound up in certain

newly attained commercial ideas which were embarrassing to those

members of the association to whose hands the chartering of a vessel

had been committed.

"See here, Charon," Sir Walter Raleigh had said, after Charon had

expressed himself as deeply sympathetic, but unable to shave the

terms upon which the vessel could be had, "you are an infernal old

hypocrite. You go about wringing your hands over our misfortunes

until they've got as dry and flabby as a pair of kid gloves, and yet

when we ask you for a ship of suitable size and speed to go out after

those pirates, you become a sort of twin brother to Shylock, without

his excuse. His instincts are accidents of birth. Yours are

cultivated, and you know it."

"You are very much mistaken, Sir Walter," Charon had answered to

this. "You don't understand my position. It is a very hard one. As

janitor of your club I am really prostrated over the events of the

past twenty-four hours. My occupation is gone, and my despair over

your loss is correspondingly greater, for I have time on my hands to

brood over it. I was hysterical as a woman yesterday afternoon--so

hysterical that I came near upsetting one of the Furies who engaged

me to row her down to Madame Medusa's villa last evening; and right

at the sluice of the vitriol reservoir at that."

"Then why the deuce don't you do something to help us?" pleaded

Hamlet.

"How can I do any more than I have done? I've offered you the

Gehenna," retorted Charon.

"But on what terms?" expostulated Raleigh. "If we had all the wealth

of the Indies we'd have difficulty in paying you the sums you

demand."

"But I am only president of the company," explained Charon. "I'd

like, as president, to show you some courtesy, and I'm perfectly

willing to do so; but when it comes down to giving you a vessel like

that, I'm bound by my official oath to consider the interest of the

stockholders. It isn't as it used to be when I had boats to hire in

my own behalf alone. In those days I had nobody's interest but my

own to look after. Now the ships all belong to the Styx Navigation

Company. Can't you see the difference?"

"You own all the stock, don't you?" insisted Raleigh.

"I don't know," Charon answered, blandly. "I haven't seen the

transfer-books lately.''

"But you know that you did own every share of it, and that you

haven't sold any, don't you?" put in Hamlet.

Charon was puzzled for a moment, but shortly his face cleared, and

Sir Walter's heart sank, for it was evident that the old fellow could

not be cornered.

"Well, it's this way, Sir Walter, and your Highness," he said, "I--I

can't say whether any of that stock has been transferred or not. The

fact is, I've been speculating a little on margin, and I've put up

that stock as security, and, for all I know, I may have been sold out

by my brokers. I've been so upset by this unfortunate occurrence

that I haven't seen the market reports for two days. Really you'll

have to be content with my offer or go without the Gehenna. There's

too much suspicion attached to high corporate officials lately for me

to yield a jot in the position I have taken. It would never do to

get you all ready to start, and then have an injunction clapped on

you by some unforeseen stockholder who was not satisfied with the

terms offered you; nor can I ever let it be said of me that to retain

my position as janitor of your organization I sacrificed a trust

committed to my charge. I'll gladly lend you my private launch,

though I don't think it will aid you much, because the naphtha-tank

has exploded, and the screw slipped off and went to the bottom two

weeks ago. Still, it is at your service, and I've no doubt that

either Phidias or Benvenuto Cellini will carve out a paddle for you

if you ask him to."

"Bah!" retorted Raleigh. "You might as well offer us a pair of

skates."

"I would, if I thought the river'd freeze," retorted Charon, blandly.

Raleigh and Hamlet turned away impatiently and left Charon to his own

devices, which for the time being consisted largely of winking his

other eye quietly and outwardly making a great show of grief.

"He's too canny for us, I am afraid," said Sir Walter. "We'll have

to pay him his money."

"Let us first consult Sherlock Holmes," suggested Hamlet, and this

they proceeded at once to do.

"There is but one thing to be done," observed the astute detective

after he had heard Sir Walter's statement of the case. "It is an old

saying that one should fight fire with fire. We must meet modern

business methods with modern commercial ideas. Charter his vessel at

his own price."

"But we'd never be able to pay," said Hamlet.

"Ha-ha!" laughed Holmes. "It is evident that you know nothing of the

laws of trade nowadays. Don't pay!"

"But how can we?" asked Raleigh.

"The method is simple. You haven't anything to pay with," returned

Holmes. "Let him sue. Suppose he gets a verdict. You haven't

anything he can attach--if you have, make it over to your wives or

your fiancees"

"Is that honest?" asked Hamlet, shaking his head doubtfully.

"It's business," said Holmes.

"But suppose he wants an advance payment?" queried Hamlet.

"Give him a check drawn to his own order. He'll have to endorse it

when he deposits it, and that will make him responsible," laughed

Holmes.

"What a simple thing when you understand it!" commented Raleigh.

"Very," said Holmes. "Business is getting by slow degrees to be an

exact science. It reminds me of the Brighton mystery, in which I

played a modest part some ten years ago, when I first took up

ferreting as a profession. I was sitting one night in my room at one

of the Brighton hotels, which shall be nameless. I never give the

name of any of the hotels at which I stop, because it might give

offence to the proprietors of other hotels, with the result that my

books would be excluded from sale therein. Suffice it to say that I

was spending an early summer Sunday at Brighton with my friend

Watson. We had dined well, and were enjoying our evening smoke

together upon a small balcony overlooking the water, when there came

a timid knock on the door of my room.

"'Watson,' said I, 'here comes some one for advice. Do you wish to

wager a small bottle upon it?'

"'Yes,' he answered, with a smile. 'I am thirsty and I'd like a

small bottle; and while I do not expect to win, I'll take the bet. I

should like to know, though, how you know.'

"'It is quite simple,' said I. 'The timidity of the knock shows that

my visitor is one of two classes of persons--an autograph-hunter or a

client, one of the two. You see I give you a chance to win. It may

be an autograph-hunter, but I think it is a client. If it were a

creditor, he would knock boldly, even ostentatiously; if it were the

maid, she would not knock at all; if it were the hall-boy, he would

not come until I had rung five times for him. None of these things

has occurred; the knock is the half-hearted knock which betokens

either that the person who knocked is in trouble, or is uncertain as

to his reception. I am willing, however, considering the heat and my

desire to quench my thirst, to wager that it is a client.'

"'Done,' said Watson; and I immediately remarked, 'Come in.'

"The door opened, and a man of about thirty-five years of age, in a

bathing-suit, entered the room, and I saw at a glance what had

happened.

"'Your name is Burgess,' I said. 'You came here from London this

morning, expecting to return to-night. You brought no luggage with

you. After luncheon you went bathing. You had machine No. 35, and

when you came out of the water you found that No. 35 had disappeared,

with your clothes and the silver watch your uncle gave you on the day

you succeeded to his business.'

"Of course, gentlemen," observed the detective, with a smile at Sir

Walter and Hamlet--"of course the man fairly gasped, and I continued:

'You have been lying face downward in the sand ever since, waiting

for nightfall, so that you could come to me for assistance, not

considering it good form to make an afternoon call upon a stranger at

his hotel, clad in a bathing-suit. Am I correct?'

"'Sir,' he replied, with a look of wonder, 'you have narrated my

story exactly as it happened, and I find I have made no mistake in

coming to you. Would you mind telling me what is your course of

reasoning?'

"'It is plain as day,' said I. 'I am the person with the red beard

with whom you came down third class from London this morning, and you

told me your name was Burgess and that you were a butcher. When you

looked to see the time, I remarked upon the oddness of your watch,

which led to your telling me that it was the gift of your uncle.'

"'True,' said Burgess, 'but I did not tell you I had no luggage.'

"'No,' said I, 'but that you hadn't is plain; for if you had brought

any other clothing besides that you had on with you, you would have

put it on to come here. That you have been robbed I deduce also from

your costume.'

"'But the number of the machine?' asked Watson.

"'Is on the tag on the key hanging about his neck,' said I.

"'One more question,' queried Burgess. 'How do you know I have been

lying face downward on the beach ever since?'

"'By the sand in your eyebrows,' I replied; and Watson ordered up the

small bottle."

"I fail to see what it was in our conversation, however," observed

Hamlet, somewhat impatient over the delay caused by the narration of

this tale, "that suggested this train of thought to you."

"The sequel will show," returned Holmes.

"Oh, Lord!" put in Raleigh. "Can't we put off the sequel until a

later issue? Remember, Mr. Holmes, that we are constantly losing

time."

"The sequel is brief, and I can narrate it on our way to the office

of the Navigation Company," observed the detective. "When the bottle

came I invited Mr. Burgess to join us, which he did, and as the hour

was late when we came to separate, I offered him the use of my parlor

overnight. This he accepted, and we retired.

"The next morning when I arose to dress, the mystery was cleared."

"You had dreamed its solution?" asked Raleigh.

"No," replied Holmes. "Burgess had disappeared with all my clothing,

my false-beard, my suit-case, and my watch. The only thing he had

left me was the bathing-suit and a few empty small bottles."

"And why, may I ask," put in Hamlet, as they drew near to Charon's

office--"why does that case remind you of business as it is conducted

to-day?"

"In this, that it is a good thing to stay out of unless you know it

all," explained Holmes. "I omitted in the case of Burgess to observe

one thing about him. Had I observed that his nose was rectilinear,

incurved, and with a lifted base, and that his auricular temporal

angle was between 96 and 97 degrees, I should have known at once that

he was an impostor Vide Ottolenghui on 'Ears and Noses I Have Met,'

pp. 631-640."

"Do you mean to say that you can tell a criminal by his ears?"

demanded Hamlet.

"If he has any--yes; but I did not know that at the time of the

Brighton mystery. Therefore I should have stayed out of the case.

But here we are. Good-morning, Charon."

By this time the trio had entered the private office of the president

of the Styx Navigation Company, and in a few moments the vessel was

chartered at a fabulous price.

On the return to the wharf, Sir Walter somewhat nervously asked

Holmes if he thought the plan they had settled upon would work.

"Charon is a very shrewd old fellow," said he. "He may outwit us

yet."

"The chances are just two and one-eighth degrees in your favor,"

observed Holmes, quietly, with a glance at Raleigh's ears. "The

temporal angle of your ears is 93.125 degrees, whereas Charon's stand

out at 91, by my otometer. To that extent your criminal instincts

are superior to his. If criminology is an exact science, reasoning

by your respective ears, you ought to beat him out by a perceptible

though possibly narrow margin."

With which assurance Raleigh went ahead with his preparations, and

within twelve hours the Gehenna was under way, carrying a full

complement of crew and officers, with every state-room on board

occupied by some spirit of the more illustrious kind.

Even Shylock was on board, though no one knew it, for in the dead of

night he had stolen quietly up the gang-plank and had hidden himself

in an empty water-cask in the forecastle.

"'Tisn't Venice," he said, as he sat down and breathed heavily

through the bung of the barrel, "but it's musty and damp enough, and,

considering the cost, I can't complain. You can't get something for

nothing, even in Hades."

CHAPTER VIII: ON BOARD THE "GEHENNA"

When the Gehenna had passed down the Styx and out through the

beautiful Cimmerian Harbor into the broad waters of the ocean, and

everything was comparatively safe for a while at least, Sherlock

Holmes came down from the bridge, where he had taken his place as the

commander of the expedition at the moment of departure. His brow was

furrowed with anxiety, and through his massive forehead his brain

could be seen to be throbbing violently, and the corrugations of his

gray matter were not pleasant to witness as he tried vainly to

squeeze an idea out of them.

"What is the matter?" asked Demosthenes, anxiously. "We are not in

any danger, are we?"

"No," replied Holmes. "But I am somewhat puzzled at the bubbles on

the surface of the ocean, and the ripples which we passed over an

hour or two ago, barely perceptible through the most powerful

microscope, indicate to my mind that for some reason at present

unknown to me the House-boat has changed her course. Take that

bubble floating by. It is the last expiring bit of aerial agitation

of the House-boat's wake. Observe whence it comes. Not from the

Azores quarter, but as if instead of steering a straight course

thither the House-boat had taken a sharp turn to the north-east, and

was making for Havre; or, in other words, Paris instead of London

seems to have become their destination."

Demosthenes looked at Holmes with blank amazement, and, to keep from

stammering out the exclamation of wonder that rose to his lips, he

opened his bonbonniere and swallowed a pebble.

"You don't happen to have a cocaine tablet in your box, do you?"

queried Holmes.

"No," returned the Greek. "Cocaine makes me flighty and nervous, but

these pebbles sort of ballast me and hold me down. How on earth do

you know that that bubble comes from the wake of the House-boat?"

"By my chemical knowledge, merely," replied Holmes. "A merely

worldly vessel leaves a phosphorescent bubble in its wake. That one

we have just discovered is not so, but sulphurescent, if I may coin a

word which it seems to me the English language is very much in need

of. It proves, then, that the bubble is a portion of the wake of a

Stygian craft, and the only Stygian craft that has cleared the

Cimmerian Harbor for years is the House-boat--Q. E. D."

"We can go back until we find the ripple again, and follow that, I

presume," sneered Le Coq, who did not take much stock in the theories

of his great rival, largely because he was a detective by intuition

rather than by study of the science.

"You can if you want to, but it is better not to," rejoined Holmes,

simply, as though not observing the sneer, "because the ripple

represents the outer lines of the angle of disturbance in the water;

and as any one of the sides to an angle is greater than the

perpendicular from the hypothenuse to the apex, you'd merely be going

the long way. This is especially important when you consider the

formation of the bow of the House-boat, which is rounded like the

stern of most vessels, and comes near to making a pair of ripples at

an angle of ninety degrees."

"Then," observed Sir Walter, with a sigh of disappointment, "we must

change our course and sail for Paris?"

"I am afraid so," said Holmes; "but of course it's by no means

certain as yet. I think if Columbus would go up into the mizzentop

and look about him, he might discover something either in

confirmation or refutation of the theory."

"He couldn't discover anything," put in Pinzon. "He never did."

"Well, I like that!" retorted Columbus. "I'd like to know who

discovered America."

"So should I," observed Leif Ericson, with a wink at Vespucci.

"Tut!" retorted Columbus. "I did it, and the world knows it, whether

you claim it or not."

"Yes, just as Noah discovered Ararat," replied Pinzon. "You sat upon

the deck until we ran plumb into an island, after floating about for

three months, and then you couldn't tell it from a continent, even

when you had it right before your eyes. Noah might just as well have

told his family that he discovered a roof garden as for you to go

back to Spain telling 'em all that San Salvador was the United

States."

"Well, I don't care," said Columbus, with a short laugh. "I'm the

one they celebrate, so what's the odds? I'd rather stay down here in

the smoking-room enjoying a small game, anyhow, than climb up that

mast and strain my eyes for ten or a dozen hours looking for evidence

to prove or disprove the correctness of another man's theory. I

wouldn't know evidence when I saw it, anyhow. Send Judge

Blackstone."

"I draw the line at the mizzentop," observed Blackstone. "The

dignity of the bench must and shall be preserved, and I'll never

consent to climb up that rigging, getting pitch and paint on my

ermine, no matter who asks me to go."

"Whomsoever I tell to go, shall go," put in Holmes, firmly. "I am

commander of this ship. It will pay you to remember that, Judge

Blackstone."

"And I am the Court of Appeals," retorted Blackstone, hotly. "Bear

that in mind, captain, when you try to send me up. I'll issue a writ

of habeas corpus on my own body, and commit you for contempt."

"There's no use of sending the Judge, anyhow," said Raleigh, fearing

by the glitter that came into the eye of the commander that trouble

might ensue unless pacificatory measures were resorted to. "He's

accustomed to weighing everything carefully, and cannot be rushed

into a decision. If he saw any evidence, he'd have to sit on it a

week before reaching a conclusion. What we need here more than

anything else is an expert seaman, a lookout, and I nominate Shem.

He has sailed under his father, and I have it on good authority that

he is a nautical expert."

Holmes hesitated for an instant. He was considering the necessity of

disciplining the recalcitrant Blackstone, but he finally yielded.

"Very well," he said. "Shem be it. Bo'sun, pipe Shem on deck, and

tell him that general order number one requires him to report at the

mizzentop right away, and that immediately he sees anything he shall

come below and make it known to me. As for the rest of us, having a

very considerable appetite, I do now decree that it is dinner-time.

Shall we go below?"

"I don't think I care for any, thank you," said Raleigh. "Fact is--

ah--I dined last week, and am not hungry."

Noah laughed. "Oh, come below and watch us eat, then," he said.

"It'll do you good."

But there was no reply. Raleigh had plunged head first into his

state-room, which fortunately happened to be on the upper deck. The

rest of the spirits repaired below to the saloon, where they were

soon engaged in an animated discussion of such viands as the larder

provided.

"This," said Dr. Johnson, from the head of the table, "is what I call

comfort. I don't know that I am so anxious to recover the House-

boat, after all."

"Nor I," said Socrates, "with a ship like this to go off cruising on,

and with such a larder. Look at the thickness of that puree, Doctor-

-"

"Excuse me," said Boswell, faintly, "but I--I've left my note--bub--

book upstairs, Doctor, and I'd like to go up and get it."

"Certainly," said Dr. Johnson. "I judge from your color, which is

highly suggestive of a modern magazine poster, that it might be well

too if you stayed on deck for a little while and made a few entries

in your commonplace book."

"Thank you," said Boswell, gratefully. "Shall you say anything

clever during dinner, sir? If so, I might be putting it down while

I'm up--"

"Get out!" roared the Doctor. "Get up as high as you can--get up

with Shem on the mizzentop--"

"Very good, sir," replied Boswell, and he was off.

"You ought to be more lenient with him, Doctor," said Bonaparte; "he

means well."

"I know it," observed Johnson; "but he's so very previous. Last

winter, at Chaucer's dinner to Burns, I made a speech, which Boswell

printed a week before it was delivered, with the words 'laughter' and

'uproarious applause' interspersed through it. It placed me in a

false position."

"How did he know what you were going to say?" queried Demosthenes.

"Don't know," replied Johnson. "Kind of mind-reader, I fancy," he

added, blushing a trifle. "But, Captain Holmes, what do you deduce

from your observation of the wake of the House-boat? If she's going

to Paris, why the change?"

"I have two theories," replied the detective.

"Which is always safe," said Le Coq.

"Always; it doubles your chances of success," acquiesced Holmes.

"Anyhow, it gives you a choice, which makes it more interesting. The

change of her course from Londonward to Parisward proves to me either

that Kidd is not satisfied with the extent of the revenge he has

already taken, and wishes to ruin you gentlemen financially by

turning your wives, daughters, and sisters loose on the Parisian

shops, or that the pirates have themselves been overthrown by the

ladies, who have decided to prolong their cruise and get some fun out

of their misfortune."

"And where else than to Paris would any one in search of pleasure

go?" asked Bonaparte.

"I had more fun a few miles outside of Brussels," said Wellington,

with a sly wink at Washington.

"Oh, let up on that!" retorted Bonaparte. "It wasn't you beat me at

Waterloo. You couldn't have beaten me at a plain ordinary game of

old-maid with a stacked pack of cards, much less in the game of war,

if you hadn't had the elements with you."

"Tut!" snapped Wellington. "It was clear science laid you out,

Boney."

"Taisey-voo!" shouted the irate Corsican. "Clear science be hanged!

Wet science was what did it. If it hadn't been for the rain, my

little Duke, I should have been in London within a week, my

grenadiers would have been camping in your Rue Peekadeely, and the

Old Guard all over everywhere else."

"You must have had a gay army, then," laughed Caesar. "What are

French soldiers made of, that they can't stand the wet--unshrunk

linen or flannel?"

"Bah!" observed Napoleon, shrugging his shoulders and walking a few

paces away. "You do not understand the French. The Frenchman is not

a pell-mell soldier like you Romans; he is the poet of arms; he does

not go in for glory at the expense of his dignity; style, form, is

dearer to him than honor, and he has no use for fighting in the wet

and coming out of the fight conspicuous as a victor with the curl out

of his feathers and his epaulets rusted with the damp. There is no

glory in water. But if we had had umbrellas and mackintoshes, as

every Englishman who comes to the Continent always has, and a bath-

tub for everybody, then would your Waterloo have been different

again, and the great democracy of Europe with a Bonaparte for emperor

would have been founded for what the Americans call the keeps; and as

for your little Great Britain, ha! she would have become the

Blackwell's Island of the Greater France."

"You're almost as funny as Punch isn't," drawled Wellington, with an

angry gesture at Bonaparte. "You weren't within telephoning distance

of victory all day. We simply played with you, my boy. It was a

regular game of golf for us. We let you keep up pretty close and win

a few holes, but on the home drive we had you beaten in one stroke.

Go to, my dear Bonaparte, and stop talking about the flood."

"It's a lucky thing for us that Noah wasn't a Frenchman, eh?" said

Frederick the Great. "How that rain would have fazed him if he had

been! The human race would have been wiped out."

"Oh, pshaw!" ejaculated Noah, deprecating the unseemliness of the

quarrel, and putting his arm affectionately about Bonaparte's

shoulder. "When you come down to that, I was French--as French as

one could be in those days--and these Gallic subjects of my friend

here were, every one of 'em, my lineal descendants, and their hatred

of rain was inherited directly from me, their ancestor."

"Are not we English as much your descendants?" queried Wellington,

arching his eyebrows.

"You are," said Noah, "but you take after Mrs. Noah more than after

me. Water never fazes a woman, and your delight in tubs is an

essentially feminine trait. The first thing Mrs. Noah carried aboard

was a laundry outfit, and then she went back for rugs and coats and

all sorts of hand-baggage. Gad, it makes me laugh to this day when I

think of it! She looked for all the world like an Englishman

travelling on the Continent as she walked up the gang-plank behind

the elephants, each elephant with a Gladstone bag in his trunk and a

hat-box tied to his tail." Here the venerable old weather-prophet

winked at Munchausen, and the little quarrel which had been imminent

passed off in a general laugh.

"Where's Boswell? He ought to get that anecdote," said Johnson.

"I've locked him up in the library," said Holmes. "He's in charge of

the log, and as I have a pretty good general idea as to what is about

to happen, I have mapped out a skeleton of the plot and set him to

work writing it up." Here the detective gave a sudden start, placed

his hand to his ear, listened intently for an instant, and, taking

out his watch and glancing at it, added, quietly, "In three minutes

Shem will be in here to announce a discovery, and one of great

importance, I judge, from the squeak."

The assemblage gazed earnestly at Holmes for a moment.

"The squeak?" queried Raleigh.

"Precisely," said Holmes. "The squeak is what I said, and as I

always say what I mean, it follows logically that I meant what I

said."

"I heard no squeak," observed Dr. Johnson; "and, furthermore, I fail

to see how a squeak, if I had heard it, would have portended a

discovery of importance."

"It would not--to you," said Holmes; "but with me it is different.

My hearing is unusually acute. I can hear the dropping of a pin

through a stone wall ten feet thick; any sound within a mile of my

eardrum vibrates thereon with an intensity which would surprise you,

and it is by the use of cocaine that I have acquired this wonderfully

acute sense. A property which dulls the senses of most people

renders mine doubly apprehensive; therefore, gentlemen, while to you

there was no auricular disturbance, to me there was. I heard Shem

sliding down the mast a minute since. The fact that he slid down the

mast instead of climbing down the rigging showed that he was in great

haste, therefore he must have something to communicate of great

importance."

"Why isn't he here already, then? It wouldn't take him two minutes

to get from the deck here," asked the ever-auspicious Le Coq.

"It is simple," returned Holmes, calmly. "If you will go yourself

and slide down that mast you will see. Shem has stopped for a little

witch-hazel to soothe his burns. It is no cool matter sliding down a

mast two hundred feet in height."

As Sherlock Holmes spoke the door burst open and Shem rushed in.

"A signal of distress, captain!" he cried.

"From what quarter--to larboard?" asked Holmes.

"No," returned Shem, breathless.

"Then it must be dead ahead," said Holmes.

"Why not to starboard?" asked Le Coq, dryly.

"Because," answered Holmes, confidently, "it never happens so. If

you had ever read a truly exciting sea-tale, my dear Le Coq, you

would have known that interesting things, and particularly signals of

distress, are never seen except to larboard or dead ahead."

A murmur of applause greeted this retort, and Le Coq subsided.

"The nature of the signal?" demanded Holmes.

"A black flag, skull and cross-bones down, at half-mast!" cried Shem,

"and on a rock-bound coast!"

"They're marooned, by heavens!" shouted Holmes, springing to his feet

and rushing to the deck, where he was joined immediately by Sir

Walter, Dr. Johnson, Bonaparte, and the others.

"Isn't he a daisy?" whispered Demosthenes to Diogenes as they climbed

the stairs.

"He is more than that; he's a blooming orchid," said Diogenes, with

intense enthusiasm. "I think I'll get my X-ray lantern and see if

he's honest."

CHAPTER IX: CAPTAIN KIDD MEETS WITH AN OBSTACLE

"Excuse me, your Majesty," remarked Helen of Troy as Cleopatra

accorded permission to Captain Kidd to speak, "I have not been

introduced to this gentleman nor has he been presented to me, and I

really cannot consent to any proceeding so irregular as this. I do

not speak to gentlemen I have not met, nor do I permit them to

address me."

"Hear, hear!" cried Xanthippe. "I quite agree with the principle of

my young friend from Troy. It may be that when we claimed for

ourselves all the rights of men that the right to speak and be spoken

to by other men without an introduction will included in the list,

but I for one have no desire to avail myself of the privilege,

especially when it's a horrid-looking man like this."

Kidd bowed politely, and smiled so terribly that several of the

ladies fainted.

"I will withdraw," he said, turning to Cleopatra; and it must be said

that his suggestion was prompted by his heartfelt wish, for now that

he found himself thus conspicuously brought before so many women,

with falsehood on his lips, his courage began to ooze.

"Not yet, please," answered the chairlady. "I imagine we can get

about this difficulty without much trouble."

"I think it a perfectly proper objection too," observed Delilah,

rising. "If we ever needed etiquette we need it now. But I have a

plan which will obviate any further difficulty. If there is no one

among us who is sufficiently well acquainted with the gentleman to

present him formally to us, I will for the time being take upon

myself the office of ship's barber and cut his hair. I understand

that it is quite the proper thing for barbers to talk, while cutting

their hair, to persons to whom they have not been introduced. And,

besides, he really needs a hair-cut badly. Thus I shall establish an

acquaintance with the captain, after which I can with propriety

introduce him to the rest of you."

"Perhaps the gentleman himself might object to that," put in Queen

Elizabeth. "If I remember rightly, your last customer was very much

dissatisfied with the trim you gave him."

"It will be unnecessary to do what Delilah proposes," said Mrs. Noah,

with a kindly smile, as she rose up from the corner in which she had

been sitting, an interested listener. "I can introduce the gentleman

to you all with perfect propriety. He's a member of my family. His

grandfather was the great-grandson a thousand and eight times removed

of my son Shem's great-grandnephew on his father's side. His

relationship to me is therefore obvious, though from what I know of

his reputation I think he takes more after my husband's ancestors

than my own. Willie, dear, these ladies are friends of mine.

Ladies, this young man is one of my most famous descendants. He has

been a man of many adventures, and he has been hanged once, which,

far from making him undesirable as an acquaintance, has served merely

to render him harmless, and therefore a safe person to know. Now, my

son, go ahead and speak your piece."

The good old spirit sat down, and the scruples of the objectors

having thus been satisfied, Captain Kidd began.

"Now that I know you all," he remarked, as pleasantly as he could

under the circumstances, "I feel that I can speak more freely, and

certainly with a great deal less embarrassment than if I were

addressing a gathering of entire strangers. I am not much of a hand

at speaking, and have always felt somewhat nonplussed at finding

myself in a position of this nature. In my whole career I never

experienced but one irresistible impulse to make a public address of

any length, and that was upon that unhappy occasion to which the

greatest and grandest of my great-grandmothers has alluded, and that

only as the chain by which I was suspended in mid-air tightened about

my vocal chords. At that moment I could have talked impromptu for a

year, so fast and numerously did thoughts of the uttermost import

surge upward into my brain; but circumstances over which I had no

control prevented the utterance of those thoughts, and that speech is

therefore lost to the world."

"He has the gift of continuity," observed Madame Recamier.

"Ought to be in the United States Senate," smiled Elizabeth.

"I wish I could make up my mind as to whether he is outrageously

handsome or desperately ugly," remarked Helen of Troy. "He

fascinates me, but whether it is the fascination of liking or of

horror I can't tell, and it's quite important."

"Ladies," resumed the captain, his uneasiness increasing as he came

to the point, "I am but the agent of your respective husbands,

fiances, and other masculine guardians. The gentlemen who were

previously the tenants of this club-house have delegated to me the

important, and I may add highly agreeable, task of showing you the

world. They have noted of late years the growth of that feeling of

unrest which is becoming every day more and more conspicuous in

feminine circles in all parts of the universe--on the earth, where

women are clamoring to vote, and to be allowed to go out late at

night without an escort, in Hades, where, as you are no doubt aware,

the management of the government has fallen almost wholly into the

hands of the Furies; and even in the halls of Jupiter himself, where,

I am credibly informed, Juno has been taking private lessons in the

art of hurling thunderbolts--information which the extraordinary

quality of recent electrical storms on the earth would seem to

confirm. Thunderbolts of late years have been cast hither and yon in

a most erratic fashion, striking where they were least expected, as

those of you who keep in touch with the outer world must be fully

aware. Now, actuated by their usual broad and liberal motives, the

men of Hades wish to meet the views of you ladies to just that extent

that your views are based upon a wise selection, in turn based upon

experience, and they have come to me and in so many words have said,

'Mr. Kidd, we wish the women of Hades to see the world. We want them

to be satisfied. We do not like this constantly increasing spirit of

unrest. We, who have seen all the life that we care to see, do not

ourselves feel equal to the task of showing them about. We will pay

you liberally if you will take our House-boat, which they have always

been anxious to enter, and personally conduct our beloved ones to

Paris, London, and elsewhere. Let them see as much of life as they

can stand. Accord them every privilege. Spare no expense; only

bring them back again to us safe and sound.' These were their words,

ladies. I asked them why they didn't come along themselves, saying

that even if they were tired of it all, they should make some

personal sacrifice to your comfort; and they answered, reasonably and

well, that they would be only too glad to do so, but that they feared

they might unconsciously seem to exert a repressing influence upon

you. 'We want them to feel absolutely free, Captain Kidd,' said

they, 'and if we are along they may not feel so.' The answer was

convincing, ladies, and I accepted the commission."

"But we knew nothing of all this," interposed Elizabeth. "The

subject was not broached to us by our husbands, brothers, fiances, or

fathers. My brother, Sir Walter Raleigh--"

Cleopatra chuckled. "Brother! Brother's good," she said.

"Well, that's what he is," retorted Elizabeth, quickly. "I promised

to be a sister to him, and I'm going to keep my word. That's the

kind of a queen I am. I was about to remark," Elizabeth added,

turning to the captain, "that my brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, never

even hinted at any such plan, and usually he asked my advice in

matters of so great importance."

"That is easily accounted for, madame," retorted Kidd. "Sir Walter

intended this as a little surprise for you, that is all. The

arrangements were all placed in his hands, and it was he who bound us

all to secrecy. None of the ladies were to be informed of it."

"It does not sound altogether plausible," interposed Portia. "If you

ladies do not object, I should like to cross-examine this--ah--

gentleman."

Kidd paled visibly. He was not prepared for any such trial; however,

he put as good a face on the matter as he could, and announced his

willingness to answer any questions that he might be asked.

"Shall we put him under oath?" asked Cleopatra.

"As you please, ladies," said the pirate. "A pirate's word is as

good as his bond; but I'll take an oath if you choose--a half-dozen

of 'em, if need be."

"I fancy we can get along without that," said Portia. "Now, Captain

Kidd, who first proposed this plan?"

"Socrates," said Kidd, unblushingly with a sly glance at Xanthippe.

"What?" cried Xanthippe. "My husband propose anything that would

contribute to my pleasure or intellectual advancement? Bah! Your

story is transparently false at the outset."

"Nevertheless," said Kidd, "the scheme was proposed by Socrates. He

said a trip of that kind for Xanthippe would be very restful and

health-giving."

"For me?" cried Xanthippe, sceptically.

"No, madame, for him," retorted Kidd.

"Ah--ho-ho! That's the way of it, eh?" said Xanthippe, flushing to

the roots of her hair. "Very likely. You--ah--you will excuse my

doubting your word, Captain Kidd, a moment since. I withdraw my

remark, and in order to make fullest reparation, I beg to assure

these ladies that I am now perfectly convinced that you are telling

the truth. That last observation is just like my husband, and when I

get back home again, if I ever do, well--ha, ha!--we'll have a merry

time, that's all."

"And what was--ah--Bassanio's connection with this affair?" added

Portia, hesitatingly.

"He was not informed of it," said Kidd, archly. "I am not acquainted

with Bassanio, my lady, but I overheard Sir Walter enjoining upon the

others the absolute necessity of keeping the whole affair from

Bassanio, because he was afraid he would not consent to it.

'Bassanio has a most beautiful wife, gentlemen,' said Sir Walter,

'and he wouldn't think of parting with her under any circumstances;

therefore let us keep our intentions a secret from him.' I did not

hear whom the gentleman married, madame; but the others, Prince

Hamlet, the Duke of Buckingham, and Louis the Fourteenth, all agreed

that Mrs. Bassanio was too beautiful a person to be separated from,

and that it was better, therefore, to keep Bassanio in the dark as to

their little enterprise until it was too late for him to interfere."

A pink glow of pleasure suffused the lovely countenance of the cross-

examiner, and it did not require a very sharp eye to see that the

wily Kidd had completely won her over to his side. On the other

hand, Elizabeth's brow became as corrugated as her ruff, and the

spirit of the pirate shivered to the core as he turned and gazed upon

that glowering face.

"Sir Walter agreed to that, did he?" snapped Elizabeth. "And yet he

was willing to part with--ah--his sister."

"Well, your Majesty," began Kidd, hesitatingly, "you see it was this

way: Sir Walter--er--did say that, but--ah--he--ah--but he added

that he of course merely judged--er--this man Bassanio's feelings by

his own in parting from his sister--"

"Did he say sister?" cried Elizabeth.

"Well--no--not in those words," shuffled Kidd, perceiving quickly

wherein his error lay, "but--ah--I jumped at the conclusion, seeing

his intense enthusiasm for the lady's beauty and--er--intellectual

qualities, that he referred to you, and it is from yourself that I

have gained my knowledge as to the fraternal, not to say sororal,

relationship that exists between you."

"That man's a diplomat from Diplomaville!" muttered Sir Henry Morgan,

who, with Abeuchapeta and Conrad, was listening at the port without.

"He is that," said Abeuchapeta, "but he can't last much longer. He's

perspiring like a pitcher of ice-water on a hot day, and a spirit of

his size and volatile nature can't stand much of that without

evaporating. If you will observe him closely you will see that his

left arm already has vanished into thin air."

"By Jove!" whispered Conrad, "that's a fact! If they don't let up on

him he'll vanish. He's getting excessively tenuous about the top of

his head."

All of which was only too true. Subjected to a scrutiny which he had

little expected, the deceitful ambassador of the thieving band was

rapidly dissipating, and, as those without had so fearsomely noted,

was in imminent danger of complete sublimation, which, in the case of

one possessed of so little elementary purity, meant nothing short of

annihilation. Fortunately for Kidd, however, his wonderful tact had

stemmed the tide of suspicion. Elizabeth was satisfied with his

explanation, and in the minds of at least three of the most

influential ladies on board, Portia, Xanthippe, and Elizabeth, he had

become a creature worthy of credence, which meant that he had nothing

more to fear.

"I am prepared, your Majesty," said Elizabeth, addressing Cleopatra,

"to accept from this time on the gentleman's word. The little that

he has already told us is hall-marked with truth. I should like to

ask, however, one more question, and that is how our gentleman

friends expected to embark us upon this voyage without letting us

into the secret?"

"Oh, as for that," replied Kidd, with a deep-drawn sigh of relief,

for he too had noticed the gradual evaporation of his arm and the

incipient etherization of his cranium--"as for that, it was simple

enough. There was to have been a day set apart for ladies' day at

the club, and when you were all on board we were quietly to weigh

anchor and start. The fact that you had anticipated the day, of your

own volition, was telephoned by my scouts to me at my headquarters,

and that news was by me transmitted by messenger to Sir Walter at

Charon's Glen Island, where the long-talked-of fight between Samson

and Goliath was taking place. Raleigh immediately replied, 'Good!

Start at once. Paris first. Unlimited credit. Love to Elizabeth.'

Wherefore, ladies," he added, rising from his chair and walking to

the door--"wherefore you are here and in my care. Make yourselves

comfortable, and with the aid of the fashion papers which you have

already received prepare yourselves for the joys that await you.

With the aid of Madame Recamier and Baedeker's Paris, which you will

find in the library, it will be your own fault if when you arrive

there you resemble a great many less fortunate women who don't know

what they want."

With these words Kidd disappeared through the door, and fainted in

the arms of Sir Henry Morgan. The strain upon him had been too

great.

"A charming fellow," said Portia, as the pirate disappeared.

"Most attractive," said Elizabeth.

"Handsome, too, don't you think?" asked Helen of Troy.

"And truthful beyond peradventure," observed Xanthippe, as she

reflected upon the words the captain had attributed to Socrates. "I

didn't believe him at first, but when he told me what my sweet-

tempered philosopher had said, I was convinced."

"He's a sweet child," interposed Mrs. Noah, fondly. "One of my

favorite grandchildren."

"Which makes it embarrassing for me to say," cried Cassandra,

starting up angrily, "that he is a base caitiff!"

Had a bomb been dropped in the middle of the room, it could not have

created a greater sensation than the words of Cassandra.

"What?" cried several voices at once. "A caitiff?"

"A caitiff with a capital K," retorted Cassandra. "I know that,

because while he was telling his story I was listening to it with one

ear and looking forward into the middle of next week with the other--

I mean the other eye--and I saw--"

"Yes, you saw?" cried Cleopatra.

"I saw that he was deceiving us. Mark my words, ladies, he is a base

caitiff," replied Cassandra--"a base caitiff."

"What did you see?" cried Elizabeth, excitedly.

"This," said Cassandra, and she began a narration of future events

which I must defer to the next chapter. Meanwhile his associates

were endeavoring to restore the evaporated portions of the prostrated

Kidd's spirit anatomy by the use of a steam-atomizer, but with

indifferent success. Kidd's training had not fitted him for an

intellectual combat with superior women, and he suffered accordingly.

CHAPTER X: A WARNING ACCEPTED

"It is with no desire to interrupt my friend Cassandra

unnecessarily," said Mrs. Noah, as the prophetess was about to

narrate her story, "that I rise to beg her to remember that, as an

ancestress of Captain Kidd, I hope she will spare a grandmother's

feelings, if anything in the story she is about to tell is improper

to be placed before the young. I have been so shocked by the stories

of perfidy and baseness generally that have been published of late

years, that I would interpose a protest while there is yet time if

there is a line in Cassandra's story which ought to be withheld from

the public; a protest based upon my affection for posterity, and in

the interests of morality everywhere."

"You may rest easy upon that score, my dear Mrs. Noah," said the

prophetess. "What I have to say would commend itself, I am sure,

even to the ears of a British matron; and while it is as complete a

demonstration of man's perfidy as ever was, it is none the less as

harmless a little tale as the Dottie Dimple books or any other more

recent study of New England character."

"Thank you for the load your words have lifted from my mind," said

Mrs. Noah, settling back in her chair, a satisfied expression upon

her gentle countenance. "I hope you will understand why I spoke, and

withal why modern literature generally has been so distressful to me.

When you reflect that the world is satisfied that most of man's

criminal instincts are the result of heredity, and that Mr. Noah and

I are unable to shift the responsibility for posterity to other

shoulders than our own, you will understand my position. We were

about the most domestic old couple that ever lived, and when we see

the long and varied assortment of crimes that are cropping out

everywhere in our descendants it is painful to us to realize what a

pair of unconsciously wicked old fogies we must have been."

"We all understand that," said Cleopatra, kindly; "and we are all

prepared to acquit you of any responsibility for the advanced

condition of wickedness to-day. Man has progressed since your time,

my dear grandma, and the modern improvements in the science of crime

are no more attributable to you than the invention of the telephone

or the oyster cocktail is attributable to your husband."

"Thank you kindly," murmured the old lady, and she resumed her

knitting upon a phantom tam-o'-shanter, which she was making as a

Christmas surprise for her husband.

"When Captain Kidd began his story," said Cassandra, "he made one

very bad mistake, and yet one which was prompted by that courtesy

which all men instinctively adopt when addressing women. When he

entered the room he removed his hat, and therein lay his fatal error,

if he wished to convince me of the truth of his story, for with his

hat removed I could see the workings of his mind. While you ladies

were watching his lips or his eyes, some of you taking in the

gorgeous details of his dress, all of you hanging upon his every

word, I kept my eye fixed firmly upon his imagination, and I saw,

what you did not, THAT HE WAS DRAWING WHOLLY UPON THAT!"

"How extraordinary!" cried Elizabeth.

"Yes--and fortunate," said Cassandra. "Had I not done so, a week

hence we should, every one of us, have been lost in the surging

wickedness of the city of Paris."

"But, Cassandra," said Trilby, who was anxious to return once more to

the beautiful city by the Seine, "he told us we were going to Paris."

"Of course he did," said Madame Recamier, "and in so many words.

Certainly he was not drawing upon his imagination there."

"And one might be lost in a very much worse place," put in Marguerite

de Valois, "if, indeed, it were possible to lose us in Paris at all.

I fancy that I know enough about Paris to find my way about."

"Humph!" ejaculated Cassandra. "What a foolish little thing you are!

You don't imagine that the Paris of to-day is the Paris of your time,

or even the Paris of that sweet child Trilby's time, do you? If you

do you are very much mistaken. I almost wish I had not warned you of

your danger and had let you go, just to see those eyes of yours open

with amazement at the change. You'd find your Louvre a very

different sort of a place from what it used to be, my dear lady.

Those pleasing little windows through which your relations were wont

in olden times to indulge in target practice at people who didn't go

to their church are now kept closed; the galleries which used to

swarm with people, many of whom ought to have been hanged, now swarm

with pictures, many of which ought not to have been hung; the romance

which clung about its walls is as much a part of the dead past as

yourselves, and were you to materialize suddenly therein you would

find yourselves jostled and hustled and trodden upon by the curious

from other lands, with Argus eyes taking in five hundred pictures a

minute, and traversing those halls at a rate of speed at which

Mercury himself would stand aghast."

"But my beloved Tuileries?" cried Marie Antoinette.

"Has been swallowed up by a play-ground for the people, my dear,"

said Cassandra, gently. "Paris is no place for us, and it is the

intention of these men, in whose hands we are, to take us there and

then desert us. Can you imagine anything worse than ourselves, the

phantoms of a glorious romantic past, basely deserted in the streets

of a wholly strange, superficial, material city of to-day? What do

you think, Elizabeth, would be your fate if, faint and famished, you

begged for sustenance at an English door to-day, and when asked your

name and profession were to reply, 'Elizabeth, Queen of England'?"

"Insane asylum," said Elizabeth, shortly.

"Precisely. So in Paris with the rest of us," said Cassandra.

"How do you know all this?" asked Trilby, still unconvinced.

"I know it just as you knew how to become a prima donna," said

Cassandra. "I am, however, my own Svengali, which is rather

preferable to the patent detachable hypnotizer you had. I hypnotize

myself, and direct my mind into the future. I was a professional

forecaster in the days of ancient Troy, and if my revelations had

been heeded the Priam family would, I doubt not, still be doing

business at the old stand, and Mr. AEneas would not have grown round-

shouldered giving his poor father a picky-back ride on the opening

night of the horse-show, so graphically depicted by Virgil."

"I never heard about that," said Trilby. "It sounds like a very

funny story, though."

"Well, it wasn't so humorous for some as it was for others," said

Cassandra, with a sly glance at Helen. "The fact is, until you

mentioned it yourself, it never occurred to me that there was much

fun in any portion of the Trojan incident, excepting perhaps the

delirium tremens of old Laocoon, who got no more than he deserved for

stealing my thunder. I had warned Troy against the Greeks, and they

all laughed at me, and said my eye to the future was strabismatic;

that the Greeks couldn't get into Troy at all, even if they wanted

to. And then the Greeks made a great wooden horse as a gift for the

Trojans, and when I turned my X-ray gaze upon it I saw that it

contained about six brigades of infantry, three artillery regiments,

and sharp-shooters by the score. It was a sort of military Noah's

Ark; but I knew that the prejudice against me was so strong that

nobody would believe what I told them. So I said nothing. My

prophecies never came true, they said, failing to observe that my

warning as to what would be was in itself the cause of their non-

fulfilment. But desiring to save Troy, I sent for Laocoon and told

him all about it, and he went out and announced it as his own private

prophecy; and then, having tried to drown his conscience in strong

waters, he fell a victim to the usual serpentine hallucination, and

everybody said he wasn't sober, and therefore unworthy of belief.

The horse was accepted, hauled into the city, and that night orders

came from hindquarters to the regiments concealed inside to march.

They marched, and next morning Troy had been removed from the map;

ninety per cent of the Trojans died suddenly, and AEneas, grabbing up

his family in one hand and his gods in the other, went yachting for

several seasons, ultimately settling down in Italy. All of this

could have been avoided if the Trojans would have taken the hint from

my prophecies. They preferred, however, not to do it, with the

result that to-day no one but Helen and myself knows even where Troy

was, and we'll never tell."

"It is all true," said Helen, proudly. "I was the woman who was at

the bottom of it all, and I can testify that Cassandra always told

the truth, which is why she was always so unpopular. When anything

that was unpleasant happened, after it was all over she would turn

and say, sweetly, 'I told you so.' She was the original 'I told you

so' nuisance, and of course she had the newspapyruses down on her,

because she never left them any sensation to spring upon the public.

If she had only told a fib once in a while, the public would have had

more confidence in her."

"Thank you for your endorsement," said Cassandra, with a nod at

Helen. "With such testimony I cannot see how you can refrain from

taking my advice in this matter; and I tell you, ladies, that this

man Kidd has made his story up out of whole cloth; the men of Hades

had no more to do with our being here than we had; they were as much

surprised as we are to find us gone. Kidd himself was not aware of

our presence, and his object in taking us to Paris is to leave us

stranded there, disembodied spirits, vagrant souls with no familiar

haunts to haunt, no place to rest, and nothing before us save

perpetual exile in a world that would have no sympathy for us in our

misfortune, and no belief in our continued existence."

"But what, then, shall we do?" cried Ophelia, wringing her hands in

despair.

"It is a terrible problem," said Cleopatra, anxiously; "and yet it

does seem as if our woman's instinct ought to show us some way out of

our trouble."

"The Committee on Treachery," said Delilah, "has already suggested a

chafing-dish party, with Lucretia Borgia in charge of the lobster

Newberg."

"That is true," said Lucretia; "but I find, in going through my

reticule, that my maid, for some reason unknown to me, has failed to

renew my supply of poisons. I shall discharge her on my return home,

for she knows that I never go anywhere without them; but that does

not help matters at this juncture. The sad fact remains that I could

prepare a thousand delicacies for these pirates without fatal

results."

"You mean immediately fatal, do you not?" suggested Xanthippe. "I

could myself prepare a cake which would in time reduce our captors to

a state of absolute dependence, but of course the effect is not

immediate."

"We might give a musicale, and let Trilby sing 'Ben Bolt' to them,"

suggested Marguerite de Valois, with a giggle.

"Don't be flippant, please," said Portia. "We haven't time to waste

on flippant suggestions. Perhaps a court-martial of these pirates,

supplemented by a yard-arm, wouldn't be a bad thing. I'll prosecute

the case."

"You forget that you are dealing with immortal spirits," observed

Cleopatra. "If these creatures were mortals, hanging them would be

all right, and comparatively easy, considering that we outnumber them

ten to one, and have many resources for getting them, more or less,

in our power, but they are not. They have gone through the refining

process of dissolution once, and there's an end to that. Our only

resource is in the line of deception, and if we cannot deceive them,

then we have ceased to be women."

"That is truly said," observed Elizabeth. "And inasmuch as we have

already provided ourselves with a suitable committee for the

preparation of our plans of a deceptive nature, I move, as the

easiest possible solution of the difficulty for the rest of us, that

the Committee on Treachery be requested to go at once into executive

session, with orders not to come out of it until they have suggested

a plausible plan of campaign against our abductors. We must be rid

of them. Let the Committee on Treachery say how."

"Second the motion," said Mrs. Noah. "You are a very clear-headed

young woman, Lizzie, and your grandmother is proud of you."

The Committee on Treachery were about to protest, but the chair

refused to entertain any debate upon the question, which was put and

carried with a storm of approval.

Five minutes later a note was handed through the port, addressed to

Cleopatra, which read as follows:

"Dear Madame,--Six bells has just struck, and the officers and crew

are hungry. Will you and your fair companions co-operate with us in

our enterprise by having a hearty dinner ready within two hours? A

speck has appeared on the horizon which betokens a coming storm, else

we would prepare our supper ourselves. As it is, we feel that your

safety depends on our remaining on deck. If there is any beer on the

ice, we prefer it to tea. Two cases will suffice.

"Yours respectfully,

"HENRY MORGAN, Bart.; First Mate."

"Hurrah!" cried Cleopatra, as she read this communication. "I have

an idea. Tell the Committee on Treachery to appear before the full

meeting at once."

The committee was summoned, and Cleopatra announced her plan of

operation, and it was unanimously adopted; but what it was we shall

have to wait for another chapter to learn.

CHAPTER XI: MAROONED

When Captain Holmes arrived upon deck he seized his glass, and,

gazing intently through it for a moment, perceived that the faithful

Shem had not deceived him. Flying at half-mast from a rude, roughly

hewn pole set upon a rocky height was the black flag, emblem of

piracy, and, as Artemus Ward put it, "with the second joints

reversed." It was in very truth a signal of distress.

"I make it a point never to be surprised," observed Holmes, as he

peered through the glass, "but this beats me. I didn't know there

was an island of this nature in these latitudes. Blackstone, go

below and pipe Captain Cook on deck. Perhaps he knows what island

that is."

"You'll have to excuse me, Captain Holmes," replied the Judge. "I

didn't ship on this voyage as a cabin-boy or a messenger-boy.

Therefore I--"

"Bonaparte, put the Judge in irons," interrupted Holmes, sternly. "I

expect to be obeyed, Judge Blackstone, whether you shipped as a Lord

Chief-Justice or a state-room steward. When I issue an order it must

be obeyed. Step lively there, Bonaparte. Get his honor ironed and

summon your marines. We may have work to do before night. Hamlet,

pipe Captain Cook on deck."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Hamlet, with alacrity, as he made off.

"That's the way to obey orders," said Holmes, with a scornful glance

at Blackstone.

"I was only jesting, Captain," said the latter, paling somewhat.

"That's all right," said Holmes, taking up his glass again. "So was

I when I ordered you in irons, and in order that you may appreciate

the full force of the joke I repeat it. Bonaparte, do your duty."

In an instant the order was obeyed, and the unhappy Judge shortly

found himself manacled and alone in the forecastle. Meanwhile

Captain Cook, in response to the commander's order, repaired to the

deck and scanned the distant coast.

"I can't place it," he said. "It can't be Monte Cristo, can it?"

"No, it can't," said the Count, who stood hard by. "My island was in

the Mediterranean, and even if it dragged anchor it couldn't have got

out through the Strait of Gibraltar."

"Perhaps it's Robinson Crusoe's island," suggested Doctor Johnson.

"Not it," observed De Foe. "If it is, the rest of you will please

keep off. It's mine, and I may want to use it again. I've been

having a number of interviews with Crusoe latterly, and he's given me

a lot of new points, which I intend incorporating in a sequel for the

Cimmerian Magazine."

"Well, in the name of Atlas, what island is it, then?" roared Holmes,

angrily. "What is the matter with all you learned lubbers that I

have brought along on this trip? Do you suppose I've brought you to

whistle up favorable winds? Not by the beard of the Prophet! I

brought you to give me information, and now when I ask for the name

of a simple little island like that in plain sight there's not one of

you able so much as to guess at it reasonably. The next man I ask

for information goes into irons with Judge Blackstone if he doesn't

answer me instantly with the information I want. Munchausen, what

island is that?"

"Ahem! that?" replied Munchausen, trembling, as he reflected upon the

Captain's threat. "What? Nobody knows what island that is? Why,

you surprise me -

"See here, Baron," retorted Holmes, menacingly, "I ask you a plain

question, and I want a plain answer, with no evasions to gain time.

Now it's irons or an answer. What island is that?"

"It's an island that doesn't appear on any chart, Captain,"

Munchausen responded instantly, pulling himself together for a mighty

effort, "and it has never been given a name; but as you insist upon

having one, we'll call it Holmes Island, in your honor. It is not

stationary. It is a floating island of lava formation, and is a

menace to every craft that goes to sea. I spent a year of my life

upon it once, and it is more barren than the desert of Sahara,

because you cannot raise even sand upon it, and it is devoid of water

of any sort, salt or fresh."

"What did you live on during that year?" asked Holmes, eying him

narrowly.

"Canned food from wrecks," replied the Baron, feeling much easier now

that he had got a fair start--"canned food from wrecks, commander.

There is a magnetic property in the upper stratum of this piece of

derelict real estate, sir, which attracts to it every bit of canned

substance that is lost overboard in all parts of the world. A ship

is wrecked, say, in the Pacific Ocean, and ultimately all the loose

metal upon her will succumb to the irresistible attraction of this

magnetic upper stratum, and will find its way to its shores. So in

any other part of the earth. Everything metallic turns up here

sooner or later; and when you consider that thousands of vessels go

down every year, vessels which are provisioned with tinned foods

only, you will begin to comprehend how many millions of pounds of

preserved salmon, sardines, pate de foie gras, peaches, and so on,

can be found strewn along its coast."

"Munchausen," said Holmes, smiling, "by the blush upon your cheek,

coupled with an occasional uneasy glance of the eye, I know that for

once you are standing upon the, to you, unfamiliar ground of truth,

and I admire you for it. There is nothing to be ashamed of in

telling the truth occasionally. You are a man after my own heart.

Come below and have a cocktail. Captain Cook, take command of the

Gehenna during my absence; head her straight for Holmes Island, and

when you discover anything new let me know. Bonaparte, in honor of

Munchausen's remarkable genius, I proclaim general amnesty to our

prisoners, and you may release Blackstone from his dilemma; and if

you have any tin soldiers among your marines, see that they are

lashed to the rigging. I don't want this electric island of the

Baron's to get a grip upon my military force at this juncture."

With this Holmes, followed by Munchausen, went below, and the two

worthies were soon deep in the mysteries of a phantom cocktail, while

Doctor Johnson and De Foe gazed mournfully out over the ocean at the

floating island.

"De Foe," said Johnson "that ought to be a lesson to you. This

realism that you tie up to is all right when you are alone with your

conscience; but when there are great things afoot, an imagination and

a broad view as to the limitations of truth aren't at all bad. You

or I might now be drinking that cocktail with Holmes if we'd only

risen to the opportunity the way Munchausen did."

"That is true," said De Foe, sadly. "But I didn't suppose he wanted

that kind of information. I could have spun a better yarn than that

of Munchausen's with my eyes shut. I supposed he wanted truth, and I

gave it."

"I'd like to know what has become of the House-boat," said Raleigh,

anxiously gazing through the glass at the island. "I can see old

Henry Morgan sitting down there on the rocks with his elbows on his

knees and his chin in his hands, and Kidd and Abeuchapeta are

standing back of him, yelling like mad, but there isn't a boat in

sight."

"Who is that man, off to the right, dancing a fandango?" asked

Johnson.

"It looks like Conrad, but I can't tell. He appears to have gone

crazy. He's got that wild look on his face which betokens insanity.

We'll have to be careful in our parleyings with these people," said

Raleigh.

"Anything new?" asked Holmes, returning to the deck, smacking his

lips in enjoyment of the cocktail.

"No--except that we are almost within hailing distance," said Cook.

"Then give orders to cast anchor," observed Holmes. "Bonaparte, take

a crew of picked men ashore and bring those pirates aboard. Take the

three musketeers with you, and don't let Kidd or Morgan give you any

back talk. If they try any funny business, exorcise them."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Bonaparte, and in a moment a boat had been

lowered and a sturdy crew of sailors were pulling for the shore. As

they came within ten feet of it the pirates made a mad dash down the

rough, rocky hillside and clamored to be saved.

"What's happened to you?" cried Bonaparte, ordering the sailors to

back water lest the pirates should too hastily board the boat and

swamp her.

"We are marooned," replied Kidd, "and on an island of a volcanic

nature. There isn't a square inch of it that isn't heated up to 125

degrees, and seventeen of us have already evaporated. Conrad has

lost his reason; Abeuchapeta has become so tenuous that a child can

see through him. As for myself, I am growing iridescent with

anxiety, and unless I get off this infernal furnace I'll disappear

like a soap-bubble. For Heaven's sake, then, General, take us off,

on your own terms. We'll accept anything."

As if in confirmation of Kidd's words, six of the pirate crew

collapsed and disappeared into thin air, and a glance at Abeuchapeta

was proof enough of his condition. He had become as clear as

crystal, and had it not been for his rugged outlines he would hardly

have been visible even to his fellow-spirits. As for Kidd, he had

taken on the aspect of a rainbow, and it was patent that his fears

for himself were all too well founded.

Bonaparte embarked the leaders of the band first, returning

subsequently for the others, and repaired with them at once to the

Gehenna, where they were ushered into the presence of Sherlock

Holmes. The first question he asked was as to the whereabouts of the

House-boat.

"That we do not know," replied Kidd, mournfully, gazing downward at

the wreck of his former self. "We came ashore, sir, early yesterday

morning, in search of food. It appears that when--acting in a wholly

inexcusable fashion, and influenced, I confess it, by motives of

revenge--I made off with your club-house, I neglected to ascertain if

it were well stocked with provisions, a fatal error; for when we

endeavored to get supper we discovered that the larder contained but

half a bottle of farcie olives, two salted almonds, and a soda

cracker--not a luxurious feast for sixty-nine pirates and a hundred

and eighty-three women to sit down to."

"That's all nonsense," said Demosthenes. "The House Committee had

provided enough supper for six hundred people, in anticipation of the

appetite of the members on their return from the fight."

"Of course they did," said Confucius; "and it was a good one, too--

salads, salmon glace, lobsters--every blessed thing a man can't get

at home we had; and what is more, they'd been delivered on board. I

saw to that before I went up the river."

"Then," moaned Kidd, "it is as I suspected. We were the victims of

base treachery on the part of those women."

"Treachery? Well, I like that. Call it reciprocity," said Hamlet,

dryly.

"We were informed by the ladies that there was nothing for supper

save the items I have already referred to," said Kidd. "I see it all

now. We had tried to make them comfortable, and I put myself to some

considerable personal inconvenience to make them easy in their minds,

but they were ungrateful."

"Whatever induced you to take 'em along with you?" asked Socrates.

"We didn't want them," said Kidd.

"We didn't know they were on board until it was too late to turn

back. They'd broken in, and were having the club all to themselves

in your absence."

"It served you good and right," said Socrates, with a laugh. "Next

time you try to take things that don't belong to you, maybe you'll be

a trifle more careful as to whose property you confiscate."

"But the House-boat--you haven't told us how you lost her," put in

Raleigh, impatiently.

"Well, it was this way," said Kidd. "When, in response to our polite

request for supper, the ladies said there was nothing to eat on

board, something had to be done, for we were all as hungry as bears,

and we decided to go ashore at the first port and provision.

Unfortunately the crew got restive, and when this floating frying-pan

loomed into view, to keep them good-natured we decided to land and

see if we could beg, borrow, or steal some supplies. We had to.

Observations taken with the sextant showed that there was no port

within five hundred miles; the island looked as if it might be

inhabited at least by goats, and ashore we went, every man of us,

leaving the House-boat safely anchored in the harbor. At first we

didn't mind the heat, and we hunted and hunted and hunted; but after

three or four hours I began to notice that three of my sailors were

shrivelling up, and Conrad began to act as if he were daft. Hawkins

burst right before my eyes. Then Abeuchapeta got prismatic around

the eyes and began to fade, and I noticed a slight iridescence about

myself; and as for Morgan, he had the misfortune to lie down to take

a nap in the sun, and when he waked up, his whole right side had

evaporated. Then we saw what the trouble was. We'd struck this lava

island, and were gradually succumbing to its intense heat. We rushed

madly back to the harbor to embark; and our ship, gentlemen, and your

House-boat, was slowly but surely disappearing over the horizon, and

flying from the flag-staff at the fore were signals of farewell, with

an unfeeling P.S. below to this effect: 'DON'T WAIT UP FOR US. WE

MAY NOT BE BACK UNTIL LATE.'"

There was a pause, during which Socrates laughed quietly to himself,

while Abeuchapeta and the one-sided Morgan wept silently.

"That, gentlemen of the Associated Shades, is all I know of the

whereabouts of the House-boat," continued Captain Kidd. "I have no

doubt that the ladies practised a deception, to our discomfiture, and

I must say that I think it was exceedingly clever--granting that it

was desirable to be rid of us, which I don't, for we meant well by

them, and they would have enjoyed themselves."

"But," cried Hamlet, "may they not now be in peril? They cannot

navigate that ship."

"They got her out of the harbor all right," said Kidd. "And I judged

from the figure at the helm that Mrs. Noah had taken charge. What

kind of a seaman she is I don't know."

"Almighty bad," ejaculated Shem, turning pale. "It was she who ran

us ashore on Ararat."

"Well, wasn't that what you wanted?" queried Munchausen.

"What we wanted!" cried Shem. "Well, I guess not. You don't want

your yacht stranded on a mountain-top, do you? She was a dead loss

there, whereas if mother hadn't been in such a hurry to get ashore,

we could have waited a month and landed on the seaboard."

"You might have turned her into a summer hotel," suggested

Munchausen.

"Well, we must up anchor and away," said Holmes. "Our pursuit has

merely begun, apparently. We must overtake this vessel, and the

question to be answered is--where?"

"That's easy," said Artemus Ward. "From what Shem says, I think we'd

better look for her in the Himalayas."

"And, meanwhile, what shall be done with Kidd?" asked Holmes.

"He ought to be expelled from the club," said Johnson.

"We can't expel him, because he's not a member," replied Raleigh.

"Then elect him," suggested Ward.

"What on earth for?" growled Johnson.

"So that we can expel him," said Ward. And while Boswell's hero was

trying to get the value of this notion through his head, the others

repaired to the deck, and the Gehenna was soon under way once more.

Meanwhile Captain Kidd and his fellows were put in irons and stowed

away in the forecastle, alongside of the water-cask in which Shylock

lay in hiding.

CHAPTER XII: THE ESCAPE AND THE END

If there was anxiety on board of the Gehenna as to the condition and

whereabouts of the House-boat, there was by no means less uneasiness

upon that vessel itself. Cleopatra's scheme for ridding herself and

her abducted sisters of the pirates had worked to a charm, but,

having worked thus, a new and hitherto undreamed-of problem, full of

perplexities bearing upon their immediate safety, now confronted

them. The sole representative of a seafaring family on board was

Mrs. Noah, and it did not require much time to see that her knowledge

as to navigation was of an extremely primitive order, limited indeed

to the science of floating.

When the last pirate had disappeared behind the rocks of Holmes

Island, and all was in readiness for action, the good old lady, who

had hitherto been as calm and unruffled as a child, began to get red

in the face and to bustle about in a manner which betrayed

considerable perturbation of spirit.

"Now, Mrs. Noah," said Cleopatra, as, peeping out from the billiard-

room window, she saw Morgan disappearing in the distance, "the coast

is clear, and I resign my position of chairman to you. We place the

vessel in your hands, and ourselves subject to your orders. You are

in command. What do you wish us to do?"

"Very well," replied Mrs. Noah, putting down her knitting and

starting for the deck. "I'm not certain, but I think the first thing

to do is to get her moving. Do you know, I've never discovered

whether this boat was a steamboat or a sailing-vessel? Does anybody

know?"

"I think it has a naphtha tank and a propeller," said Elizabeth,

"although I don't know. It seems to me my brother Raleigh told me

they'd had a naphtha engine put in last winter after the freshet,

when the House-boat was carried ten miles down the river, and had to

be towed back at enormous expense. They put it in so that if she

were carried away again she could get back of her own power."

"That's unfortunate," said Mrs. Noah, "because I don't know anything

about these new fangled notions. If there's any one here who knows

anything about naphtha engines, I wish they'd speak."

"I'm of the opinion," said Portia, "that I can study out the theory

of it in a short while."

"Very well, then," said Mrs. Noah, "you can do it. I'll appoint you

engineer, and give you all your orders now, right away, in advance.

Set her going and keep her going, and don't stop without a written

order signed by me. We might as well be very careful, and have

everything done properly, and it might happen that in the excitement

of our trip you would misunderstand my spoken orders and make a fatal

error. Therefore, pay no attention to unwritten orders. That will

do for you for the present. Xanthippe, you may take Ophelia and

Madame Recamier, and ten other ladies, and, every morning before

breakfast, swab the larboard deck. Cassandra, Tuesdays you will

devote to polishing the brasses in the dining-room, and the balance

of your time I wish you to expend in dusting the bric-a-brac. Dido,

you always were strong at building fires. I'll make you chief

stoker. You will also assist Lucretia Borgia in the kitchen.

Inasmuch as the latter's maid has neglected to supply her with the

usual line of poisons, I think we can safely entrust to Lucretia's

hands the responsibilities of the culinary department."

"I'm perfectly willing to do anything I can," said Lucretia, "but I

must confess that I don't approve of your methods of commanding a

ship. A ship's captain isn't a domestic martinet, as you are setting

out to be. We didn't appoint you housekeeper."

"Now, my child," said Mrs. Noah, firmly, "I do not wish any words.

If I hear any more impudence from you, I'll put you ashore without a

reference; and the rest of you I would warn in all kindness that I

will not tolerate insubordination. You may, all of you, have one

night of the week and alternate Sundays off, but your work must be

done. The regimen I am adopting is precisely that in vogue on the

Ark, only I didn't have the help I have now, and things got into very

bad shape. We were out forty days, and, while the food was poor and

the service execrable, we never lost a life."

The boat gave a slight tremor.

"Hurrah!" cried Elizabeth, clapping her hands with glee, "we are

off!"

"I will repair to the deck and get our bearings," said Mrs. Noah,

putting her shawl over her shoulders. "Meantime, Cleopatra, I

appoint you first mate. See that things are tidied up a bit here

before I return. Have the windows washed, and to-morrow I want all

the rugs and carpets taken up and shaken."

Portia meanwhile had discovered the naphtha engine, and, after

experimenting several times with the various levers and stop-cocks,

had finally managed to move one of them in such a way as to set the

engine going, and the wheel began to revolve.

"Are we going all right?" she cried, from below.

"I am afraid not," said the gallant commander. "The wheel is roiling

up the water at a great rate, but we don't seem to be going ahead

very fast--in fact, we're simply moving round and round as though we

were on a pivot."

"I'm afraid we're aground amidships," said Xanthippe, gazing over the

side of the House-boat anxiously. "She certainly acts that way--like

a merry-go-round."

"Well, there's something wrong," said Mrs. Noah; "and we've got to

hurry and find out what it is, or those men will be back and we shall

be as badly off as ever."

"Maybe this has something to do with it," observed Mrs. Lot, pointing

to the anchor rope. "It looks to me as if those horrid men had tied

us fast."

"That's just what it is," snapped Mrs. Noah. "They guessed our plan,

and have fastened us to a pole or something, but I imagine we can

untie it."

Portia, who had come on deck, gave a short little laugh.

"Why, of course we don't move," she said--"we are anchored!"

"What's that?" queried Mrs. Noah. "We never had an experience like

that on the Ark."

Portia explained the science of the anchor.

"What nonsense!" ejaculated Mrs. Noah. "How can we get away from

it?"

"We've got to pull it up," said Portia. "Order all hands on deck and

have it pulled up."

"It can't be done, and, if it could, I wouldn't have it!" said Mrs.

Noah, indignantly. "The idea! Lifting heavy pieces of iron, my dear

Portia, is not a woman's work. Send for Delilah, and let her cut the

rope with her scissors."

"It would take her a week to cut a hawser like that," said Elizabeth,

who had been investigating. "It would be more to the purpose, I

think, to chop it in two with an axe."

"Very well," replied Mrs. Noah, satisfied. "I don't care how it is

done as long as it is done quickly. It would never do for us to be

recaptured now."

The suggestion of Elizabeth was carried out, and the queen herself

cut the hawser with six well-directed strokes of the axe.

"You ARE an expert with it, aren't you?" smiled Cleopatra.

"I am, indeed," replied Elizabeth, grimly. "I had it suspended over

my head for so long a time before I got to the throne that I couldn't

help familiarizing myself with some of its possibilities."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Noah, as the vessel began to move. "I begin to feel

easier. It looks now as if we were really off."

"It seems to me, though," said Cleopatra, gazing forward, "that we

are going backward."

"Oh, well, what if we are!" said Mrs. Noah. "We did that on the Ark

half the time. It doesn't make any difference which way we are going

as long as we go, does it?"

"Why, of course it does!" cried Elizabeth. "What can you be thinking

of? People who walk backward are in great danger of running into

other people. Why not the same with ships? It seems to me, it's a

very dangerous piece of business, sailing backward."

"Oh, nonsense," snapped Mrs. Noah. "You are as timid as a zebra.

During the Flood, we sailed days and days and days, going backward.

It didn't make a particle of difference how we went--it was as safe

one way as another, and we got just as far away in the end. Our main

object now is to get away from the pirates, and that's what we are

doing. Don't get emotional, Lizzie, and remember, too, that I am in

charge. If I think the boat ought to go sideways, sideways she shall

go. If you don't like it, it is still not too late to put you

ashore."

The threat calmed Elizabeth somewhat, and she was satisfied, and all

went well with them, even if Portia had started the propeller

revolving reverse fashion; so that the House-boat was, as Elizabeth

had said, backing her way through the ocean.

The day passed, and by slow degrees the island and the marooned

pirates faded from view, and the night came on, and with it a dense

fog.

"We're going to have a nasty night, I am afraid," said Xanthippe,

looking anxiously out of the port.

"No doubt," said Mrs. Noah, pleasantly. "I'm sorry for those who

have to be out in it."

"That's what I was thinking about," observed Xanthippe. "It's going

to be very hard on us keeping watch."

"Watch for what?" demanded Mrs. Noah, looking over the tops of her

glasses at Xanthippe.

"Why, surely you are going to have lookouts stationed on deck?" said

Elizabeth.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Noah. "Perfectly absurd. We never did it on

the Ark, and it isn't necessary now. I want you all to go to bed at

ten o'clock. I don't think the night air is good for you. Besides,

it isn't proper for a woman to be out after dark, whether she's new

or not."

"But, my dear Mrs. Noah," expostulated Cleopatra, "what will become

of the ship?"

"I guess she'll float through the night whether we are on deck or

not," said the commander. "The Ark did, why not this? Now, girls,

these new-fangled yachting notions are all nonsense. It's night, and

there's a fog as thick as a stone-wall all about us. If there were a

hundred of you upon deck with ten eyes apiece, you couldn't see

anything. You might much better be in bed. As your captain,

chaperon, and grandmother, I command you to stay below."

"But--who is to steer?" queried Xanthippe.

"What's the use of steering until we can see where to steer to?"

demanded Mrs. Noah. "I certainly don't intend to bother with that

tiller until some reason for doing it arises. We haven't any place

to steer to yet; we don't know where we are going. Now, my dear

children, be reasonable, and don't worry me. I've had a very hard

day of it, and I feel my responsibilities keenly. Just let me

manage, and we'll come out all right. I've had more experience than

any of you, and if--"

A terrible crash interrupted the old lady's remarks. The House-boat

shivered and shook, careened way to one side, and as quickly righted

and stood still. A mad rush up the gangway followed, and in a moment

a hundred and eighty-three pale-faced, trembling women stood upon the

deck, gazing with horror at a great helpless hulk ten feet to the

rear, fastened by broken ropes and odd pieces of rigging to the

stern-posts of the House-boat, sinking slowly but surely into the

sea.

It was the Gehenna!

The House-boat had run her down and her last hour had come, but,

thanks to the stanchness of her build and wonderful beam, the

floating club-house had withstood the shock of the impact and now

rode the waters as gracefully as ever.

Portia was the first to realize the extent of the catastrophe, and in

a short while chairs and life-preservers and tables--everything that

could float--had been tossed into the sea to the struggling immortals

therein. On board the Gehenna, those who had not cast themselves

into the waters, under the cool direction of Holmes and Bonaparte,

calmly lowered the boats, and in a short while were not only able to

felicitate themselves upon their safety, but had likewise the good

fortune to rescue their more impetuous brethren who had preferred to

swim for it. Ultimately, all were brought aboard the House-boat in

safety, and the men in Hades were once more reunited to their wives,

daughters, sisters, and fiancees, and Elizabeth had the satisfaction

of once more saving the life of Raleigh by throwing him her ruff as

she had done a year or so previously, when she and her brother had

been upset in the swift current of the river Styx.

Order and happiness being restored, Holmes took command of the House-

boat and soon navigated her safely back into her old-time berth. The

Gehenna went to the bottom and was never seen again, and when the

roll was called it was found that all who had set out upon her had

returned in safety save Shylock, Kidd, Sir Henry Morgan, and

Abeuchapeta; but even they were not lost, for, five weeks later,

these four worthies were found early one morning drifting slowly up

the river Styx, gazing anxiously out from the top of a water-cask and

yelling lustily for help.

And here endeth the chronicle of the pursuit of the good old House-

boat. Back to her moorings, the even tenor of her ways was once more

resumed, but with one slight difference.

The ladies became eligible for membership, and, availing themselves

of the privilege, began to think less and less of the advantages of

being men and to rejoice that, after all, they were women; and even

Xanthippe and Socrates, after that night of peril, reconciled their

differences, and no longer quarrel as to which is the more entitled

to wear the toga of authority. It has become for them a divided

skirt.

As for Kidd and his fellows, they have never recovered from the

effects of their fearful, though short, exile upon Holmes Island, and

are but shadows of their former shades; whereas Mr. Sherlock Holmes

has so endeared himself to his new-found friends that he is quite as

popular with them as he is with us, who have yet to cross the dark

river and be subjected to the scrutiny of the Committee on Membership

at the House-boat on the Styx.

Even Hawkshaw has been able to detect his genius.

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