LAFITTE of LOUISIANA

BY MARY DEVEREUX

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY DON C. WILSON

CHAPTER X.

A night had passed, and the island of Martinique lay drowsing in the sleepiness of midday. In Fort Royal bay, before the sleepy town, lay three ships at anchor. The one nearest shore was a brigantine, beautiful in model and French in build; she carried a long eighteen-pounder amidships, and her bulwarks were pierced for lighter guns. This was the "Black Petrel," and she displayed the American ensign, now hanging limp in the motionless air, as were the like colors shown by the "Condor," rocking near-by in the lazy tide.

Down in the luxuriously furnished cabin of the brigantine, Laro and Lafitte, seated, and in earnest conversation, paused ocasionally to scrutinize this craft.

"Perhaps she means no mischief," muttered the former; "but the very flag she flies, and the red showing on her decks are enough to set my teeth on edge."

"You say you heard ashore last evening, as did I, that she stopped only to fill her water butts, and is bound farther south."

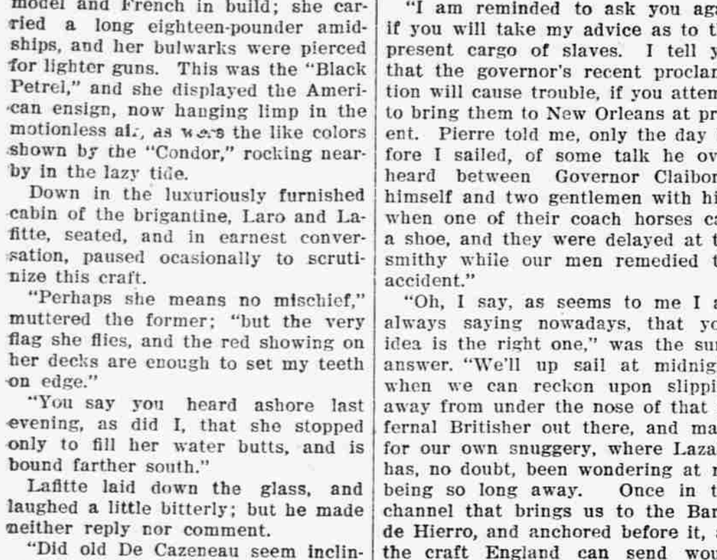
Lafitte laid down the glass, and laughed a little bitterly; but he made neither reply nor comment.

"Did old De Cazeneau seem inclined to treat his granddaughter with kindness?" Laro inquired, after a short silence, and as if considering it wise to change the subject.

"Yes, for all I could see; and he is likely to do so while she makes no demand upon his gold."

Laro uttered an oath and drained his glass.

"That man has been growing more and more miserly ever since his pretty daughter ran away with that cursed Englishman, and I have often thought it might have been money in my pocket if I had let Stanley's blood out of his veins the night of the gover-



"I fear Garonne make harm for all."

nor's ball before he levanted with the girl."

Jean let this pass without remark; but, as Laro replenished his glass, the young man said, "If you are not careful you will get your brains as befogged as they were when I tried to talk with you this morning."

"Befogged, was I, my son? Yet not so much but that I recall every word you told me of what has happened since you left Lazalie and me on the Barra de Hierro, and went to play gentleman awhile in New Orleans. By the way, Jean," he added, as from an after thought, "that was an odd thing for you to do—go off on a wild goose chase to the Florida wilds to bring De Cazeneau's brat away from the Choctaws."

There was a smouldering anger in Lafitte's eyes as he turned them upon Laro's mocking face.

"I told you that the Indian runner, Bird-Wing, came from his tribe to Count de Cazeneau, bringing a letter from Mrs. Stanley, imploring his forgiveness, as she was dying, and beseeching his protection for the daughter she must leave among the Indians. He asked for my services, and I gave them gladly, for his daughter's sake."

Lafitte looked steadily at Laro, who, in a mocking tone, asked, "Did you find her still such a charming demoiselle? I dare swear you did not, if there be truth in the reports that the Englishman left her long ago—left her to wear out her life among their red neighbors."

Lafitte rose and went over to the port-hole, turning his back as he answered, "I found her dead, with the Indians mourning for her as for one well loved. Her child, with her maid, Barbe, a French woman, I brought to the count."

"What is the child called, and how old said you she was?" Laro inquired, now in a more serious tone.

"She is fourteen, but such a pale little slip that she neither looks nor seems her age. She bears the same given name as her mother—Roselle; but the Indians called her 'Island Rose.' Their cabin was on a small island, and, in spite of their rude surroundings, the mother seems to have reared the child most carefully. The count has formally adopted her, and she is now known as Roselle de Cazeneau."

Lafitte said this with a dignified coldness, and as if wishing, by a full explanation, to dismiss the subject.

Laro did not answer, and Lafitte continued:

"I am reminded to ask you again if you will take my advice as to this present cargo of slaves. I tell you that the governor's recent proclamation will cause trouble, if you attempt to bring them to New Orleans at present. Pierre told me, only the day before I sailed, of some talk he overheard between Governor Claiborne himself and two gentlemen with him, when one of their coach horses cast a shoe, and they were delayed at the smithy while our men remedied the accident."

"Oh, I say, as seems to me I am always saying nowadays, that your idea is the right one," was the surly answer. "We'll up sail at midnight, when we can reckon upon slipping away from under the nose of that infernal Britisher out there, and make for our own snuggery, where Lazalie has, no doubt, been wondering at my being so long away. Once in the channel that brings us to the Barra de Hierro, and anchored before it, all the craft England can send would have hard work to get at us. We will take the niggers there for awhile, and turn them out on the island, to work our crops, until Claiborne takes another nap and forgets all about the recent agitation."

He had, while speaking, again picked up the spyglass, and focussed it upon the man-of-war, where nothing was changed among the red-coated loungers.

"Have you anything more to say to Jude?" inquired Lafitte, after a few moments' silence upon his part, while Laro was swearing at the enemy he was scanning.

"No," replied the latter, without taking the glass from his eye; "for, befogged as you thought me, I gave him his orders this morning, before I came aboard this craft."

"Very well," said Lafitte, paying no attention to Laro's covert defense of himself. "Then nothing remains to be done until night."

"Nothing," the other man assented; and Lafitte left him.

The "Black Petrel's" gunner, Lopez, an old fellow of Laro's, leaned against the taffrail, smoking, while he looked scowlingly at the English vessel. Near Lopez lounged Garonne, mate of the "Black Petrel," a heavily built, brutal-faced Portuguese, as swarthy as his companion.

Some distance forward, leaning against the bulwark, his arms folded, and his stolid face turned toward the sinking sun, was the statuesque form of Ehewah, the only Indian aboard—a young sub-chief of the Muyscas tribe, inhabiting an island of the southern seas.

"I have been watching him, and I tell you the dog is not to be trusted," the gunner was saying. "Laro seems nowadays to have no eyes save for his rum; and this, if he has not a care, will lead us all into some infernal trap, where we may feel the rope around our necks."

"Have a care, Lopez," said his companion sternly, "that you get not the taste of another rope first, upon your bare back, for showing disrespect to your captain."

"You have been over-free with that sort of rope already; and this lies at the bottom of what I thought it my duty to warn you against," was the surly retort. "An Indian never forgets the hurt he never forgives; and forgiving is something an Indian would scorn as we would scorn cowardice."

Garonne, with an oath, asked what he meant.

"I will stake all the silver and gold that fell to my share from the fight three weeks ago with the Spanish brig, that Ehewah will never forget the splicing to the main mast you gave him for stealing your ruby. Every blow of the rope's end awoke a dozen devils in his heart; and these will, sooner or later, make a merry hell for you, and perhaps for all of us."

Garonne, whose look of scowling anger had changed to one of sneering scorn, uttered a burst of vile profanity, and striking the taffrail with a broad fist, brown as mahogany, exclaimed roughly, "Let me hear no more such talk from you, Lopez; old messmates as we are, you are going a bit too far. You prate like some old housewife in her dotage."

Lopez, with an angry snarl, straightened himself, and turning away, saw Lafitte coming toward him. Garonne also saw the latter, and, advancing, said, "No sign yet, captain, of a visiting boat from over there," indicating with his thumb the man-of-war.

Lafitte nodded a careless recognition of the mate's remark and passed on to Lopez.

"I had thought that when the cool came the Englishman might have tried to board us for an interview,' the young man remarked in the kindly tone his men knew as well as they did the coldly imperious one that never failed to hold in check the most lawless amongst them.

"Much better they keep away," said Lopez slowly, in the English tongue—one he spoke but imperfectly. "Much better, sir; but to me it the surest shows that we are watched."

"Well," said Lafitte, still looking at the vessel, "let them watch their fill, while the daylight gives them the chance. At midnight the wind will be of a sort the 'Black Petrel' needs, and we will give them a cleared patch of the sea to watch when the light comes again."

Then he asked, "What were you and Garonne quarrelling over as I came up?"

Lopez glanced about and saw that Garonne and the Indian had disappeared. Then, turning his eyes to Lafitte, he answered in a lowered voice "Do not think I am becoming soft hearted, my captain, that I have to say I fear Garonne make harm for all, by bastinadoing a Muycas like white man sailor. This I was telling him."

The "Black Petrel" had—as Lafitte knew already from Laro—some three weeks before encountered a richly laden Spanish brig, bound for a West Indian port. A fierce fight had ended in victory for the brigantine, after which the prize was burned, and the survivors of its crew set adrift in open boats.

There were twenty slaves aboard together with a rich cargo, and in the latter were found a number of uncut gems, from which the Indian had been suspected of stealing a large ruby awarded to Garonne as part of his share of the plunder. Ehewah, upon being accused, refused to admit or deny the theft, and Laro, contrary to his usual custom, had left the Indian to be dealt with as his accuser saw fit.

Garonne, whose natural brutality had been increased by generous imbibings of spirits taken from the despoiled vessel, was not content with inflicting ordinary punishment for such an offense, but had for several days in succession, caused the Indian to be stripped, tied to the mast and flogged unmercifully, after which he was treated with unsparing severity by the mate.

"Ehewah's back bears scars that only revenge will heal," declared Lopez in conclusion, and now speaking in his own tongue. "He has been changed ever since. No man ever had a kinder care or softer touch for a mate who was sick or hurt, as I have to remember from the time, two years ago, when I was laid up with a cracked head, at Tobagga. But now he glares like a wild cat when one of us crosses his way, and he has not spoken ten words since he was bastinadoed."

Lafitte's only comment was to bid Lopez keep silence upon the subject, and to have a watchful eye upon Ehewah.

(To be continued.)

EARLY CARRYING OF MAILS.

In 1747 Newspaper Changed Day of Issue to Suit the Carrier.

The New York postoffice is the largest supporter of the postal department, to which it returns $6,000,000 or more clear profit. This is some advance on the good old times, as may be seen from Bradford's New York Gazette of Dec. 6, 1747: "Cornelius van Denburgh as Albany Post designs to set out for the first time this winter on Thursday next. 'All letters to go by' him are desired to be sent to the postoffice or to his house near the Spring Garden."

During the Hudson river navigation the Albany mail was transmitted by sloops, but in the winter a messenger, as above mentioned was required, and it is probable that he traveled on foot. The winter average of the eastern and southern mails is given in the same paper and same date as follows:

"On Tuesday the Tenth Instant at 9 o'clock in the Forenoon the Boston and Philadelphia Posts set out from New York to perform their stages once a Fort'nite during the Winter months and are to set out at 9 o'clock Tuesday morning. Gentlemen and Merchants are desired to bring their Letters in time. N. B. This Gazette will also come forth on Tuesday Mornings during that time."

It is evident that the Gazette, which was a weekly published on Wednesday, changed its day to accommodate the mails.—Troy Times.

An Oriental Answer.

It was in a Maine Sunday school, says Lippincott's Magazine, that a teacher recently asked a Chinese pupil if he understood the meaning of the words "an old cow."

"Been cow a long time," was the prompt answer.

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CHAPTER XI.

Soon after midnight, with a south-sou'-west wind that was all the "Black Petrel" could desire for a speedy filling of her sails, the ship started northward, to a safe retreat—the island known to Laro and his followers as the "Barra de Hierro."

The day was coming, gray and heavy looking, with a misty cloud bank in the east promising fog later on. Overhead, the pale dawn was extinguishing the stars above the sea that stretched, a dull green floor, in every direction.

Lafitte, asleep in his cabin, was aroused by a knocking upon the door; and, to his instant query, Garonne's voice replied, with a suggestion of satisfaction in its gruff tone, "She is after us, sir, sure enough."

"Where away?" demand Lafitte, when he had admitted the mate, and was making himself ready to go on deck. Laro was already there, for he could be heard shouting to his men.

"Heap up the shot, Lopez!" he roared. "Heap them knee-high, I say; for that cursed Britisher shall swallow them by the wholesale if she comes meddling here!"

"Where away, I say?" Lafitte repeated, with a note of sternness, as Garonne, instead of answering, had paused in the doorway, and was looking intently over his shoulder at something in the main cabin.

"Three points on the starboard bow, sir," the mate now hastened to say, with an apologetic gesture. "She is not yet to be made out clearly; but the lookout reports her as very like the man-of-war we left in Fort Royal last night."

When Lafitte came from his room he found Garonne, who had left him a few minutes before, still standing in the outer cabin, and looking around keenly, as if something were amiss.

Lafitte questioned him, and he replied that when entering the former's cabin he had seen the Indian, Ehewah, glide from that of Laro, and disappear hastily, as though not wishing to be observed.

Garonne growled something under his breath.

Lafitte laughed lightly.

"If he was in there while you were knocking at my door, Garonne, he would scarcely, unless he has suddenly become deaf, fail to realize that he would surely be seen coming out. What cause for suspicion can lie in his coming here? You know well that he is in the habit of doing so, and that Captain Laro permits it."

Garonne growled something under his breath—doubtless, profanity; but this was suppressed, as Lafitte seldom failed to emphasize his disapproval of such language in his presence.

"Have you a positive reason for suspecting anything wrong from Ehewah's being here now?" he demanded sternly.

"Only that he has not been coming about here of late," said Garonne sulkily.

"Has he been forbidden to do so?" was Lafitte's next question, and Garonne admitted that he had not.

Then Lafitte, dismissing the subject, went above, followed by the mate, who, as the former had long known, was about the only man among his followers who had, in secret, but little liking for him.

The sun had lifted above the horizon, but its rays were dulled by the low-lying cloudiness stretching away across the zenith from end to end, as would a gray wall. To the southward the sky was clear, and defined against it like a phantom ship that seemed to be sailing toward the "Black Petrel" was a large craft, which, growing more and more distinct, appeared to have fresher wind than that now partially filling the brigantine's sails.

Laro, standing beside Lafitte, as they both watched her, muttered a curse.

"She is getting the benefit of what we have had and left, in the way of breeze. But we'll trust the devil to foul her hereabouts, and help us to better wind farther along, although I am of half a mind to let her catch us, if that be her intention, and then, if she tarries to ask impertinent questions, give her a good dose of iron."

"Better keep away and mind our own matters, unless she has the wish, and gets the chance, to interfere with us," replied Lafitte, moodily.

Both men were silent for a while, as they watched the stranger drawing nearer. Then there came a noticeable softening of Laro's face as he turned suddenly to Lafitte, and laying a hand on his shoulder, said, in a tone which caused the dark eyes to turn from the approaching ship and rest wonderingly upon the speaker, "Jean, lad, dost remember the old days, when we first met at Le Chien Heureux, where I taught thee to sing 'As tides that flow—as winds that blow'? Madre de Dios—but thou wert a boy to make any man's heart hold thee close, as mine has done all these years. And I wonder—aye, oft do I wonder, has my love of thee brought thee to lasting evil? I have been rough with thee, lad, at times; aye, surely I have of late. But my love for thee is the same this day as it has ever been. Never doubt that, Jean, my lad, whatever befalls!"

Startled at the manifestation of such a mood in Laro, Lafitte looked at him with a silence due to amazement.

"I had a strange dream last night, Jean," continued Laro, in a tone curiously unlike his usual one; "a dream I feel is meant as a warning. I have Indian blood in my veins, and so you can better understand the dream, and what it means to me, for it comes only to those of my race whose end is near. But I have no fear, and care nothing as to how my end comes—whether it be by shot, shell, or the sword."

He stood more erect as he said this, and spoke with an air of braggadocio.

"But somehow it has stirred old times to light, Jean—this dream of mine," he added, relapsing into the odd softness of look and voice.

"Rouse yourself, Laro—what has come to you?" said Lafitte sharply; for he was beginning to wonder if this were anything more than a new phase of maudlin excitement.

But Laro remained silent, his eyes fixed upon the deck.

"What is this dream which seems to have affected you so powerfully?" presently inquired Lafitte, thinking that perhaps it might be better to humor Laro than to show disrespect for his peculiar mood.

The broad brown hand went again to rest upon Lafitte's shoulder, and Laro looked off over the sea with eyes which seemed for the moment to have lost all interest in the approaching vessel.

"It was this, my lad: I sat at a table heaped with fruits and wines, and about me was such as makes the heart of man glad to be alive. But suddenly there came a flash of lightning, with an awful peal of thunder, and, looking out upon a portico near me, I saw a form clad like an Indian warrior riding a horse black as the gates of hell. Straight up the steps of the portico the steed galloped, and into the room, where it circled around the table, until the warrior drew his bow and let fly an arrow that struck my glass, and sent the wine, blood-red, pouring over me and my guests in a stream which grew, and grew, until it was a red river flowing over the table, and washing it away, and I awoke, shivering, to see Ehewah standing by my bunk, telling me that a craft was in sight which looked like the Englishman."

Laro's bearing, so changed and softened, no less than the dream he had related, made Lafitte feel at a loss what to say. He could not deny that the recital had affected him strangely, seeming to bring him into closer touch with Laro as the latter added, "I have always known that to dream of this Indian and his black horse means death to one of my family."

The pressure of his hand grew heavier upon Lafitte's shoulder, and he raised his eyes, now filled with a softer expression than the young man had ever seen them hold.

"Jean, my lad, if anything happens to me, you will always take care of Lazalie? Even though you have no love to give the girl, you will let no harm come to her?"

The sound of her name brought Lafitte to his proper senses, and the perplexed look vanished from his face as he exclaimed, "Mon dieu, Laro—what nonsense are you talking? You, to be so upset by a mere dream! Drop all thought of it, and give your mind to more important matters, for if we are to reach the Barra de Hierro this night we must put aside such unsubstantial things as dreams, and keep a lookout for the Englishman."

The stranger was surely drawing nearer, and the past twenty minutes had brought her close enough to be made out distinctly. She was, beyond doubt, a man-of-war, and presumably the same that had been the brigantine's neighbor in Fort Royal harbor.

"Have you the gun in prime order, Lopez?" asked Lafitte, who now came and stood beside the old gunner. "Ah, that you have, I see," he added with a smile, after glancing at it, now divested of its tarpaulin covering, "and I look to you for its proper handling, should occasion arise."

Lopez, who stood with his assistants clustered around him, replied with a grin, "Never you fear, my captain, but that the gun and myself will give a proper account of ourselves."

There now came a shout from aloft, the lookout announcing that the approaching vessel was the Englishman, and that she seemed to be preparing for action.

"Curse the wind—why won't it hold with us?" muttered Garonne, standing near the group about the gun, and Lafitte noted the gleam of hatred that, for the second, made Ehewah's face fiendish as he glanced at the speaker.

"Wind or no wind," returned Lopez, in a growl, "we are taking our own course, and if yonder gentlemen trouble us, their own fault it will be if burnt fingers they get for meddling.'

"Stand by to take in the stun-sails!" the voice of Laro broke in. The captain seemed to have recovered fully from his recent mood, and to have forgotten the dream that inspire it.

"Lively, you dogs!" he shouted. "Lively, there, and if that craft wants to overhaul us, let her make the trial."

The "Black Petrel" now changed her course, and the other vessel did the same, this indicating that she intended to give chase, but the brigantine was by far the better sailer, and had Laro chosen to run southward, he might have escaped.

This, however, would have carried the "Black Petrel" away from her proposed destination, a thing that Lafitte, no less than Laro, scorned to permit, especially as the pursuer was of a nation hated by both of them. They were therefore of one mind in the determination not to submit to personal inconvenience on account of the Englishman.

The latter drew still closer as the day wore on, when a little after noon the fog bank, which had been promised at sunrise, rolled in over the sea enveloping pursuer and pursued as in the folds of a heavy blanket.

Lafitte was for keeping straight to their course, but Laro, with sulky persistence, claimed that their better plan would be to anchor. He knew that early the next morning—should the fog lift by sunset—he could reckon upon reaching the channel flowing inward to the Barra de Hierro, and, although its bars and reefs, while familiar to himself and his men, guarded a course the stranger could not follow in safety, he did not care to risk pointing out the way to his island retreat.

(To be continued.)

Germany Has a Perfect System for the Collection of Debts.

Writing from Bamberg, Consul W. Bardel calls attention to a German way of doing things.

"The most influential and most important credit agency," he says, "is an association called the Verein Creditreform. This association is composed of the best element of bankers, manufacturers, merchants and tradespeople in over 400 cities in Germany, 175 in Austria-Hungary, 75 in the Netherlands and with branches in every large city of Europe. While these work entirely independent each in its own district, they exchange their experiences in a systematic and honest way.

"The object is to look after delinquent debtors, to inquire carefully into the solidity of business houses and to give verbal or written reports on their standing. A responsible secretary is constantly in charge of each office. His pay depends upon the amount of fees paid by the members. The associations issue cards of introduction for the use of traveling salesmen which enable them to obtain fairly correct reports on the trade they have to visit in any place, no matter how remote from home."

Finger Bowl Unnecessary.

"So you had a good time in the city, Hiram?"

"Oh, bang up, Martha. Why, cousin took me out to dinner and it was great."

"I hope you knew how to conduct yourself properly, Hiram!"

"Oh, yes; but at the tail end of the dinner the waiter brought me a glass bowl full of water."

"Of course, Hiram!"

"But, Martha, I had drunk so much by that time that I couldn't drink a mouthful more!"—Yonkers Statesman.

That One Was Enough.

They had been married six long months and the honeymoon had evidently disappeared for keeps.

"I've only had one wish ungratified since our wedding day," she said.

"And what is that?" he asked in a tone redolent with indifference.

"That I were single again," she replied.

The Soft Inpeachment.

Widow—Do you know that my daughter has set eyes upon you?

Gentleman (flattered)—Has she, really?"

Widow—Certainly; only to-day she was saying "That's the sort of a gentleman I should like for my papa."