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THE PAST—THE PRESENT—FOR THE FUTURE.

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THE

PIRATE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

At the age of twenty-five, while a poor lieutenant serving in Ireland, I had the offer of a good military appointment in India, and yet I hesitated to accept it, because I knew in so doing I should be forced to tear myself from one, who, I felt, was far dearer to me than any thing the world held, and to whom I felt I was as dear. Margaret Cameron, the object of my passion, was the daughter of a retired Scotch officer, who dwelt in my native village. I had known and loved her from childhood, and when this gave place to womanhood, my affection changed in kind, while it strengthened in degree. I will not go over the ten thousand times trodden ground of lovers' explanation, and self-reproaches, and brothels, that passed between Margaret and myself—we parted solemnly plighted to each other. I was condemned, by the will of capt. Cameron, and by the necessity of obtaining some professional promotion, to spend a few years in India before I could receive the hand of his daughter.

I reached my Asiatic destination—long and anxiously looked for European letters—took up one day, by accident, an English paper, and there read: "Died at the house of capt. Cameron, in the village of A—, Miss Margaret Cameron, aged 18." I wrote in despair to capt. Cameron, informing him of the paragraph I had read, and implored him for the love of mercy to contradict it. The countess of Falcondale, a distant relation of my sole parent, my mother, who had been a continual drawback on all my early gratifications, and whose distinguished characteristic was the love of management and plotting, and bringing things about by her own exclusive agency, answered my letter, ratifying what I had heard, with the additional melancholy intelligence that my mother was no more. I will not here dwell upon my feelings.

The appearance of my name, about five years afterwards, among the "Marriages" in the Calcutta Gazette, was followed by successive announcements among the "Births and Deaths," in the same compendious record of life's changes. My wife perished of a malignant fever, and two infant children speedily followed her. I set out, to return overland to my native country, a sober, steady, and partially grey-haired colonel of 36. My military career had been as brilliant as my domestic path had been clouded. The habitual complexion of my mind, however, was gravity, a gravity which extended itself to my countenance, and there assumed even a shade of melancholy. Yet I was a disappointed, not a discontented man, and my character had, I trust, undergone some changes for the better. I arrived at a port in the Levant, and thence took ship for Malta, where I landed in safety.

At this period the Mediterranean traders were kept in a state of perpetual alarm by the celebrated "Demon Ship." Though distinguished by the same attractive title, she in no wise resembled the phantom terror of the African Cape. She was described as a powerful vessel, manned by a desperate crew, and blood crew, whose rapacity triumphed over all fear of danger, and whose cruelty forbade all hope of mercy. Yet, though she was neither built of iron nor manned by devils, her feats had been so wonderful, that there was at length no other rational mode of accounting for them than by tracing them to supernatural, and consequently demonical agency. She had sailed through fleets undiscovered, she had escaped from the fastest pursuers, she had overtaken the swiftest fugitives, she had appeared where she was not expected, and disappeared when even her most latitude and longitude seemed calculable.

In short, it seemed as if ubiquity were an attribute of the demon ship. Her fearful title led to her, and she received the observation voice of the real captain, "What are we to do with these fine passengers of ours? I am sick of this stage-play work, and the men are tired by this time, of being kept down in the hold. We shall have them mutiny if we stifle them much longer below. Look how that sail is sinking on the horizon. She can never come up with us now. There be eight good casks in the forecastle, and we can spare them due ballast. That would do the job decently enough for our passengers—ha!" Here there was something jocose in the captain's tone. "Oh! mine coot captain, you are a man of secret," observed Jaqueminot; "but were it not wise to see dat sail no more, before we show dat we no vile merchandises, but men of de trade dat make de money by de valor?" "There is something in that," observed Jack; "if the convoy come up, and our passengers be missing, 'tis over with us. We can no longer pass for a trader; and to hoist the Demon colors, and run to with friate and sloop both, were to put rash odds against us." "And de cont^s sacks wasted for nothing," said Jaqueminot, with a countenance that contrasted curiously with his vehement and horror-stricken manner in my cabin. "Better to wait one day, two day, par bleu! tree day, than spoil our sport by de precipitation." "I grudge the keep of these dainty passengers all this while," said the captain, roughly; "my lady there, with her chickens, and her conserves and her pasties; and Mr. Mollyflower Colonel here, with his bottles of port and claret, and cups of chocolate and Mocha coffee. Paying, too, forsooth, with such princely airs for every thing, as if we held not his money in our own hands already. Hunted as we then were, 'twas no bad way of blinding governments, by passing for traders, and getting menied passengers on board; but it behoves us to think what's to be done now?" "My opinion is," said Jack, "that as we have already put such violence in our habits, we keep up the farce another day or two until we get into clear seas again. That vessel, yonder, still keeps on the horizon, and she has good glasses on board." "And the men?" asked the captain. "I had rather, without more debate, go into his hen pen here, and down into the cabin below, and in a quiet way do for our passengers, than stand the chance of a mutiny among the crew." Here my very blood curdled in my veins. "Dat is grot, and like mine brave capitain," said the Frenchman, "and yet Monsieur Jean say well too much danger kill at present; but why not have the crew above deck vidout making no attention to de vagabonds. Dey take not no notice—Miladi tink but of moon, and stars, and book; and for de colonel, it were almost pity to cut his throat in any case. He ver coot father; like we chosen spirit. Sacrebleu! I knew him a boy." [I had never seen the fellow until I was on the wrong side of my thirtieth birth day.] "Always for de mischief—stealing apples, banting his schoolfellow, and other sperited tricks. At last he was expel school. I say not dis praise from no love to him, for he beat me one, two time, when I secretarie to his uncle; and don run off vid my sode heart, so I ver well pleased make him bad turn." "Well, then, suppose the man come on deck, half at a time," said the captain, and we'll keep the prisoners—Heaven help us! the passengers—till the sea be clear, may be still sunset." "Look, look!" said Jack, "the frigate gains on us; I partly see her hull, and the wind slackens." I now put my own glass, which was a remarkably good one, through my little window, and could distinctly see the sails and rigging and part of the hull of our late convoy. I could perceive that many of her crew were aloft, but the motion of our vessel was so great, that the frigate was sometimes on and sometimes off the glass; and I was therefore unable to discover whether she were hoisting or taking in sail. It was a comfortable sight, however, to see a friendly power apparently so near; and there was a feeling of hopeless desolation when, on removing the glass, the vessel, whose men I could almost have counted before, shrank to a dim, grey speck on the horizon. The captain uttered an infernal oath, and called aloud his sailors, "Seamen, ahoy, ahoy! Make all the sail you can. Vess out the main-sheet, top-sails unreefed, royals and sky-sails up" [Etc. Etc.] "Stitch every stick of canvas, keep her to the wind, keep her to the wind!" I was surprised to find that our course was suddenly changed, as the vessel which had previously driven before the breeze, was now evidently sailing with a side wind.

The noise of rattling cables, the trampling of sailor's feet on deck, and the increased blasting of the wind in the crowded est-

of speech, to draw them as much as possible, towards my cabin. I then listened with a silentness which made me almost fear to