

# Maud Percy's Secret

BY MAY AGNES FLEMING

Author of  
"The Fatal Wedding"  
"The Unseen Bridegroom,"  
"A Terrible Secret."

(CONTINUED.)

"I've had my tea a hour ago," said Miss Priscilla, with a grim sort of smile. "You was so sound asleep I didn't care habout wakening hof you, not to speak hof 'aving heat so much for your dinner. I didn't think you'd care for hany tea. 'Ere's your things, Miss Pet, and your 'oss is at the door; but you can stay hall night, hif you like."

"I won't stay all night! I'll never come here again—yes I will, too! I'll come every single day—see if I don't!" exclaimed Pet, bouncing across the room, and giving her hat a slap on her head. "I know you don't want me, and I'll just come! If you was to our house, do you think I'd pack you off without any tea? No, I wouldn't if I had to boil the tea-leaves we used the last time, for it! It just shows the sort of folks Englishers are, and I wish there wasn't one in the world—I just do; and I don't care who hears me saying it."

And while scolding furiously, and flinging things about in a manner perfectly awful to so neat a housekeeper as the ancient spinster, Miss Petronilla had managed to dress herself and descend the stairs, while Miss Priscilla, grim as a cast-iron statue, stood at the head, holding the light. Pet flounced out of the hall, giving the door a terrific bang behind her, and stepped out into the night.

By the light that streamed from the glass top of the door, Pet saw Cupid holding her pony. Springing lightly on his back, she gathered up the reins, and paused a moment before starting to look around.

The night was pitch-dark, still, and sultry. Not a breath of air moved, not a leaf rustled; but from the inky pale of deepest gloom over head, short, fitful flashes of lightning at intervals blazed. A storm was at hand, and would soon burst.

"For de Lor's sake! hurry, Miss Petronilla," said Cupid, in a frightened whisper. "Dar's de awfullest storm a comin', to-night, you ever seed. Miss 'Silly oughtn't 'lowed you to go froo de woods, to-night."

"Miss 'Silly, indeed! I guess she hopes I may only get my neck broke before I get home," said Pet, shortly, as she turned her pony's head in the direction of the bridal-path leading through the gorge.

The sure-footed steed, left to himself, trotted the narrow path, and entered, at last, upon the forest road. Having nothing else to do, Pet began ruminating.

"If that ain't what I call mean!" she indignantly muttered, "sending me off like an Arab, without anything to eat. The hateful, stingy old thing! I like that soft, green, good-natured Orlando, but I can't bear her. Sh-h-h! softly, Starlight, my boy! there's niggers in these woods, you know, who wouldn't mind chawing you and me right up."

Even while she spoke, a hand grasped her bridle-rein, and a deep, stern voice cried:

"Stop!"

At the same moment, there came a vivid flash of lightning, and Pet beheld, for a second, the face of a negro black as a demon. The next instant all was deepest darkness again.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Miss Petronilla Lawless was an exceedingly precocious, an exceedingly courageous, and an exceedingly self-possessed young lady, as our readers are aware, yet now her brave heart for one moment seemed to die within her, and a terrified shriek arose and was barely suppressed on her lips. The hour, the scene, the darkness, the danger, might have made an older and stronger person quail. Alone in the woods where no scream for help could be heard, with the gloom of Hades all around, save when the blue blaze of the heat-lightning flashed for a moment through the darkness, helpless and alone, in the power of a fierce, blood-thirsty negro. For one instant, a deadly inclination to swoon came over her; but the next "coward and boaster," as she heard the words from Ranty's lips, came borne to her ear, nerving her heart with new courage and her childish arms with new strength.

"Am I a coward and boaster, as he said?" she mentally exclaimed, while her eye lit fiercely up. "Yes, I am, if I scream and faint, so I won't do either. It wasn't for nothing I learned to shoot and carry pistols about and Ranty won't call me a coward again, if I die for it!"

All these thoughts had passed through her mind in half an instant; and now the dauntless little amazon sat erect on her horse, and one little brown hand dropped to the pistol she carried in her belt.

The black, meanwhile, had held her rearing steed firmly by the bridle-rein.

"Come, get off with you!" said the negro, gruffly. "I'll look after

you not a few days, Miss Pet. Come; I've got a place all ready for you in here."

Now Pet was too young and guileless to fear any worse fate than robbery, imprisonment, or perhaps, death; but as the negro attempted to pass one arm around her waist and left her from her saddle, her face blanched with horror and loathing, and shrinking back, she shrieked:

"Let me go—let me go, I tell you! I'll kill you, if you don't let me go!"

"Oh come, now missy—none o' this. Little kittens spit and snap, but we ain't afraid of 'em. You've got to come; so you may as well come at once."

"Lift her off, and carry her 'long. No use a' standin' foolin' here!" said another deep, guttural voice.

"Let me alone! I tell you to let me alone! I'll murder you if you don't!" screamed Pet, passionately, her finger closing hard on the trigger.

"Oh, I'm getting tired of this yer!" exclaimed the black, as he resigned the horse to his companion.

And, going over to Pet, he flung his arm around her, and attempted to lift her from her saddle.

A flash of lightning, at that instant, revealed the black, shining visage plainly to Pet, as his face was upraised to hers.

Her teeth were clenched hard, her pistol was raised, one swift, short prayer for help, and the brave little amazon fired!

A loud cry, that arose even above the sharp report, burst from the lips of him who held the horse, as he let go the reins and sprang toward his wounded companion.

The frightened Arabian, the moment he felt himself released, bounded madly away; and in five minutes Pet was beyond danger.

The cottage on the Barrens was the nearest habitation; but all was dark there, and the family had evidently retired to rest.

While Pet paused to deliberate a moment whether she would rouse them up or ride home to Heath Hill, she chanced to turn her eyes in the direction of the White Squall—as the old sailor, Admiral Havenful, had named his huge white palace of painted wood—and perceived a long line of red light streaming from one of the windows far over the dry level moor.

"Uncle Harry's up yet!" exclaimed Pet. "I'll go there and stay all night. Gee up, Starlight! You have carried me out of danger once to night; just take me to 'Old Harry's,' as Deb says, and then you may put your head under your wing and go to sleep as fast as you like."

As if he had understood her, her fleet steed bounded furiously over the heath; and five minutes later, Pet was standing knocking away with the butt end of her whip on the door, loud enough to waken the dead.

This terrific thumping brought three or four servants scampering to the door; and close at their heels, holding a bed room candle-stick high on his head, came the "grand seigneur" of the household, himself looking slightly bewildered at this attempt to board him by force.

"Law! if it ain't Miss Pet!" ejaculated the man who admitted her. "Might o' known 'twas she; nobody else would come thumpin' like dat. Fit to tar the ruff off!"

"Don't be afraid, Uncle Harry; it's only me!" said Pet as she came in, dispersing the darkeys by a grand flourish of her whip.

"Port your helm!" exclaimed the admiral, still slightly bewildered, as he held the candle-stick aloft and stared at Pet with all his eyes.

"Well, how can I port my helm

## CRASH!!

Goes the crockery and the waitress will probably be called clumsy and careless. Her plea of sudden dizziness is not allowed. "What right has she to be dizzy?" they ask. Women who are suffering from diseases peculiarly feminine are liable to sudden dizziness and faintness, and it is only by curing the womanly diseases to which they are subject that dizziness and other ills can be entirely relieved.



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out here, I want to know?" cried Pet, testily. "Look at these niggers gaping as if I had two heads on me, and you, standing, staring at me, with that old candle-stick over your head, that's got no candle in it. Here, go along with you! Be off with you!"

And again Pet flourished her whip among them, in a way that had the effect of speedily sending them flying to the kitchen regions, while she gave her passive uncle a push that sent him into the parlor from which he had just emerged.

This done, Pet followed him, shut the door with a bang, flung her whip across the room, and dropped, with a long, deep breath of relief and security, into an arm chair.

The admiral sank into another, still holding the candlestick in his hand, and never removing his eyes from her face. Thus they sat, for some minutes, she gazing on the floor, he gazing in a helpless bewilderment on her; and while they are thus engaged, we will take the liberty of glancing round the parlor of the White Squall.

Like the sitting room of Miss Priscilla Toospegs, there was a "plentiful scarcity" of the ornamental, and unlike hers, a great preponderance of the useless. The floor was covered by a thick, dark carpet; the windows were shaded by blue-paper blinds; the walls were as white as the largest possible amount of whitewash could make them, and adorned by pencil draughts of ships, brigs, schooners, corvettes, and every other kind of vessel that ever delighted the heart of a sailor and puzzled an uninitiated female to describe.

Over the mantel-piece was a huge painting of a straw-colored and pink man-of-war, on a blue-green sea, blazing away at a terrified-looking little cutter, on whose deck could be seen a gentleman and a lady, both considerably taller than the mainmast. This work of art was the pride and glory of the admiral, and was displayed to every stranger who visited the White Squall as something that might make even the great old masters look to their laurels.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

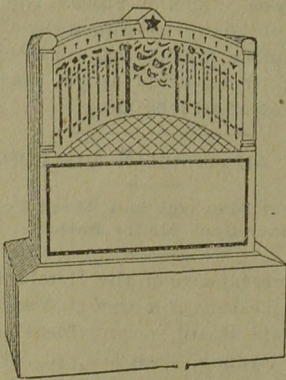
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## MONUMENTS

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