

Maud Percy's Secret

BY MAY AGNES FLEMING

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

(CONTINUED.)

"Well, Mr. Germaine, he sailed along with the pirates. They were a motley assembly, that crew—men from every nation, whom crime, revenge, hatred, or any other dark, dreadful cause had driven together here to wage eternal war against the world they hated, and find their only delight in scenes of blood, pillage, and murder. There were French, Spanish, Italian, English, Corsicans, and Heaven knows what besides, all jabbering together there—raising the most infernal commotion sometimes, when they got drinking and fighting, that ever shamed Babel. The discipline was pretty strict, about as strict as it could be by any possibility, but among such a gang, but they would break out at times, and then the diabolical regions themselves might have found it hard to raise such scenes as ensued. There were worse crimes than murder committed, sometimes, by these human fiends; your father never took part in them, though: the memory of the past kept him from that. Standing by myself, sometimes, after witnessing things that would make your blood curdle, I used to wonder if there was a deep enough pit in hell for these fellows. When I was young, I used to believe in such a place, Mr. Germaine, no doubt you do now; but somehow I got over that and sundry other pleasant beliefs of late years. Though, whenever I think of what I saw and heard on board that cursed floating pandemonium, I wish, from the bottom of my soul, there was one to grill them alive for their deeds in the flesh."

"Did my father ever take part in these horrible scenes?" asked Ray, with a slight shudder.

"No, never!" replied the outlaw, emphatically; "your father had been a gentleman once, and his whole nature revolted against this brutality. No, he never joined these fearful revels, but he fought like the very fiend himself in open warfare, especially against the English ships. When they were attacked, he was worth the whole pirate crew together. He fought, and cut, and clove, and slashed them, like the devil and all his angels. Burning and smarting still under the sense of his mighty wrongs and degradations, he seemed determined to wipe out all his sufferings in their blood. Many an English heart grew cold in death to atone for the wrong, one of their countrymen had done him. He had vowed vengeance against the whole nation, and I doubt whether St. Senatus himself kept a vow more religiously both in letter and spirit."

"Well, Mr. Germaine, we cruised along with these sea-wolves some four or five months, and kept on at our old trade of throat-cutting, plank-walking, scuttling, sinking, and burning ships. Sometimes, to vary the amusement, and breathe a spell, we used to go ashore, and raise old Nick generally among the peaceable inhabitants of various sea-port towns and cities. These places very soon got too hot to hold us, and we never ventured back to the same place twice; for some of the men getting tender-hearted at times, would take a fancy to the pretty wives and daughters of the good citizens, and carry off two or three of them for the benefit of sea air. Of course there always was the devil to pay when these little escapades were found out, and it was like running our heads into a hornet's nest to go back. Your father wished to go to England and see after you, I fancy, but there was no opportunity. He managed to make his escape, however, after a long time: gave the high-sea wolves leg-bail one moonlight night, and was off. He reached England in safety, and there, the first news he had was his own death, and the marriage of Lady Maud Percy to the son of his enemy, Lord Ernest Villiers."

"The news nearly drove him mad, for his love for that most beautiful lady amounted to frenzy. His intentions had been to seek you out; but when he heard of that marriage, he fled from England as if the old demon was after him, and never rested till he reached the place where he knew he was most likely to meet his old friends, the pirates, again."

"Well, he found them, gave some plausible reason for his absence, and was admitted among that happy band of Christian brothers once more. He reached them just in the nick of time, too; for their commander was dead, and the whole crew was plunged in deepest affliction about it, as they were never likely to find another who could kill, slay, burn, and murder all before him, and send in subordinate sailors to kingdom come, with a rap of a marlin spike, as neatly as he could. Your father had, from the first, been an immense favorite with them, and had obtained that powerful ascendancy over them that men of refined and strong minds always possess over coarse, brutal natures; and besides he had the amiable qualities of his lamented and ac-

complished predecessors in a high degree. Therefore, no sooner did he arrive than he was unanimously, and with one accord, elected to the vacant command, and stood in the shoes of the never-to-be-sufficiently-mourned-for Captain Diago, who, having served his Satanic Majesty like a faithful servant for five-and-twenty years in this whirligig world, went to aid him in keeping the Kingdom Infernal in order, with five ounces of lead through his skull."

"Well, Mr. Germaine, under the command of your worthy father, who, by the way, dropped his alias of Germaine when he first joined the pirates, the 'Diable Rouge' as we called, very appropriately, our ship, did a flourishing business, and sunk more goodly vessels belonging to their various Christian Majesties than all the other gay crafts sailing under the black flag at the time. He did some good, too, among his own crew—put a stop to all their not-easily-to-be-told excesses, of more kinds than one, and let them know they had found their master at last. They were inclined to rebel, and did rebel at first; but he very coolly took out a brace of pistols and shot two of the ring-leaders of the mutiny dead; and then, in a speech, much shorter than sweet, gave them to understand that every symptom of insubordination would, for the future, be put a stop to in the same gentle and fatherly way. Well, Mr. Germaine, would you believe it, instead of flying into a rage as this, and kicking up a rumpus, they immediately conceived an immense respect for him, and from that day no Caliph Haroun Alraschid ever reigned it more royally over his bastinadoed subjects than did Captain Re—"

your father, on board the 'Red Devil.' On board a French privateer, that we sent to 'Davy Jones' one night, we found a lot of ladies; and after sending their masculine friends to another, and it is to be hoped, a better world, we transferred the fair portion of the cargo to our own ship. It was nothing unusual for us to take ladies in this way; but since your father took command, they were always well and respectfully treated, and landed at the first port we touched, well supplied with money, and left to make the best of their way home. Therefore, our having three or four of the dear creatures on board now, would not have been worthy of notice, had not one of them, a most beautiful French girl, and a daughter of a great magnate of the land—a marquis de something—took it into her head to fall in love with our dare-devil of a captain; and when the ship arrived at the place where the rest were to be landed, mademoiselle absolutely 'put her foot down,' to use a common expression, and flatly refused to leave him. In vain he expostulated; told her he did not love her; that the life he led was too dangerous for her to think of sharing; that his life was never safe for two consecutive minutes; that she would be wretched with him, and so forth, in fact, he talked to her as if he had been the greatest old anchorite that ever looked upon the adorable sex as a special invention of Satan—the whole thing was the old story of St. Revere and Cathleen over again. Mademoiselle wouldn't listen to reason, and determined to have him at any price. Our moral young captain hesitated at first; but she was young, beautiful, 'rounded and ripe,' and he was only frail, fresh and blood like the rest of us, and the result of all her tears and pleadings was that one evening they both went on shore together, and perpetrated downright matrimony, in free and easy defiance of all the statutes and

A PICTURE

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Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets invigorate stomach, liver and bowels.

by-laws against bigamy that ever were made. Perhaps he thought he had made enough miserable for life, and that there might be some merit, after all, in making this infatuated young creature happy. It is really wonderful how girls, all over the world, will cling to the most undesirable class of men, black-legs, pugilists, loafers, all sorts of outlawed people, and give the cold shoulder to sensible strait-laced forward every-day Christians. You may talk to them till your tongue aches, and show them the evil of their ways in the most glaring colors, their answer will be: 'I love him, and after that you might as well try to drain the Atlantic with a teaspoon, as to make them give him up; they'll cling to him like a barnacle to the bottom of an old ship. But hold on! it won't do to indulge in a train of moral reflections; for if I begin, I won't know when to stop.'

"Well, our captain took his pretty wife to sea with him—for, though he offered to procure a home for her or any part of the globe, she would not hear of leaving him. He was totally unworthy of such strong passionate love as she lavished upon him; but he did all he could, under the circumstances, to make her happy. He liked her, she was such a strong, loving, brave-hearted girl—but he did not, could not, love her. It seemed as if all love had died out of his heart until the birth of his little daughter, and then some of the old slumbering affections awoke, and centered in her."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Noisy Fish.

Many fish can produce musical sounds. The red gurnard has earned the name of seacock from the crowing noise which it makes, while another species is called the piper. Others, notably two species of opidium, have sound producing apparatus, consisting of small movable bones, which can be made to produce a sharp rattle. The curious "drumming" made by the Mediterranean fish known as the mangle can be heard from a depth of thirty fathoms.

The first shipment of wheat from Chicago via the lakes was made in 1833. The shipment consisted of seventy-eight bushels.

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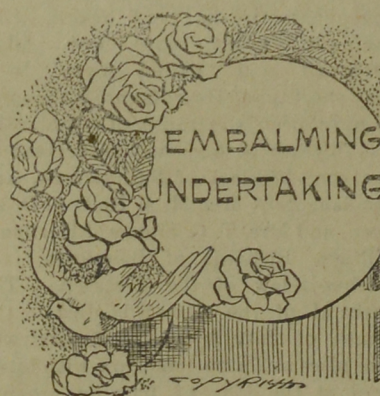
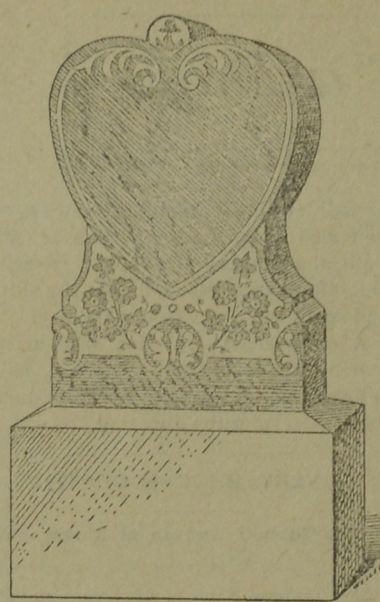
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