

**THE PIRATE, AND THE
THREE CUTTERS, IN
TWO VOLUMES: VOL. I**

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The Pirate, and The Three Cutters, in Two Volumes: Vol. I by Frederick Marryat

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FREDERICK MARRYAT

**THE PIRATE, AND THE
THREE CUTTERS, IN
TWO VOLUMES: VOL. I**

THE PIRATE,

AND

THE THREE CUTTERS.

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FATHER," &c. &c.

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THE PIRATE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BAY OF BISCAY.

It was in the latter part of the month of June, of the year 179—, that the angry waves of the Bay of Biscay were gradually subsiding, after a gale of wind as violent as it was unusual during that period of the year. Still they rolled heavily; and, at times, the wind blew up in fitful, angry gusts, as if it would fain renew the elemental combat; but each effort was more feeble, and the dark clouds which had been summoned to the storm, now fled in every quarter before the powerful rays of the sun, who burst their masses asunder with a glorious flood of light and heat: and, as he poured down his resplendent beams, piercing deep into the waters of that portion of the Atlantic to which we now refer, with the exception of one object, hardly visible, as at creation, there was a vast circumference of water, bounded by the fancied canopy of heaven. We have said, with the exception of one object; for in the centre of this picture, so simple, yet

so sublime, composed of the three great elements, there was a remnant of the fourth. We say a remnant, for it was but the hull of a vessel, dismasted, water-logged, its upper works only floating occasionally above the waves, when a transient repose from their still violent undulation permitted it to reassume its buoyancy. But this was seldom; one moment it was deluged by the seas, which broke as they poured over its gunwale; and the next, it rose from its submersion, as the water escaped from the port-holes at its sides.

How many thousands of vessels—how many millions of property—have been abandoned, and eventually consigned to the all-receiving depths of the ocean, through ignorance or through fear! What a mine of wealth must lie buried in its sands, what riches lie entangled amongst its rocks, or remain suspended in its unfathomable gulf, where the compressed fluid is equal in gravity to that which it encircles, there to remain secured in its embedment from corruption and decay, until the destruction of the universe, and the return of chaos. Yet, immense as the accumulated loss must be, the major part of it has been occasioned from an ignorance of one of the first laws of nature, that of specific gravity. The vessel to which we have referred, was, to all appearance, in a situation of as extreme hazard as that of a drowning man clinging to a single rope-yarn; yet, in reality, she was more secure, from descending to the abyss below than

many gallantly careering on the waters, their occupants dismissing all fear, and only calculating upon a quick arrival into port.

The Circassian had sailed from New Orleans, a gallant and well-appointed ship, with a cargo, the major part of which consisted of cotton. The captain was, in the usual acceptation of the term, a good sailor; the crew were hardy and able seamen. As they crossed the Atlantic, they had encountered the gale to which we have referred, were driven down into the Bay of Biscay, where, as we shall hereafter explain, the vessel was dismasted, and sprang a leak, which baffled all their exertions to keep under. It was now five days since the frightened crew had quitted the vessel in two of her boats, one of which had swamped, and every soul that occupied it had perished; the fate of the other was uncertain.

We said that the crew had deserted the vessel, but we did not assert that every existing being had been removed out of her. Had such been the case, we should not have taken up the reader's time in describing inanimate matter. It is life that we portray, and life there still was, in the shattered hull thus abandoned to the mockery of the ocean. In the *caboose* of the Circassian, that is, in the cooking-house, secured on deck, and which fortunately had been so well fixed as to resist the force of the breaking waves, remained three beings—a man, a woman, and a child. The two first mentioned were of that infe-