

**TOM CRINGLE'S
LOG. IN TWO
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Tom Cringle's Log. In Two Volumes, Vol. II by Michael Scott

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MICHAEL SCOTT

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Michael Scott

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LOG.

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VOL. II.

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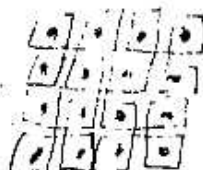
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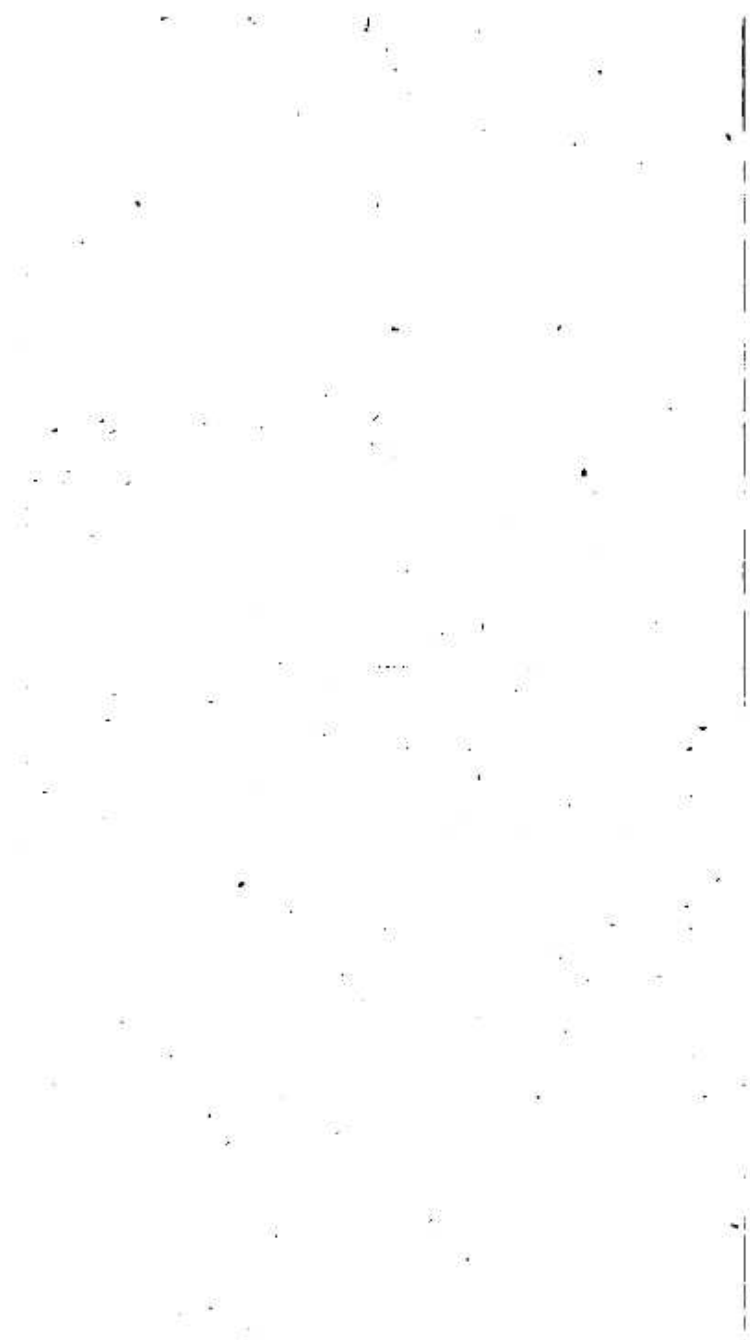
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TOM CRINGLE'S LOG.

VOMITO PRIETO.

(CONTINUED.)

THE small twinkling lights from millions of lesser stars, in that part of the firmament where she hung, round as a silver pot-lid—shield I mean—were swamped in the flood of greenish-white radiance shed by her, and it was only a few of the first magnitude, with a planet here and there, that were visible to the naked eye, in the neighbourhood of her crystal bright globe; but the clear depth, and dark translucent purity of the profound, when the eye tried to pierce into it at the zenith, where the stars once more shone and sparkled thick and brightly, beyond the merging influence of the pale cold orb, no man can describe *now*—one could, *once*—but rest his soul, he is dead—and then to look forth far into the night, across the dark ridge of many a heaving swell of living water—but, “Thomas Cringle, aboy—where the devil are you cruising to?” So, to come back to my story. I went aft, and mounted the small poop, and looked towards the aforesaid moon, a glorious resplendent tropical moon, and not the paper lantern affair hanging in an atmosphere of fog and smoke, about which

your blear-eyed poets *haver* so much. By the by, these gentry are fond of singing of the *blessed* sun—were they sailors they would *bless* the moon also, in place of writing such wearisome poetry with regard to her *blighting* propensities. But I have lost the end of my yarn once more, in the strands of these parentheses—Why, what a word to pronounce in the plural!—I can no more get out now, than a girl's silkworm from the innermost of a nest of pill-boxes, where, to ride the simile to death at once, I have warped the thread of my story so round and round me, that I can't for the life of me unravel it. Very odd all this. Since I have recovered of this fever, every thing is slack about me; I can't set up the shrouds and backstays of my mind, not to speak of bobstays, if I should die for it. The running rigging is all right enough, and the canvass is there; but I either can't set it, or when I do, I find I have too little ballast, or I get involved amongst sifsals, and white water, and breakers—don't you hear them roar?—which I cannot weather, and crooked channels, under some lee-shore, through which I cannot scrape clear. So down must go the anchor, as at present, and there—there goes the chain-cable, rushing and rumbling through the hause-hole. But I suppose it will be all right by and by, as I get stronger.

“But rouse thee, Thomas! Where is the end of your yarn, that you are blarneying about?”

“Avast heaving, you swab you—avast—if you had as much calomel in your corpus as I have at this present speaking—why, you would be a lad of more metal than I take you for, that is all.—You would have about as much quicksilver in your stomach, as I have in my purse, and all my silver has been *quick*,

ever since I remember, like the jests of the gravedigger in Hamlet—but, as you say, where the devil is the end of this yarn?"

Ah, here it is! so off we go again—and looked forward towards the rising moon, whose shining wake of glowworm-coloured light, sparkling in the small waves, that danced in the gentle wind on the heaving bosom of the dark blue sea, was right ahead of us, like a river of quicksilver with its course diminished in the distance to a point, flowing towards us, from the extreme verge of the horizon, through a rolling sea of ink, with the waters of which for a time it disdained to blend. Concentrated, and shining like polished silver afar off—intense and sparkling as it streamed down nearer, but becoming less and less brilliant as it widened on its approach to us, until, like the stream of the great Estuary of the Magdalena, losing itself in the salt waste of waters, it gradually melted beneath us and around us into the darkness.

I looked aloft—every object appeared sharply cut out against the dark firmament, and the swaying of the mast-heads to and fro, as the vessel rolled, was so steady and slow, that *they* seemed stationary, while it was the moon and stars which appeared to vibrate and swing from side to side, high over head, like the vascillation of the clouds in a theatre, when the scene is first let down.

The masts, and yards, and standing and running rigging, looked like black pillars, and bars, and wires of iron, reared against the sky, by some mighty spirit of the night; and the sails as the moon shone dimly through them, were as dark as if they had been tarpawlings. But when I walked forward, and looked

aft, what a beauteous change! Now each mast, with its gentle swelling canvass, the higher sails decreasing in size, until they tapered away nearly to a point, though topsail, topgallant-sails, royal and sky-sails, showed like towers of snow, and the cordage like silver threads, while each dark spar seemed to be of ebony, *fished* with ivory, as a flood of cold, pale, mild light streamed from the beauteous planet over the whole stupendous machine, lighting up the sand-white decks, on which the shadows of the men, and of every object that intercepted the moonbeams, were cast as strongly as if the planks had been inlaid with jet.

There was nothing moving about the decks. The lookouts, aft, and at the gangways, sat or stood like statues, half bronze, half alabaster. The old quartermaster, who was cunning the ship, and had perched himself on a carronade, with his arm leaning on the weather nettings, was equally motionless. The watch had all disappeared forward, or were stowed out of sight under the lee of the boats; the first Lieutenant, as if captivated by the serenity of the scene, was leaning with folded arms on the weather gangway, looking abroad upon the ocean, and whistling now and then either for a wind, or for want of thought. The only being who showed sign of life was the man at the wheel, and he scarcely moved, except now and then to give her a spoke or two, when the cheep of the tiller-rope, running through the well-greased leading flocks, would grate on the ear as a sound of some importance; while in daylight, in the ordinary bustle of the ship, no one could say he overheard it.

Three bells! "Keep a bright lookout there," sung out the Lieutenant. "Ay, ay, sir," from the four