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THE MAROON.

A LEGEND OF THE CARRIBBEES.

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(Concluded.)

We shall say nothing of her shows of fondness. Maria de Pacheco was not feeble or childish, not wanton, indeed, in the display of her attachments. She was too proud for the exhibition of love in its weakness and dependence. But she indulged the mood somewhat after the fashion of the Sultana of the East.—She would to love and to be loved, and she required obedience. It was necessary that Lopez should prove that he was not ungrateful for the risks which she had run, and the sacrifices which she had made, in his behalf. It was needful that his attachment should be as fond, and his behavior as dutiful, as it had been before the unfortunate discovery which had placed them both at the mercy of Juan. That he was reluctant, or forgetful in any respect, Maria was not suffered to perceive. Excited as she was by her own emotions, the consciousness of a great battle fought, and a triumph gained—the last trophies of which were now in her hands—she, perhaps, would have been slow to detect the wandering mood and the indifferent manner of her companion, even if he had betrayed either. But the timid nature is always solicitous how it alarms or offends the bold one; and on the score of his devotedness, Maria beheld nothing, as yet, to occasion her jealousy. But his will, which kept him observant of her moods, was not sufficient to prescribe to her the course to be pursued, or to arrest her eager progress. Her impetuous spirit hurried her forward; and the ground which—feeling his way at every step—it had taken Lopez several days to traverse, when he first undertook to explore his territory, was now overcome in a few hours. Vainly did he seek to detain her gaze, to arrest her progress, and inspire in her an admiration of objects which had never once fixed his own. His artifices, though never suspected, were always fruitless. She still made fearful progress. The seashore was abandoned, the cool groves received them; the plain rose beneath her footsteps—they were already upon the slopes of that elevation, at the extremity of which lay the secret and the treasure of the Maroon. He looked back in terror for the sun. His round red orb still shone high and proudly in the heavens; and it was with equal wonder and self-reproach that Lopez remembered how long it was before his timid spirit had suffered him to compass the same extent of territory. The path naturally opened for her footsteps. They had often been traversed by his own; and it was with a mortal fear that Lopez momentarily caught glimpses of the small, naked footstep of Amaya, on the softer sands, as she had wandered beside him in their rambles. But these were never seen by Maria de Pacheco. The earnest and intense nature seldom pauses for the small details in a progress. Her proud spirit was always upward as well as onward, always above the earth. She threw herself suddenly down beneath the thicket. There was a pause. Our Maroon enjoyed a brief respite from his terrors. He threw himself beside her, and her eyes closed in his embrace. To a fierce and intense nature such as hers, there is something delicious in the pauses of the strife, but it is only because they are momentary. The rest from conquest is perhaps the only real luxury of enthusiasm; but the interval is brief, and is simply designed to afford a renewal of the vitality necessary for continued action.

"How sweet, how beautiful, is the repose of sky and shore and sea! What a delicious languor of atmosphere is this!" and a moment after speaking thus, Maria de Pacheco shook off her own languor, and was once more upon her feet.

"Will she now return to the shore—to the palms where I told her I had slept?" Such was the secret inquiry of his heart. She had no such purpose. Her curiosity was still unsatisfied. Besides, to walk simply upon the solid earth, after weeks on shipboard, is itself a luxury. The sun was still high, and bright, though sloping gradually to the sea. The step of Maria was taken forward, and Lopez followed, like a criminal, with reluctant footsteps, as if going to execution. They stood at length on the brow of the hill, which looked over to the Caribbean shore. The abrupt precipice arrested her farther progress, and she stood gazing with eager satisfaction upon the small, snug and lovely domain of the Maroon.

XXIII.

The thoughts coursed rapidly through the brain of Lopez de Leyva. He felt that she was on the brink of his secret. Another step, to the right or to the left, and the descending pathway would lead to the sandy esplanade at the mouth of the cave; and, with her restless glance, what could keep her from discovering its curious portal and penetrating to its inmost recesses. Were she to make this discovery without his assistance, her suspicions might well be awakened! He resolved with unaccustomed boldness. He made a merit of necessity. He put his hand upon her arm, and with a sweet significant smile looked upon her face as she gazed upward.

"I have reserved for the last, my greatest curiosity. I have conducted you hither to surprise you. Follow me now and you will see how complete is my establishment!"

She did not reflect that he had been guided by her footsteps, and that his reluctance at her inspection of his territories had been declared from the beginning. She was sufficiently happy, and indulged in no recollections or reflections, which might occasion doubt or suspicion. He led the way and she descended to the beach. He conducted her to the cave, and with the eager delight of a curious child, she darted into its

recesses. The antechamber was a wonder, but the interior aroused all that was romantic in her nature. It was just the sort of dwelling for one trained among the gypsies of the Alps. The chamber was so wild and snug! The stone, such a truly Egyptian fire-place!—She did not dream of its uses as an altar, nor did she breathe a syllable on this subject. And the couch in which he had slept, in which there still remained a sufficient supply of moss and leaves, to render it suitable for the same purpose, was one to determine her instantly that it should be hers that very night.

We need not describe the consternation of Lopez as he listened to this resolve. It completed his disquiet and annoyance. He had trembled at every step which she had taken—at every glance of her eyes when the cave was entered. He feared her eager survey, her penetrating scrutiny. His eyes stole frequently and unconsciously to the remote corner of the cave in which he had concealed Amaya; and while he trembled at the possible discoveries of the Spanish woman, his companion, his heart smote him for those which the poor girl of Caribbee must have already made. For Maria de Pacheco, assuming the duty and devotion of her lover, had not spared her endearments. The silence and the secrecy of the cavern seemed to invite them. She had hung upon his neck with her caresses, and he had been compelled to requite them, though in fear and trembling. His conscience smote him when he thought of the selfish and confiding passion of Amaya—her simple truth, her gentle nature, and the artless sweetness of her affections. But to withstand the imperious spirit of the woman at his side, was not within his strength and courage. His fears, and the new-born agonies of the Indian women, may be more easily imagined than described.

XXIV.

Again did the two emerge from the cavern. The sun had set! Night was falling rapidly, as is its wont in those regions, where the day makes, as it were, but a single transition, from meridian brightness to the stillness and the dusk of midnight. An angry flush lay in the region where the sun went down, to the wary mariner denoting wind and tempest. But neither Lopez nor his companion thought of storm; nor did this fear impress the seamen on board the Dian de Burgos. The fruits from the shore, the momentary pause from the ordinary duties of the sea, and a division of a portion of the treasures of Velasquez and Juan among the crew, by way of hush-money and bounty, called for something like indulgence. The Dian de Burgos was not without her luxuries. The stores of her late captain were fished up. Linares was disposed to be liberal to his former comrades; and wine and stronger beverages were not denied to their enjoyment. It was among the infirmities of Linares that he himself was not wholly insensible to the joys of the vine. As the heir to Velasquez he might certainly indulge his tastes. He did so; and while Maria de Pacheco luxuriated in the delights of love, he gratified his newly gotten liberty by sacrifices at the altars of a very different deity.

Ordinary precautions are soon forgotten in the acquisition of extraordinary pleasures. No one thought of tempest. The evening remained calm. There was little wind stirring, just enough to break into irregular but not threatening billows, the vast surface of the sea. The stars were out soon, large, bright and very numerous. A thin drift of clouds might be seen to send slowly away among them from the west to the east. Lopez would have led his companion away from the cavern—would have persuaded her to a couch among the palms where, as he showed her, his own had first been made.—But she had resolved upon the chamber in the cavern, and he was compelled to submit. They re-entered it with heedful footsteps. The interior was wholly dark, except where, in the inner apartment, the light of the stars made its way through the two small apertures which the Maroon had left unenclosed. It was long before they slept. Much had Maria de Pacheco to relate. She gave him the details of the conspiracy against Velasquez. She suppressed nothing of her own share in the proceedings, and declared a very natural and genuine horror at the catastrophe, which she yet insisted on as necessary to her own safety and to his. The Maroon listened to the narrative with conflicting feelings and in silence. The conduct of Maria established a new claim upon his gratitude; but it did not contribute to the strength of his former passion; and his thoughts, though fascinated by the terrible story to which he listened, were sometimes startled from their propriety, as he heard, more than once, what seemed to him a deep sigh from the hiding place of Amaya. It may have been in his fancy only that this intrusive monitor was heard, but it sufficed to keep him apprehensive. Fortunately, Maria de Pacheco heard nothing. She had no suspicions, and, in the death of Juan and Velasquez her fears were all ended. In the recovery of the Maroon all her hopes seemed to be satisfied.

XXV.

The night began to wane; the wind rose. It could be heard shrilly to whistle through the crevices of the rock, as if in threat and warning. But Maria slept, not deeply, and her head was on the arm of the Maroon. When he sought to rise, which more than once he did, she started from her sleep with disquietude. If he stirred, she was conscious of it. Her sleep was troubled. Her dreams revenged upon her conscience the obtuseness which, by the force of her will, she imposed upon it in her waking moments. It enabled her to restrain, though unconsciously, the movements of her companion. He made repeated attempts to disengage himself from her grasp, and rise. He wished to confer with Amaya. We may conjecture what he would have said. But he strove in vain. In watching for the moment when the sleep of

Maria should become sufficiently deep to afford him the desired opportunity, he finally slept himself. Nature yielded at last, and his slumbers were soon quite as profound as those of his companion.

Without being well conscious that he slept at all, he was suddenly awakened, as if by a death-cold hand upon his wrist. He started, and was confounded when he unclosed his eyes, to behold the cavern brightly illuminated. The fire which had been suffered to go out by the Caribbean damsel, in the sweet experience of her first mortal passion, had been suddenly revived and by her hands. She stood between him and the altar-place, her eyes wildly sad and staring upon him and his companion. A torch was still grasped in one of her uplifted hands. She had probably been inspecting closely the sleeping features of the woman who had first taught her to feel the agony which belongs to a consciousness of the infidelity of the beloved one. As, at his awakening, the head of the Maroon was involuntarily uplifted, she cast the brand which she held upon the altar, flung one of her hands despairingly and reproachfully toward him, and darted headlong from the chamber.

XXVI.

Maria de Pacheco still slept. It was now doubly important to the "Maroon" that she should do so. To rise softly—which he now succeeded in doing, without arousing her—to extinguish the brands and to steal forth, and see what was the course, and what the purpose of Amaya, was the next natural movement of Lopez. He soon smothered the flame and quenched the burning embers; but the night had grown dark;—the stars were shrouded, and, when he emerged from the cavern, he could see nothing. He stole back, trembling with doubt and apprehension, and wondering what next would follow. Maria had awakened.

"Where are you?—was her salutation as he drew nigh—"Where have you been?"

"Hear you the wind, Maria? The night is very dark and gusty? We shall have a storm to-morrow."

"But we are safe, Lopez!" was the reply. "I am not sure of that," was the secret whisper of his guilty heart.

The night passed without further interruptions: At dawn, the Maroon arose before his companion. He proceeded to his treasure which he now prepared to have in readiness to convey, without being suspected, on board the vessel. The richer pearls were hidden in his bosom, and in the folds of his garments. The rest were stored away carefully in the bottom of the largest basket which he had found in his cavern, and which he pretended had been picked up on the shore.—A few bananas were laid upon the top to prevent inquiry. His arrangements were all complete before Maria awakened. With the sunrise they had both emerged upon the beach. But the sun rose faint and struggled in his course against numerous clouds. The wind came in sudden gusts sweeping the ocean into temporary anger. The lulls between were not less unpromising; and, to the old seaman, the signs were pregnant of those wild and capricious changes of the weather, which so frequently converted into a scene of wrath and horror, the otherwise sweet serene of these latitudes. But Maria did not heed these signs, in the consciousness of the attainment of her desires. Lopez was too anxious to leave the neighborhood of the poor Caribbean damsel, about whom his heart constantly re-proached itself; and those whom we left on shipboard were quite too happy in the enjoyment of their infrequent saturnalia, to disturb themselves with anticipations of the future. It may have been a fancy only, but, looking back at the moment ere he stepped into the boat which was to convey him from the isles, did he catch a glimpse of the slender form of Amaya among the palms, with her arm outstretched and pointing to the cavern? A second and more earnest glance revealed him nothing.

Safely within the ship, his treasures made secure, and with the example of all around him persuading him to licentiousness, Lopez de Leyva soon gave way to excess which contributed to make him forgetful of the damsel he had deserted. He was received with half-madness by Linares and the crew. The coarser pleasures in which these were indulging were transferred, with some qualifying refinements, to the cabin of Velasquez. Here, from flagons of gold and silver, did our "Maroon" quaff the intoxicating beverage to the health of Maria de Pacheco, and the prosperous fortunes of the Dian de Burgos. The day passed in prolonged indulgence. The excesses which might have revolted Maria and her companion at another time, were now only the outpourings of a natural exultation which was due to a sense of newly acquired freedom, and the acquisition of novel luxuries. The gradual progress of the hours brought on increase of wind which finally grew to storm. But this occasioned no disquiet and did not lessen the enjoyments of any of the parties. Linares, like a veteran seaman, full of wine as he was, first took care to see if his vessel was secure. He was in good anchorage. His ship was stripped to the storm, and he had no reason to apprehend that she would drag her anchor under any pressure of the gale. A good watch was set, and wishing for more freedom in his revels, he withdrew from the cabin to the more genial, if more rough association of the crew.

XXVII.

Night came on—a night of storm and many terrors. Maria de Pacheco and our "Maroon" were not wholly insensible to its dangers. At moments when the pressure of wind was most severely felt, they would pause in the midst of their delights, and think of the solid security of the chamber in the rock. But the revel went on without reserve. The rich flagon stood before them in the cabin. They lived for each other, and there was no tyrannic power at hand to arrest

them as they carried the intoxicating draught of rapture to their lips. No longer conscious of other eyes, Lopez de Leyva required the caresses of his companion with an ardency quite equal to her own. They spoke of their mutual delights. They declared their mutual hopes of home, and in the increasing exultation which he felt in his security, and the increasing influence of the wine which he had quaffed, the Maroon revealed to Maria the wealth of pearl which were contained in his bosom and his baskets. He poured forth his milk-white but transparent treasures, into her lap, and wound the lengthened strands about her neck. His form resting upon one knee before her, her head stooping to his embrace, neither of them perceived, for several moments, that while they were most drunk with delight, they had a visitor. The door of the cabin had opened silently upon them, and the deserted damsel of the Caribbees, standing erect, with hands drooping at her side, and eyes staring intently, but vacantly and wild upon them, now stood, beholding herself, for a while unseen, their almost infantile caresses. Stern and mournful did she stand, surveying this scene of tenderness, which every pulse of her passionate young heart told her was indulged at her expense. She neither sighed nor spoke, nor moved after her first entrance. Was it an instinct of their own souls which taught them that another and a hostile spirit was at hand and which made the proud Spanish woman start to her feet, with a sudden terror, while the "Maroon" sinking lower upon both knees, looked round him in shame and trepidation at the unexpected presence? To him the deserted woman gave but a single glance, but that declared every thing in their mutual histories. Advancing toward Maria de Pacheco, before her purpose could be divined, suddenly tore the strands of pearl from the bare neck and bosom to which they seemed beautifully kindred, then, dashing them to the floor, trampled them under foot, and fled from the cabin with a shriek which sounded like that of doom in the ears of the "Maroon." He had apprehended a worse danger when he saw her so suddenly approach Maria. He had seen in the grasp of the Indian maiden, the same broad and heavy cleaver of stone, with which he beheld the priestess, on the night of her first entrance to the cave, sever the long sable tresses from her neck, and devote them, in sacrifice, on behalf of her future destinies. That she would use this fearful instrument on the forehead of the Spanish woman was the spontaneous fear in the heart of Lopez; but, at that moment, so suddenly had he been surprised by her presence, and so greatly was he confounded by his guilt and terror, she might have safely executed the deed of death had murder been her purpose.

Inflamed with wine, stung by the indignity to which she had been subjected, Maria de Pacheco recovered from her astonishment much sooner than her paramour from his fears. Confronting him with a fierce and flashing glance from her dark imperial eye, she demurred, in choking accents, the explanation of the scene. But, filled with terror, partly intoxicated, and wholly confused and bewildered by the condition in which he found himself, the unmeaning mutterings from his lips gave no satisfaction to the eager and heated inquirer. With a speech full of equal scorn and suspicion, she flung away from his approach, and darted out upon the deck of the vessel in pursuit of the stranger. There, all was storm and darkness. The black masses of night seemed to crowd and accumulate before her path, filling up the passages, and preventing her progress. The vessel pitched awfully. The woman could scarcely keep her feet; though quite as much accustomed to the motion of the ship as any of the seamen. She felt her way along the bulwarks. She saw nothing, heard nothing—nothing but the awful roaring of the winds as they fell upon the waves in the fury of a mortal conflict. She made her way to the prow. The excellent look-out of veteran seamen whom Linares had provided for the watch was nowhere to be seen. She called to them below, and a couple of drunken sailors scrambled up and tottered toward her. They had seen nothing. She could see nothing. Nothing was to be heard. Yet, more vigilant, more sober, and less passionate faculties might have detected, even while she made her inquiries, certain dull and heavy strokes, which, at pauses in the storm, seemed to arise from the deep, and to run along the cable. Little did Lopez de Leyva divine the fatal purpose for which the Caribbean damsel carried with her that hatchet of stone.

Impatient, with a brain full of suspicions, and a heart severed by disappointment, Maria de Pacheco returned to the cabin, leaving the two half-drunken sailors in possession of the watch. They might have been, and probably were, famous watchers at all other times. But the liquors of Velasquez had been equally potent and tempting, and they were still provided with a flask of the delicious beverage. They drank and sang together in defiance of the storm. What was the storm to them? The Dian de Burgos was as tight a creature as ever swam the seas, and firm were the sands, in which their anchors found their rest. Besides, since they came on deck, the storm seemed somewhat to have subsided. The seas were not so high. The ship no longer plunged with that peevish and cumbersome motion, like a high gutted horse under the discipline of a cruel curb, but rose easily and gently with the play of the billows, as if she were smoothly posting, with a fair gale, along accustomed pathways of the sea. The observations of our watch were of this satisfactory complexion. It never occurred to them as possible that the ship really was in motion—that she no longer opposed the resistance of her mighty bulk to the winds and waters, but obeyed placidly the impulses which their united powers gave. They little dreamed how much of their consolation, was drawn from causes of their greatest danger.

XXVIII.

Meanwhile, in the cabin of the Dian de Burgos, the tempest raged as fiercely as it did without, and entirely excluded the terrors of wind and sea. The ready instincts of Maria de Pacheco had conducted her to much of the secret of her paramour. She now recalled his reluctance to conduct her over the island,—the art, which, when on the eve of discovery, had made a merit of necessity, and led her into the recesses of the cavern—the uneasiness which seemed heedless of her endearments; the disquiet which they seemed to occasion—his disappearances at midnight and the pearl, the treasure, of which he was so unaccountably possessed. The sudden appearance of the Indian damsel revealed the whole secret, and led to conjectures which made the course of the "Maroon" seem more odious to Maria than it possibly could have been under a frank and honest statement of the facts. To have made this statement required nothing more than common courage. But this was the very faculty which Lopez wanted most. When his secret was extorted from him, as it finally was, and the whole of its details surrendered, the vexation of the Spanish woman was not so much because of the events, as because of his withholding them. It betrayed a want of confidence in her, and this was proof of deficient sympathy. Upon this sympathy she had staked her life—had periled all that was feminine in her nature; and the appalling terror, lest she should have periled all in vain, might well justify the fearful aspect, and stern and keen reproaches, with which she encountered.

She was at last pacified. It was her policy to be so. When the heart has made its last investment, it is slow to doubt its own securities. His declarations of attachment, when he had somewhat recovered his confidence, began to re-assure her. She yielded to his persuasions, to his blandishments and caresses, rather than to his reasons, or such as he urged in his justification. It was in the midst of those endearments that a voice was heard faintly singing at the cabin entrance, a voice which the Maroon but too painfully remembered. The tones, though faint, were distinct. The song was in the dialect of the Caribbee, and it was one of which a feeble translation has been already given; a ballad which the poor Amaya had been wont to sing him, when she would beguile him to join her in her sports of ocean. It rehearsed the delights and the treasures of the deep; its cool crystalline chambers, always secure from the shafts of the sun; its couches of moss and sea weed, and of the sweet devotion of the sea maid who implored him to her embraces. The pathetic tenderness of her tone—the wild but pleading earnestness of her plaint—the solemn sweetness and mysterious force of that invocation with which the separate verses were burdened.

"Come, seek the ocean's depths with me!" startled the guilty Maroon with a new and nameless terror. He started to his feet, but remained stationary, incapable of motion. But the angry spirit of Maria de Pacheco was aroused once more. She put him aside, and darted to the entrance of the cabin. As she threw it open a white form flashed upon the darkness. It seemed as if a spirit had shot away from her grasp, and darting high in air, had disappeared in the black waste of sky and sea beyond. A shriek, rather in exultation than grief, was heard amid the roar of wind and water. It was followed by the human scream of Maria. "Madre de Dios!" the ship is moving. We are at the mercy of the sea! Ho! there, Lopez! Linares! Awake! arouse ye, or we perish!"

Her cries were cut short by her terrors. The prow of the ship was lifted, fearfully lifted, as if by some unseen power from below. The water surged awfully beneath, and a terrible roar followed, as if from a herd of wild animals deep in the hollows of the sea.

"What is that, Lopez! what is this?" whispered the woman to the faint-hearted paramour who had crept beside her. A terrible shock followed; another and another! and the whole dreadful danger was apparent in an instant to both. They were among the rocks. The ship had struck, and the ready memory of the Maroon, well conceived the fearful condition in which they stood, borne by the irresistible and treacherous currents upon those silent and terrible masses of rock, where, in moments of the sea's serene, he had so frequently shared in the wild sports of his Caribbean beauty. Well might he remember those rude and sullen masses. Often had he remarked, with a shudder, the dark and fearful abysses which settled, still and gloomy, in their dark mysterious chambers.—But he had now no time to recall the periods of their grim repose. Another moment, and the ship, awfully plunging under the constant impulses of the sea, bore her sharp bow, with a deep groan, in the black and seething waters. The breakers rushed over them with a fall like that of a cataract. For a single instant, the Dian de Burgos hung suspended as it were, upon a pinnacle. Then, even as she still besotted, and only half awakened sailors, were rushing out on deck, she divided in the middle, one part falling over into the reservoir among the rocks, the other tumbling back upon the sea, to be driven forward, by successive shocks, and in smaller fragments, to a like destiny.

In this fearful moment, Maria de Pacheco, was separated, by the numerous waves, from the side of the "Maroon." He heard her voice through the awful roar.

"Where are you, Lopez—O! let me not lose you now!" But he could make no answer. He heard her no more. Her cries ceased with that single one. He had not strength to cry, for he was struggling himself with the sea, and with another peril. While the fierce currents bore him forward,—while the wild billows tore him away from the fragment of rock which he had grasped spasmodically, in the moment when the ship went to pieces—he was conscious of a sudden plunge beside him,—of an arm fondly wrapped about his neck, and of a voice that sung in tones the most mournful and pathetic in his ears, even as he sank, and sinking with him, that fond ballad of the Caribbean damsel. It was a heart-broken chant, which had some exultation in it. The last human words of which the feeble and perfidious "Maroon" was conscious, were those of the "entreaty sea nymph,

"Come, seek the ocean's depths with me!"

The Susan Loud and Georgiana, the two American vessels captured at the island of Contoy by the Spanish forces, at the time of the Lopez excitement, have been finally disposed of at Havana. The brig Susan Loud, being an old, worm-eaten vessel, was sold at auction on the 29th ult., but the barque Georgiana, proving a fine staunch craft, was to be sent to Cadiz as a trophy of the loyalty of the Cuban subjects to the Queen of Spain.