

FRANCOIS. OR PIRATE COVE.

A Legend of Cape-Breton.

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CHAPTER I.

Despair.

"He was a mark
For blight and desolation."—BYRON'S DREAM.

"Yes!" he cried—no longer able to control the pent-up agony of his soul—"it is but one bold plunge, after all, and then—all is over forevermore! Eternity!—tush! why should that bugbear affright us? Who has ever returned from the grave to satisfy our doubts as to an hereafter? Pah! it is all a fable; the Romans had their elysium, the Moslem his paradise—the Christian his heaven—and all of them are dupes. I cannot stand this whirl of thought—this maddening memory of the past—one brave plunge, and I am at rest forever! At rest?—and can there be a rest for me?" and he accompanied the exclamation by a phrenzied movement of the hand against his throbbing forehead.

The person thus soliloquizing was a young man, perhaps, twenty-five or twenty-seven years of age; tall and well-formed, with a swarthy complexion, and dark eyes and hair. His features wore a certain degree of beauty, and were bold and masculine—but the expression was bad—and evinced discontent mingled with despair. His dress consisted of a blue frock, and canvas trowsers, belted round the waist, in the manner peculiar to sailors; but there was a marked contrast between his white hands and the coarse costume in which he was dressed.

At the time of which we write he is standing on the fore-castle of a brig, with his arms folded and apparently lost in contemplation. Around him, engaged in their various duties, are a number of men, some wearing clothes of a similar description, and others infinitely worse dressed. Let us follow him in the train of his reflections and thereby learn something of his situation:

"Yes"—he continued, "it is but one leap into those dark waters, and all is over. This mysterious thinking power, called the human mind, can agonize no longer, and I shall be at

rest. Oh, could I fly from my thoughts—could I become insensible to the past and the future alike—could I only become like those animated and breathing clouds of dust around me—with sufficient power of reasoning to vie with the instinct possessed by the brute creation—it would be all I ask. But reflection will drive me mad. To possess thousands but a few weeks since—and now—to be penniless! and penniless by my own mad conduct—by lavishing my living on cheats, gamblers, drunkards and courtezans! To be, but a month since, the associate of the refined, the beautiful, the learned, the rich—and now to be an outcast—the companion of all that is vulgar and vile, ignorant and unsympathizing!—Great heaven! what human brain could bear it! To be refused employment, even in the meanest capacity; to be almost spurned from every door—to go as a mendicant for permission to toil; it cannot be endured.—They may talk of men of moral courage and philosophic fortitude—but those who talk so, never had their theory put to such a test as this. And now to become the companion of these degraded men, and work my passage to a foreign land! No! I cannot do it. Let me end this brief existence—one plunge, and it is done. There is no hereafter—why should I fear. Everything in this universe is in a state of transition; everything is resolved back to its original, and so is man. His body is resolved back into the elements, and immortal spirit he has none. Yet they say that there is an overruling Providence. Have I not adured him to stay me in my mad career? and yet I was not stayed. True, I made no effort, but had I even done so, effort was vain—for a resistless destiny precipitated me onwards, and I could not pause. Well—I will put the thing to the test. I will go on shore; I will make one attempt to earn my living; but, stop! I may be apprehended—never mind, I will try. If that fails, I have still the last resource, and can act the Roman's part."

At this moment a man who was engaged in unloading the vessel, and whose peculiar construction of visage and figure made him rather conspicuous, addressed the young man:—