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THE BUCCANEERS OF TORTUGA.

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CHAPTER I.

"He did not follow what they all pursued,
With hope still baffled, still to be renewed."

BYRON.

THE exploits of the Buccaneers of the West Indies are over, and peaceful colonies now occupy these pleasant isles, which were once the abodes of piracy and rapine. These lawless communities have disappeared from the land and wave—the places that knew them know them no more: yet the record of their crimes and daring deeds, will long haunt the fair islands of the west—will long be remembered and repeated on the Spanish main, with almost superstitious awe.

Among the many wild adventures that are told of these singular men; those that befel a French nobleman of high rank, are the most remarkable; but before relating the errors and misfortunes of Henri St. Amande, (for that was the name the Duke De — bore during his sojourn with the pirates,) it will not be amiss to describe the customs, manners and origin of the rude people with whom he united his destiny.

The French and English colonists settled on the Island of St. Christopher, were driven from thence by the Spaniards, who regarded them with the most bitter jealousy and animosity. The unfortunate fugitives, however, succeeded in establishing themselves in the northern part of St. Domingo, and afterwards in the small Island of Tortuga.

At first these expatriated families confined themselves to the peaceful enjoyments of hunting, fishing, and cultivating the earth. They lived in

little huts built on some spot of cleared ground just large enough to dry their skins, and to contain their bucaning houses. These spots they called boucans, and the huts they dwelt in ajoupas. As to laws, the Buccaneers acknowledged none but an odd jumble of conventions made between themselves, which, however, they regarded as the sovereign rule. At first the new settlers were harmless and inoffensive in their habits, till the exterminating wars the Spaniards carried on against them, roused in them a spirit of revenge and retaliation, and transformed them into warriors and pirates; at whose very name their enemies learned to tremble.

Those whose outraged feelings led them to adopt this new and perilous life, fortified themselves in the Island of Tortuga, and invited their countrymen to quit their European homes and join their association. Many adventurers obeyed the summons, actuated either by avarice, necessity, or hatred to the Spanish nation, and soon every name and race might be found among those pirates; who, bound together by a league of rapine and violence, outcasts from the world—and united in one cause—became the scourges of the New World; and the avengers of the injured natives of Peru and Mexico.

Among these lawless men, Henri St. Amande was distinguished for his daring exploits, and refined manners; and even the Buccaneers themselves wondered why a youth of such promise had quitted his native France, to become their associate, and waste his patrimony in fitting out privateers to devastate the shores of South America.