

Satyrane: OR The Stranger in England

Thomas Love Peacock

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CHAPTER I. Introduction

THE MISSIONARY ship Puff being on its voyage to save the souls of Australasian sinners with a large cargo of bibles and rum (it having been found by experience that the Indians will not swallow the first without the second of these commodities) was cast away on the shore of Terra Incognita, and the whole crew perished with the exception of one "chosen vessel," who was miraculously kept afloat by special providence and the secondary cause of a cork jacket.

This long-faced gentleman, having been safely floated upon a shelving part of the shore, looked about him with some misgivings of heart. Himself and his dear brethren who were now at the bottom of the sea had been favoured with a call to convert the idolaters of the Southern Islands: but he knew not how to reconcile the genuineness of this call with the stubborn fact of their having been all drowned before a single idolater was converted. But he comforted himself with the reflection that he was himself reserved for some great work, and in the meantime he refreshed his inward man and diluted the salt water which he had unwillingly swallowed with a portion of the contents of a small leathern bottle, of rum which he had not forgotten to attach to his jacket. He now looked about for some solid to his fluid, and suddenly the dread of cannibals occurred to him. How, thought he, if in seeking to kill and eat I should myself be killed and eaten? And in dismal doubt and perplexity he turned his steps from the shore.

He had not proceeded far before his ears were saluted with unholy sounds of music and merriment, which seemed to shew that the persons from whom they proceeded were a set of ungodly heathens who were so lost to all sense of piety as to think of making themselves happy. He felt strengthened in the conviction of his call to shew these deluded reprobates the saving grace and virtue of long faces and dismal sounds, and after another application to his bottle he concealed it in a copious pocket, from which he extracted a bible, and his courage being thus braced up by the trebly powerful compound of hunger, pot-valour, and fanaticism, he marched boldly onward towards' the spot from which the sounds proceeded.

His way led through a beautiful valley which the palm, the pomegranate, and the citron, the fruits and flowers of all climates, had united to adorn. The clouds of the storm were dispersed: the sun was shining in full splendour: and the whole aspect nature displayed a luxuriant brilliancy that carried with it a clear conviction of the vileness of world. His path wound round a point of hills. The valley opened into a natural amphitheatre: and he beheld a scene that made him groan in spirit, and shewed that he was in the dominions of Satan.

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