

The Phantom Ship (Classic Reprint)

Marryat Marryat

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Excerpt from The Phantom Ship

The Phantom Ship is the most notable of the three novels constructed by Marry at on an historic basis, and like its predecessor in the same category, Snarleyyow, depends largely for its interest on the element of diablerie which is very skilfully manipulated. Here, however, the supernatural appearances are never explained away, and the ghostly agencies are introduced in the spirit of serious, if somewhat melodramatic, romance. Marryat's personal experience enabled him, with little research, to produce a life-like picture of old Dutch seamanship, and his powers in racy narrative have transformed the Vanderdecken legend into a stirring tale of terror. The plot cannot be called original, but it is more carefully worked out and, from the nature of the material at hand, more effective than most of Marryat's own. He has put life into it, moreover, by the creation of some genuine characters, designed for nobler ends than to move the machinery.

Amine, indeed, as Mr Hannay points out, "is by far his nearest approach to an acceptable heroine." Her romantic and curiously superstitious disposition is admirably restrained by strength of will and true courage. The scenes of the Inquisition by which she meets her death are forcibly described. Philip Vanderdecken is a very respectable hero; daring, impetuous, and moody, without being too improbably capable. The hand of destiny lends him a dignity of which he is by no means unworthy. Krantz, the faithful friend, belongs to a familiar type, but the one-eyed pilot is quite sufficiently weird for the part he has to play.

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