



CARIB GOLD

By ELLERY H. CLARK WNU Service Copyright 1926 by BOBBS-MERRILL CO

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I.—In the small New Jersey village of Straitsmouth, in the year 1749, Richard Lindsay, who tells the story, is a carefree youth whose chief activities are fishing and hunting. Proud of his marksmanship, he gives an exhibition before some villagers and a stranger, with whom they afterward dine at the tavern. The conversation turns on a notorious pirate, whose ship, the Black Panther, is thought to be in the vicinity.

CHAPTER II.—Next morning Lindsay, after wild ducks, is sitting in a "blind" when three strangers land on a beach near him. Surprised, he makes no sound. The men bury a chest while he watches. The work finished, he sees two of the strangers kill the third. The actual slayer is the man with whom Lindsay had talked the day before. Lindsay's presence is discovered. After apparently determining to kill the youth to prevent his talking, the question of his shooting ability seems to be of importance, and he gives the two men proof of his skill. His acquaintance, whose name he learns is Burford, tells Lindsay the third man is Captain Barclay, and his ship, of course, is the Black Panther. The three go aboard.

road none of the best, and I cannot have you risk an injury in the darkness to the legs of your good horse or to your own neck. Also, for reasons of my own, I wish to enter the Cove on foot. So here we will part."

Once in the road, he thrust his hand in his pocket, drew out a couple of large coins and handed them to me. "Not as payment, my lad," he observed, "but as a token from one man to another, and in memory of your shooting, at which"—he added with a smile that spoke volumes—"you are even more expert than you are at wrestling. Good-by; perhaps some day we shall meet again."

He waved his hand, walked off briskly down the road, and left me gazing after him, until presently I glanced at the coins, which I learned later that evening from my father were the beautiful golden doubloons of Spain. As I reviewed the events of the afternoon it seemed to me that a merchant's life was more varied and interesting than I had imagined it to be. Indeed, it seemed such a busy existence that I wondered where the merchant had found time to learn the art of wrestling with such skill. And so, still deep in thought, I turned around and squared away for home.

CHAPTER II

Out of the Fog.

By the time I had reached home and eaten my supper, thoughts of the morning's sport had driven all else from my mind. With a relish which my hunter can appreciate, I made ready my shotgun, powder-flask and shot-pouch, and laid beside them my favorite rifle. These preparations completed, I walked to the beach to look at my dory, and finding that everything was in its proper place, I returned to the house and went to bed.

Never a heavy sleeper at any time, but being able to doze, as the saying is, with one eye open, I was always, before a shooting expedition, more than ever on the alert. Half a dozen times in the night I stirred, awakened, and once or twice even rose and walked over to the window, to admire the ocean sleeping so peacefully under the stars, which shone in multitudes in the infinite distances of the sky. Toward morning, however, keenly alive as I was to the weather and its varying moods, I sensed, even in my sleep, that a change had come; and when next I opened my eyes I saw that the starlight had faded and was conscious that a faint, almost imperceptible chill permeated the room. "Fog," I thought to myself, and hastening to the window I found that a light northeast wind had blown in from the ocean this chilling, all-pervading blanket, covering everything with its mantle and blotting from sight every landmark around the house.

At first, with that ebbing of courage which comes with the early dawn, I decided to abandon my trip; but when my eye chanced to fall on my gun and rifle, they fired my enthusiasm anew, and with a shrug of my shoulders I determined to make the best of it, calculating that the sun, later in the day, would in all probability burn away the fog. I dressed as quickly as I could, breakfasted with great relish on some pilot biscuit and a glass of milk, and with gun and rifle under my arm, made my way out-of-doors and down to the beach. There I found the dory, her rail, sides and thwart gemmed with moisture, and, as I had done so many times before, I seized her bow with joy in my own strength, ran her down to the water's edge, and a moment later had seated myself at the oars and was pulling away, with long and steady strokes, for the island; taking care, for the present, to keep close to the shore, which was dimly outlined through the fog, since I knew from experience how easy it is in such weather to lose one's

bearings completely in a very short time.

Far inland, from some distant farm, an irrepressible cock, after the immemorial custom of his kind, shouted aloud that day had come; and almost at once a rival, with no less vigor flung the challenge back again. Then suddenly, far away from the eastward there came to my ears, dim and faint, another sound which I could not comprehend, but which seemed, had such a thing been probable, like the muffled reports of firearms. Instantly the memory of yesterday's talk in the ale-house came to my mind. "The Black Panther," I repeated whimsically to myself. "He is lurking and prowling out there in the fog."

This sound, whatever it was, soon died away, and I continued, without more thought of it, to cover the distance in fine style, and presently, with great suddenness, as is always the case with objects in a fog, the shore of the island sprang into being before my eyes; and an instant later I had driven the dory's bow deep into the yielding sand, and jumping out, had hauled her a boat's length up the beach and planted the anchor at the base of the reeds. Impatient for the morning's sport, I took from the dory's bow a dozen wooden decoys, rudely whittled to represent curlew and plover, each supported on a long stick to be firmly implanted in the sand. Then, with these lures in one hand and with gun and rifle in the other, I made my way across the island to the easterly shore, set out the decoys, head to the wind, on a tempting sand spit; and a gunshot away, at the edge of the undergrowth, scooped out for myself a narrow blind just deep enough so that, when seated, my head was below the tips of the surrounding reeds. Then I loaded both gun and rifle with the utmost care, and at last was ready for what might befall.

For some time yet, however, I was doomed to wait with ill-concealed impatience. I knew that it was, either sunrise, or very near it, but no light as yet could penetrate this barrier of fog. And to render me more restless still, the ceaseless whistling of the shore-birds told me that though they were hidden from my sight, they were all about me in myriads.

Then through the thinning fog a band of half a dozen majestic curlew came into view just beyond the decoys leisurely following the curve of the beach and constantly bending their long necks to feed on the spoil brought in by each advancing wave. Wiping the moisture from the barrel I drew my shotgun to my shoulder and sighted at the flock. Momentarily my finger curled around the trigger; in another instant I think I should have pressed it, and then this story would never have been written; but I hesitated just long enough to hear, above the whistling of the shore-birds, above the faint ripple of the water on the shore, the unmistakable and not far distant "clink-clank" of oars against thole-pins. Hardly believing my own ears, I sat stock-still, my gun still at my shoulder; and then again "clink-clank." Without doubt, a boat was passing in the fog.

In the next second the scamps had leaped, quacking, from the pond; the curlew, with their clattering cry of alarm, had likewise vanished, and a general commotion and unrest, accompanied by shrill notes of warning, told me, as plainly as though I had seen it, that the boat was headed for the island.

In another few seconds the sound of oars ceased; there came, instead, the crunch of a boat's bow upon the beach; then voices, low and guarded; and out of the mist three forms came dimly into view. The foremost, even allowing for the magnifying properties of the atmosphere, I could perceive to be a man of giant stature, and doubtless of corresponding strength, for he was carrying, in an attitude that showed that his burden taxed him to the utmost, a large chest or box. Behind him, one to the right and one to the left, came two other figures, men, I judged, of average size, one bearing a spade and the other unincumbered by any burden at all.

Doubtless I seem to describe all this in a very calm, matter-of-fact way, but I can assure you that at the time the impression it made on me was one of a different sort, vivid enough to set my eyes to staring and to make my blood leap faster in my veins; for, from the tales I had heard around the fire at the inn, I had no doubt (in spite of the talk that there were none in our waters) that these men were pirates; and that since, for obvious reasons, they did not give their money into the custody of the bankers on the shore, they had come to the island to deposit it in the good old-fashioned way, according to the custom of freebooters since their trade began.

... I experienced other emotions as well, chief among which was a very lively fear; for though I knew, of course, that I was quite invisible, still the trio advanced straight for me, as though their destination was the very spot where I lay concealed. Fortunately for me, however, they came to a stop some fifty feet from the edge of my blind; he whom I took to be the leader of the party gave a curt word of command, and at once the huge man, with great alacrity, set down his burden and began rubbing his arms as if to restore the circulation of the blood. Thereupon the leader flung another word to the man with the spade, and he at once laid down this implement beside the box and the two withdrew from their com-



I Continued to Crouch There in the Reeds.

panion, coming so far in my direction that soon they were nearer to me than they were to the chest. Apparently they were searching for a mark of some sort, for presently the man who had carried the spade stopped near a low, gnarled cedar and observed, "Why not this tree, Captain, if you may call it such? At all events, it's larger than its mates."

At these words I experienced another thrill, but of a different kind. Naturally these three men were unknown to me, and I had not traveled enough to have made many acquaintances in other towns; yet I could have sworn I had somewhere heard this man's voice, or at least a voice almost exactly resembling it. But before I had time to perplex myself further, the man addressed as Captain made answer, and although I had never seen the fine gentlemen who attend at court, yet his tone, languid and somewhat bored, was such as I imagined these gentry to affect. "Twill serve," he said. "Now the line, Burford, and cross bearings. An then"—he added, so low that I could barely hear the words—"and then for Tom."

What followed I could not well describe, for the fog, which had seemed to be lightening, now shut in thick again, and their maneuvers took their first to the westward, for which I was duly thankful, and then back in my direction, which made me crouch and cover like a hunted hare. There was measuring, I judged, and placing of marks, and the man who had born the spade was continually jotting down figures in what I supposed to be a small book. All this time the big man sat on the chest, quietly, as if glad to be let alone, and without, as far as I could see, evincing the slightest interest in what was going on.

Many and many a time, since that morning when I lay crouched amid the reeds, I have debated with myself what I should have done, for I had such an opportunity as might never come again in the course of a lifetime. At such close and point-blank range I could have fired my shotgun full in the face of one of the men, then have seized my rifle and shot down another and then, taking to my heels and protected by the smoke and by the mist I could have crouched in the shelter of the undergrowth until I had reloaded my rifle and returned to take my chances with my remaining foe. Here, with fortune favoring me, I would have put out of the way three pirates, and would have gained for myself a chest of treasure.

But such arguments I should answer as follows: In the first place, I did not know that these men were pirates. In the second place, even if I had some means of assuring myself on this point, the fact remains that in those days, were not regarded with the horror and loathing which they merited. To the world in general, your pirate, like Blackbeard or Morgan, provided you did not fall about of him and endanger your own skin, was a good deal of a hero, whose adventures were to be eagerly followed and whose prowess, like that of knights of old, was to be celebrated both in story and in song. And if these two reasons are not enough to explain my inaction, there remains a third, namely, that I was only nineteen, and that my mind did not then work, nor has it since worked, I fear with any great celerity. And so, when perhaps I should have been bold and keen and wide-awake to make my fortune for life, I continued to crouch there in the reeds, my eyes staring and so fascinated with what I was seeing that I could only gaze like a great booby, with never a thought of gun and rifle at my side. Do not mis-

understand me; I do not say, even today, that I should have acted otherwise than I did; but if I had so acted, I might have managed to prevent the very lamentable series of events which followed.

After a few minutes of these evolutions on the part of the two men who seemed to be the leaders in the enterprise, they stood for a moment in silence at a point midway between me and the third man; then gave him a curt order, and at once, without a word, and, as it seemed to me, somewhat reluctantly, he heaved his huge bulk upright, picked up the box and brought it to the spot where they stood. Then, going back and recovering the spade, he proceeded to dig, and soon had a large pile of earth and sand thrown up by his side. Yet his companions evidently wished to insure the security of their hiding place, for presently I saw him get down into the pit and make the dirt fly ever faster than before. Then, at the word of command, he stopped again, and reaching out over the side of the hole, he half dragged, half carried the chest, the size of which was hard to determine in the darkness, and swung it down to the bottom, after which he emerged and began filling in the pit. Over this matter, indeed, the whole party spent much time; the surplus earth was carried away and dumped into the pond, and as nearly as I could discern, they were at great pains to smooth out all traces of their foot-prints around the spot where they had buried the chest.

And then, wholly without warning a terrible thing happened. The big man, who had done the bulk of the labor, now stood leaning on his spade, gazing blankly into the fog, when, to my surprise, I saw the man whom I deemed the leader steal quietly up behind the dreaming giant and crouch down until he was fairly on his hands and knees, his back level with his follower's legs. At once I recognized the maneuver—I had seen the same thing done, and had done it myself, scores of times in the rough play of the Straitsmouth boys; for, given an active confederate, this is a trick against which there is no guard; if your ally gives the victim a good hard shove, he is bound to lose his balance, reel helplessly backward, and sprawl at full length upon the ground. Yet while, as I say, this was a favorite trick with boys, to see it employed in this place, and with grown men as actors, puzzled me, and made me feel that instead of jest, it boded deadly earnest. And my fears were, as it proved, only too well grounded, for without loss of an instant the third man walked boldly up to his unsuspecting victim, and, without a word or a sign to reveal his purpose, suddenly gave him the violent push which I had been dreading to see. Without uttering a sound the surprised giant flung up his hands and fell heavily. (To Be Continued Next Week)

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Father of Mrs. J. C. Leedy Passes Away

W. E. Wilson, father of Mrs. J. C. Leedy of Sherwood, passed away Friday evening at his home at Salem. He had been ill for over a year with hardening of the arteries so his death was not unexpected. The funeral occurred Sunday.

Building a Good Road.

R. A. Twiss is building and rocking a good road to his new home near the highway at Tigard. Pipes are also being laid for Bull Run water to the house.

E. L. C. E. Will Entertain M. E. Endeavorers

The E. L. C. E. of the Evangelical church of Tigard, will entertain the Epworth League of the M. E. church Friday evening, April 1. They will give an "April Fool" party and a good time is anticipated by the young people.

Virginia Sibley Celebrates Her Seventeenth Birthday

Miss Virginia Sibley celebrated her 17th birthday at Tigard Saturday evening with a dinner, with her sister and husband, Mr. and Mrs. Warren H. Day, of Portland, as guests. Miss Sibley was born in Yongchow, China, one of the oldest cities in China. It was ruled over by the Italian, Marco Polo, at one time, who was governor from 1380 to 1383.

BRIDGES ARE BEING REPAIRED

Letter From Tigard Commercial Club Brings Bridge Crew.

Highway bridge department crews were repairing the bridge across Fanno creek Saturday. They put in new girders underneath the bridge and some repairs were made to the bridge across the Tualatin river. The ditches alongside the highway were opened up so that the water could run freely.

The Tigard Commercial club wrote the state highway commission about a month ago recommending repairs to both bridges.

The bridge crew has been in Tigard over a week with their repair wagon and rented the house formerly occupied by the Joy family.

Enjoyed Birthday Party At Sherwood Wednesday

Mrs. B. G. Leedy, of Tigard, spent Wednesday at Sherwood visiting her daughter, Mrs. Alice Young and enjoyed a birthday party for her granddaughter, Lois, who celebrated her fourth anniversary.

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Advertisement for V. SANDBOTHE, R. N., MALE NURSE AND MASSEUR. Graduate of Bellevue hospital, New York City. Formerly connected with Burns' Baths in San Francisco, Cal.

Large advertisement for Pacific Stages, featuring a motor stage vehicle and the slogan 'Not alone comfort—but luxury!'. Includes text about fine equipment and convenient travel.