



SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—In the small New Jersey village of Strainsmouth, 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 men proof of his skill. His acquaintance, whose name he learns is Burford, tells Lindsay the third man is Captain Barclay, and his ship, off shore, is the Black Panther. The three go aboard.

upon his back, whereupon, to my horror, the man who had shoved him leaped, without loss of a second, full on top of him, and I saw a great knife gleam and plunge, once, twice, thrice. Into the unresisting body of the fallen man.

Meanwhile the man who had knelt had risen to his feet again, and I saw that he held a pistol in his hand, ready to fire. And for an instant, indeed, it seemed that there might be need, for the fallen man, whose vitality must have been prodigious, now succeeded. In spite of his wounds, in throwing off the man who bestrode him and in dashing him to the ground; and the next second, to my terror, he came plunging for my blind, a most horrible and ghastly sight, with head thrown back, and mouth gaping and distorted in agony. He ran aimlessly, reeling from side to side, with arms pitifully outstretched before him, and with body inclining farther and farther forward until at last, whether from tripping over a root or whether from loss of strength, he crashed prostrate, not ten feet from where I was covering, with my blood frozen in my veins.

With a bound his betrayer was upon him, and I could have faintly away when he turned the prostrate body, and, as if to make assurance sure, plunged his knife, with a kind of diabolical savagery, full into the giant's throat. Then, more slowly, he rose to his feet, and even in my terror I experienced a still further shock as I saw that in spite of his change of dress this murderer, beyond all question, was none other than the peaceful merchant, the affable stranger with whom I had talked and laughed at Strainsmouth only the day before. He stood motionless, the dripping knife still in his hand, looking around him as if seeking a tuft of grass with which to clean it, while I crouched low amid the reeds, hoping and praying that he would not see me. But as he glanced hither and thither to the right and left of him, all at once—and I could have screamed aloud as I saw what was coming—his eyes, drawing nearer and nearer, at length looked squarely into mine. Frozen with horror, I made no movement of any kind, but remained staring as if turned to stone.

Nor was he, on his part, more active. He must, of course, have been a man accustomed to all kinds of excitement and adventure, and not easily to be surprised; but the sight of a face looking up at him out of the reeds on an island which he confidently believed to be uninhabited, save for himself and his partner in crime, clearly staggered him. Before either of us could act the man who had been in the back ground had stepped forward, and he, at least, was quick as lightning itself. With a gesture so rapid that the eye could not follow it, his hand leaped up and I found myself gazing into the round muzzle of a deadly looking pistol, while he said, without raising his voice, but in a tone like steel, "Come out of there!"

With a sinking heart I realized that my opportunity had passed. What ever I might have done, had my wits been as quick as his, was of no import now. The sight of that pistol settled everything, and abandoning all hope, I obeyed his command.

I shall never forget that first sight of Capt. Francis Barclay. He was not a large man, but I have never in my life met another who gave such an impression of power. His figure was lithe and well-proportioned; his face, thin and aquiline, was very dark and clean-shaven, save for a small coal-black mustache; his hair, also jet black, curled negligently beneath his cocked hat, with its sable plume. Nor was his dress less noticeable than his face and figure, for in spite of the hour and the occasion, he was clad in knee-breeches and silken hose, with long slashed boots; his waistcoat was of some light sprigged stuff, and his

coat was of scarlet, with fumes at wrist and throat.

He had, as I have said, shown that he was proof against surprise, and yet, as I came forward, I distinctly saw his expression change. What there could be to amaze him in the sight of a desperately frightened boy I could not then imagine, yet he glanced at me as if thoroughly taken aback, crying out, "In God's name Burford, what is this? I thought we had left him on the schooner."

My friend of yesterday—now, I had little doubt, my enemy—had advanced to my blind and had thoughtfully taken possession of my gun and rifle. Now he resumed his place at the captain's side. "I was startled when I saw the other," he answered, "but this is not he. This is the boy I spoke of who drove me down the shore. And in a tone vastly different from his friendly geniality of yesterday he asked: 'How much have you seen?' The fog is thick; perhaps you have seen naught save my quarrel with my friend. Perhaps you could not see in the darkness, that he struck me first."

Now why I did so I do not rightly know, except that I think I have inherited from my good parents a strong love of truth; and I dare say, also, that I may have felt that even if I cared to tell lies, these men were clever enough to detect me; so I answered directly enough: "I saw every thing. I saw you bury the chest, and I saw what followed."

His expression altered when I spoke of the chest. Then he turned to his companion, who still held his pistol leveled at my breast. "A fine outspoken lad," he said with an irony that even I could understand. "But I fear of too roving a nature. Home after all, is the only place where a boy is really safe."

At these words, the import of which there was no mistaking, I felt a sudden sinking of heart. And at the same time I experienced that sensation which comes to all of us at times, that all this could not be true. The whole aspect of the day with its chill, persistent fog, the unlooked-for coming of these strange men, the cold-blooded murder I had witnessed—surely, I thought, I could throw off this night mare, waken, and find myself in my bed at home. Yet that silent bulk at my feet, with the pool of blood trickling into the thirsty sand, was real enough. And that dark-visaged figure with the pistol was real enough, too, and as I looked, without any melodramatic flourish, but as coolly and naturally as if he were about to shoot at a mark, he raised his weapon still higher until it pointed at my forehead and I knew that the hand which held it was as firm as a rock. I made no doubt that he was about to fire, that I was as good as dead at that moment and there fell upon me that absolute calm which comes when all hope is past, when one has, in anticipation, already suffered the agonies of death. And now, thought I, as long as I must die, I can at least die like a man and let him see that we breed no cowards in Strainsmouth; and thereupon I straightened myself erect, let my arms fall loosely at my side, and looked him squarely in the eye.

The silence lengthened; from the far distance the whistle of a flock of curlew came to my ears. How strange, I reflected idly, that that should be the last sound I would hear; and then, slowly, deliberately, the dark pirate lowered his weapon until its muzzle pointed toward the ground. Then came the reaction. A momentary faintness and dizziness seized me; I felt myself sway, almost threw up an arm for support. Then, with a great fear lest these men should mock my cowardice, I bit my lip savagely, thrust my nails into my flesh, and the weakness passed.

Burford turned inquiringly toward the man in the red coat. The captain's face was alight with some emotion that I could not fathom; the dawning of some new idea was there, and whatever it was, it must have pleased him hugely, for all at once he began to laugh, not openly and heartily, as I was accustomed to see men laugh, but silently, and as it seemed to me, evilly. Presently, since he did not communicate to his companion the reason for it, my friend of yesterday inquired with some sharpness, "What cause for laughter?"

"Cause?" answered the captain, becoming grave again. "Much cause. What if we sent this one in place of the other?"

What he meant by this was unknown to me, but evidently Burford understood, for he seemed to ponder for a moment, then queried, "What gain?"

"What gain?" Barclay repeated. "All the gain in the world. I spare his life; hence he goes as my man. He will be welcomed without suspicion; the fatted calf, perhaps, will be

killed for him. And at a time appointed he delivers my enemy into my hand."

What they were talking about I had not the remotest idea, but I could see that what red-coat said impressed his hearer. For an instant Burford stood in silence, then glanced at me with a scrutinizing and critical air. "But they have the other's picture, and he has a scar."

Captain Barclay, smiling as if at some humorous thought which I could not comprehend, answered lightly, "A simple enough matter, my dear Burford; simple enough."

Burford appeared to have no more objections, and I was beginning to think that for some mysterious reason I was going to be saved after all, when suddenly the captain gave a sharp exclamation of disappointment. "Ah, I



"Go to the Gig, Burford, and Bring Me My Gun."

forgot," he said. "The other is a dead shot. That, in fact, is the main reason for his coming—to drill the body guard. The old fog adds other reasons, but if I know my man it's the marksman and not the nephew he wants. So unless this lad can shoot like the devil himself, we must give up the plan."

Again I shuddered, partly at his words but even more at the business-like way in which he once more raised his pistol, as if to complete his work where he had abandoned it. But this time, for a change, it was Burford who was to come to my aid. "But he can shoot like the devil himself," he exclaimed. "I saw him only yesterday kill three sea-ducks with three bullets and two of the birds were on the wing."

The captain hesitated; finally his fingers, to my great relief, left the handle of his too-ready pistol. "It may have been chance," he answered, gazing at me as if suspicious of my merits as a marksman. "Still, we can see. Go to the gig, Burford, and bring me my gun."

Burford departed. The dark captain stood waiting silently until his follower returned and handed him his piece. Gradually, while we had been talking, the mist had begun to fade, so that now, while it was still impossible to see to any distance, yet for a space of perhaps one hundred yards around us the air was tolerably clear, and the faint light of the sun could be seen, painting the gray a pale and beautiful gold. From the mainland, where they had spent the night in the fresh-water ponds and streams, flocks of ducks were passing continuously out to sea. Indeed, the captain had no sooner taken the gun from Burford's hand than, heralded by a rapid beat of wings, a single black duck hurtled by overhead. Like a flash, the piece leaped to his shoulder, and the bird, struck dead in midair, turned over and over and crashed heavily upon the sand. Without the slightest emotion, the captain handed me my gun. "Do likewise," he commanded. And with a significant touch of finger on pistol butt, he added curtly, "No tricks, mind."

I was in no mood for tricks. Nor, to be honest, was I eager to enter this test of marksmanship, for I knew that my nerves had been sorely tried, and I knew also how simple a matter it is for the best-aimed charge to scatter and fall to strike a vital spot. However, there was but one thing to do, and a second later a wideness shot out of the fog, and, catching sight of us, began towering upward with the speed and elusiveness for which a wild duck is noted. It was not an easy shot; yet so strong was the fowler's instinct in my heart that without thought I swung on the bird, and, hitting him with the very center of my heavy charge, fairly drove him upward through the air before he turned over and dropped lifeless within a dozen feet of where we stood.

The captain said nothing, nor from the expression on his face could I tell whether or not he was pleased at my display. "Load," he commanded curtly, and handed his own piece to Burford to be recharged. Once again we stood prepared, and before a minute had passed a pair of low-flying pin-tail drakes swept by us, separating, as they glimpsed us, and passing one to our right, one to our left, giving us a close, but none too easy cross-shot. At once the cautious Burford dropped flat to escape the chance of being hit, and the captain, picking the bird on the right, shot him neatly out of the air. I, perforce, took the one on the left, but, to my horror, though I

felt that I had held straight and true, he flew on as if untouched. From the corner of my eye I could see the captain's hand reaching for his pistol. "No, no," I cried. "Wait!" For many a time I had known a duck to fly on as if unhurt, then suddenly collapse, stone-dead. And, fortunately for me, this was to prove one of those instances, for before the drake had reached the borders of the encircling fog, all at once his wings folded to his sides, and darting downward through the air, he spashed lifeless into the sea.

The captain gazed at me as if uncertain whether it was luck or skill that was aiding me, and would, I think, have tested me yet again, but as he handed the gun to his subordinate, a flock of about twenty scup ducks, closely massed, passed overhead, but well out of gunshot. With a sudden exclamation, he stooped, seized my rifle from the ground, leveled it and fired. I fairly held my breath; if he made a shot like this, then in all probability my doom was sealed. And for a second I thought he had been successful, for one of the flock started to fall, then, to my intense relief, recovered and flew strongly on after his companions, while through the clear, transparent air a single feather floated down.

The captain pointed upward, not, I felt, without pride. "A feather, at least," he exclaimed. "Can you better that, my young cockerel?" And he handed me my rifle.

I felt that it was now or never. What might be the humor of this strange man I knew not, but I sensed instinctively that he was inordinately vain of his skill, and that whatever might be the object of this difficult test, he was most eager to prove that he was a finer shot than a more country boy. Yet, strangely enough, so keen in most men's minds is this desire to excel, that even now, while my life hung on the result of the next shot, and while I was of two minds whether it would be to my advantage to win or lose, still, illogically enough, while I felt my better chance to be to humor the captain's pride by missing and thus perhaps continuing to live, I nevertheless stood ready to do my best, and if I must die, at least to die with the memory of a shot well sped to lighten my pangs.

I had not long to wait. Again a whistle of wings, and a half dozen red heads emerged from the fog. They took no notice of us, but passed directly over our heads, at almost precisely the same range as the flock at which the captain had fired. Two beautiful birds were flying close together and almost directly in line, and as they passed overhead I sighted at the leader, swung ahead, and pressed the trigger. Never in my life have I felt a keener thrill than when from

(To Be Continued Next Week)

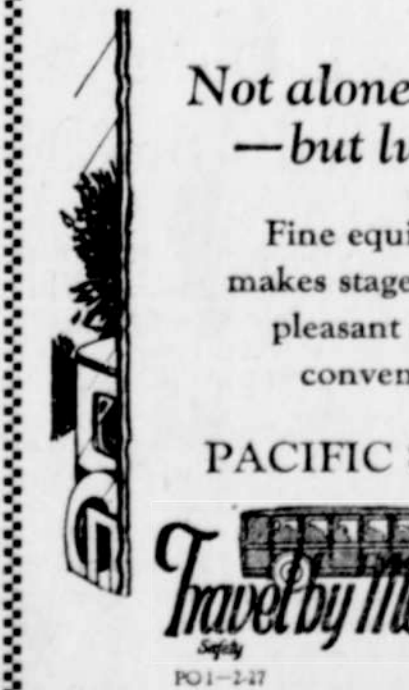
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TIGARD

M. F. Bishop has had the kitchen of his farm home remodeled and modernized and a bath room built on N. Kickert, of Tigard Plumbing company, is installing the plumbing this week.

The Stage family have stored their furniture and have gone to Kelso, Washington, to visit their daughter, Mrs. Ernest Pfaffle. Mrs. C. H. Pfaffle drove down Monday.

Mrs. A. Baird entertained in Portland last night with a card party. Mr. and Mrs. E. Eickmeyer were guests from Tigard.

A baby boy was born to Mr. and Mrs. Walter West at Klamath Falls last week.

R. H. Grandy made a business trip to Eugene this week.

Graders at Work Monday On Fairwell Street

The gas and water mains were taken up on Fairwell street Monday at Multnomah and gas was cut off part of the day. The pipes will be relaid when the street grade is made. A culvert was put in at 33rd street, and the scraper is pulling down the hills on either side and making a fill. There will be a cut of about six feet at the top of the hill and some lots will be left rather high.

DURHAM.

Mrs. A. Sattler entertained the Social club at her home on Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. A. Koch entertained Mr. and Mrs. H. Behrs, Mr. and Mrs. W. Cademo and Mr. and Mrs. R. Hofeldt last week Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. Art Lehr have rented J. S. Thomas' home. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas left for Long Beach, Wash., last Monday, where Mrs. Thomas intends to recuperate from her recent illness.

A farewell surprise party was given at the home of Miss Anna Krainik last Saturday evening. Miss Krainik moved to Portland Monday. Mr. and Mrs. George Schwisler will occupy the house.

Mr. and Mrs. A. Sattler had for their guests on Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. Forken of Portland.

Mr. and Mrs. George Capen of Portland, visited at the M. Frison home last Sunday.

METZGER.

Friday, April 1, the Junior club held a pie social and program at the club house. On the pies the sum of \$90.20 was realized. The play called "Powders and Patches" was entertaining and well given. The members of the cast were Katherine and Nadine Gibson, Laurette Wheeler, Iris Cornum, Emily and June Gilbride, Robert Leedy, Paul Lohr, Maurice Smith and Merton Robertson. Charlotte Shierk gave a clever reading.

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