



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 manhood, 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, off shore, is the Black Panther. The three go aboard.

CHAPTER III—On the ship Lindsay meets a youth whom he resembles in a remarkable manner. The youth is Robert McAllister, whom Barclay has captured on his way to his uncle's plantation in Jamaica. The pirate tells a story of wrong done to him by Andrew McAllister and admits he has sworn to kill him. He would use young McAllister as a spy in his uncle's household. The youth refuses to be a party to the treachery, and Barclay and Burford kill him.

CHAPTER IV—Realizing his helplessness and under threat of a lingering death, Lindsay agrees to assume young McAllister's name and take his place in Andrew's household. Fate, for now, as if in a sudden burst of friendship, he took a step forward, placed his hands on my shoulders and with the winning and forceful manner of which he was a master, continued: "If McAllister had been true to me, I would be true to him. I am a fighting man; that is my trade. I show no mercy to my enemies, and I ask none, but when I've once called a man my friend, I have never betrayed him. On that I give you my oath. You speak of treachery, of hating to be a traitor and a spy. What did McAllister do to me that night in the Antilles? No blacker act of treachery was ever seen since the world began. All my life ended there; everything since is only a dream. I must have my revenge; if it were not for that, life means nothing to me; I would as soon leap over the rail this instant and feed some hungry shark. You see, my lad, even in these few hours we've known each other, I've bared my heart. For two reasons I ask you to do this for me. For your own sake; you are young, on the threshold of the world; you don't want to go out yet into the eternal dark. And even more for my sake. Help me rid the earth of this cruel tyrant, who feeds and batters on the miseries of others. Come, give your word, and there's no more to be said. Your life is your own again, and you shall grudge to Jamaica with me as my guest. One word—that's all you have to speak."

Now if ever there was a cunning rascal, always ready to find the weak joint in your armor, Capt. Francis Barclay was the man. Even in the few hours he had known me, he had discovered that I was not to be driven, but that by flattery and asking for my aid, he stood a better chance of winning me to his side. Yet I am vain enough to think that even his persuasion would not have influenced me, if I had thought that I was doing wrong; for though the prospect of death by torture was far from pleasing, still we can die but once, and that is honor. But I reflected that while the Bible praised those who lay down their lives for a friend, the present case was altogether different. For here, on one side, was a bloodthirsty pirate who valued no one's life, not even his own, at a farthing; while set over against him were two other men, according to his statement even worse than himself. And why I should lay down my life for the sake of a villainous old scoundrel was more than I could see. In any event, I was not called upon to make a decision now. Later, if honor forbade me to betray McAllister, well and good; but now, standing here in the sunlight with the fresh breeze on my face, to gain even a few weeks' respite from death seemed a most desirable thing. And so I answered: "I'll do as you say, but on one condition; if I find McAllister and Shively to be honest men, so that it goes against me to betray them and I would rather die myself, then I have the privilege of that choice. Otherwise, I'll be faithful to you, and play the part of Robert McAllister until the time comes when I feel that I am actually doing wrong. Is that fair?"

"Fair and just," he cried quickly. "I could ask nothing fairer. If you take a fancy to McAllister and Shively, I'll quit the sea and turn preacher. And now, lad, as I've told you, I need you and I must guard your life with care. I can't trust you forward with my gentle darlings; their play is too

keen. You will share my cabin, and you had better begin by turning in and getting some sleep, for your face is white as chalk at this moment."

To tell the truth, I was ready enough to go, for often, while a strain continues, we may brace our nerves to meet it, but when it is over, then we realize what we have been through. So now the idea of rest was delightful, but suddenly one other thought struck me. "But," I cried, "McAllister had a scar."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Never fear," he assured me. "We'll invent a story for that. Go below now, and take your sleep."

Once stretched out in comfort in the cabin, I tried my best to slumber, but for some time I lay broad awake. Over and over again, in strange confusion, the events of the day whirled through my brain. Again I saw the giant sailor plunge headlong to the ground; again I trained my gun



My Lungs Seemed Choking. I Drew in a Great Breath.

on the passing wildfowl; again I boarded the schooner, and listened to the talk of McAllister and the captain, and saw its frightful conclusion. Yet at last sleep came, at first deep and unbroken, and then suddenly filled with a most terrible and realistic dream. I was, as it seemed, lying on the sand of the island, and two pirates had crept upon me, and in spite of my efforts to rise, were holding me down, while one of them menaced my throat with a knife. In my anguish I fought, struggled, tried to scream, but not a sound would come. Their grip would not loosen; the blade came nearer and nearer to my throat; it was too awful; with an effort into which I put every atom of strength that I possessed I stirred my leaden limbs, opened my weary eyes—

For one dreadful second I thought that my dream was true. Burford, gripping me by the arms, lay across my body, his strength more than a match for mine. Over my head I saw the face of the captain, in one hand a most murderous looking knife, in the other a sponge which in spite of my struggles he thrust under my nostrils in such fashion that I must breathe or die. Through my wearied brain flashed the thought, "Why all this trouble to kill me when a simple thrust would have done the trick?" And then all at once the answer came to me; McAllister has a scar. My lungs seemed choking; I drew in a great breath of the pungent liquid on the sponge; then—blackness.

CHAPTER V

Two of a Trade.

Two weeks had passed since I had first boarded the schooner, and in that time, with favoring winds and under cloudless skies, we had passed from the waters of the North Atlantic into those of the Caribbean.

It took some time for the cut on my cheek to heal (leaving, to the delight of the captain, a crooked scar), but when I had once regained my customary vigor, I found little enough to do; for the captain kept me aft, away from the quick-listed crew, and though nominal at liberty, I was, as a matter of fact, on almost the same footing as a prisoner.

It must be said, however, that no prisoner could have had a more delightful jailer. I realize, of course, that since he had contrived to scar me for life, this statement sounds incredible; but the fact remains that this man possessed for me the same strange fascination that he had for all with whom he came in contact. I despised myself for admiring him, and

yet, in spite of this, I could not help it. In the first place, he was the most vivid talker I have ever known, and in the privacy of the cabin would narrate countless tales of his various voyages and adventures. And from these tales I soon discovered that Burford was of great service to him, a right-hand man who, with his placid and genial ways, could gather information or set plans afoot where a more dashing and conspicuous lieutenant might have failed.

Nor were the captain's powers of conversation limited to narrative; his philosophy of life was equally fascinating. I realize now that he must have tried deliberately to shock me by setting up the most impossible standards of proper conduct, but though he was wrong, and I knew he was wrong, yet his brain was so much more subtle than mine, and his lecturing so much greater, that I was always out-argued and put to shame. I heard him with loathing and reluctance, but I could not answer his arguments, and was fast getting into a sulky and defiant mood, so that it was with immense relief that I heard a bustling upon deck and then a cry "Sail ho!"

After the inaction of the past fortnight, it did not take the captain long to gain the deck. There, sure enough, a couple of points off our weather bow was a distant sail. We had been running with started sheets, and now, by luffing sharply, we were able to lay our course directly for her. The Black Panther was a fast sailer, but I think we were all amazed to find how rapidly we overhauled our prey, until presently, as we drew nearer, it became evident, from her strange evolutions, that she must have been abandoned for her sails flapped aimlessly against her masts, and she yawed here and there, at the whim of tide and breeze.

In less than half an hour we were near enough to read the name upon her stern, and to discover that she was the brig Sea Gull of Charleston; but as we anticipated, we received no answer to our hail; whereupon the captain gave orders to lower a boat, told me to accompany him, and we were soon dancing over the waves toward the derelict. The captain, bidding the crew stand by, clambered briskly over the rail, I followed at his heels, and in another instant I was on the deck of the abandoned brig, only to find myself turned suddenly faint and sick at the sight which met my eyes.

There was blood everywhere; the decks were stained with it, the scuppers were pools of crimson. And this bright and glaring hue so caught my eye that it was a moment before I perceived that scattered from bow to stern, in all attitudes of sudden and violent death, were stretched the corpses of a score of people, not only men but among them a number of women and even the bodies of two little flaxen-haired children.

The captain, accustomed to such scenes, beheld them quite unmoved; and while I clutched at the rail, with no desire for further inspection, I saw him go up to one of the dead men, draw a knife from the body and examine it with interest, then step to the foremast and critically survey the object lashed to it, at the sight of which I closed my eyes. I had read the word "torture" in books, but had never dreamed to come face to face with it like this. But I was to be spared further anguish. The captain, indeed, had turned to me with a mocking smile, as if about to summon me to join him, when something—doubtless the evidence of fire at which he had just been gazing—suddenly inspired his agile brain, and without taking further notice of me, he disappeared below. And then it was my privilege to witness a most singular and unlooked-for spectacle, for the next instant he emerged again with the utmost celerity, and shouting loudly to the crew, who were lying on their oars a short distance from the brig, he ran full speed, for the rail, and dived, as nonchalantly as if it were an everyday occurrence, smoothly and cleanly into the sea. Filled with amazement as I was, I yet had sense enough to realize that if the experienced and wily captain was acting in this singular fashion, I had better do the same. And forthwith, with the greatest alacrity, I followed suit.

This, as it proved, was one of the cleverest actions of my life, and if I had not performed it, I should not be writing these pages today, as you will shortly see. Even as it was, the captain, who was an excellent swimmer, reached the boat ahead of me, and began to give orders before he had fairly swung himself over the rail. Instantly the men bent to their oars, at which I, in my turn, gave a lusty shout, and the captain, staring at me for a moment as if he had forgotten my existence, bade them back water; and the second that I felt the stern within my reach, I grasped it with a death grip and tumbled aboard with a mighty flop, like that of a giant codfish. Immediately the crew gave way again with all speed, and we left the derelict behind us at an astonishing pace.

The captain spoke no word, but kept gazing back apprehensively over his shoulder. What in the world, I wondered, could he have seen? Here was a man whom I had come to regard as absolutely calm and fearless, afraid of nothing, and now he was showing the panic of a schoolboy. I will own to the liveliest curiosity, but did not realize how soon it would be gratified for on a sudden, without a moment's warning, there came such a roar as I had never heard before, and devoutly hope I shall never hear again; and in a second a huge column of flame and smoke went towering up into the sky, the force of the explosion fairly splitting the brig in twain. It is impossible to give, in words, the faintest idea of the sight. (To Be Continued Next Week)

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OLD LANDMARK GOES

The round barn on the highway near Reedville, now being torn down, is one of the old land marks. This barn was built in the summer of 1876 by the late W. O. Hockens of Beaverton and was used for a race-track barn. The race-track was on this side of the barn. S. G. Reed was the owner of the place at that time. Mr. Hockens also built a store house across the highway and near the residence on the Ladd & Reed farm during the same summer. The store house is very unique in construction, having walls one foot thick and filled with charcoal. —Hillsboro Argus.

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