



CHAPTER VII—Lindsay has made the acquaintance of a young man, George Lewis, whom he admires. While watching a card game in which Lewis is engaged, Lindsay detects a player cheating. He denounces the cheater, and a duel follows. Lindsay wounds his opponent, but grants him his life on his admitting the truth of Lindsay's accusation.

CHAPTER VIII—Lindsay finds Shively, introduces himself, and is coldly received. Shively is a cowardly brute, but Lindsay, under his control, he is torturing a young female slave when the woman's husband tries to kill him with a knife. Shively shoots the man, but in his death throes the slave declares he will come back to haunt his slayer.

CHAPTER IX—Lindsay is accepted without question as McAllister's nephew. He finds the man the embodiment of evil, and is convinced of the truth of Barclay's story of his villainy. Living with McAllister is his adopted daughter, Helen, with whom Lindsay is impressed. He finds the place strongly defended. His acquaintance with Helen progresses. During a hurricane McAllister's ship, the Ashantee, with a cargo of slaves, is wrecked on the island, not a soul surviving.

CHAPTER X—Investigating a disturbance among the cattle, Lindsay with two negroes finds one of the animals frightfully mutilated, evidently not the work of any man, however powerful. That night the two negroes watching are killed in much the same manner as had been the helper the day before. Dick sees a black man in a canoe, evidently escaping from the island, and, believing him the murderer, shoots and kills him. The tension is relieved, but that night Lindsay finds McAllister investigating a buried treasure. While he watches, unseen, McAllister is threatened by what seems to be a black man. Lindsay shoots him and the figure makes for the house. While seeking entrance, Dick shoots and kills him. The brute proves to be an orang-utan.

CHAPTER XI—The big ape had escaped from the wreck of the Ashantee. Lindsay tells Helen, whom he has learned to love, the whole truth of his deception. She believes Barclay's story in truth. Dick goes to meet the pirate, as arranged. At the plantation he hears rumors of an uprising of the slaves. On his way to Barclay Dick passes a stranger, whose appearance is vaguely familiar. Meeting Quashy, the jockey, strongly urges Dick to return to the island at once. Barclay arranges to take Helen off the island to safety and then settle with McAllister.

CHAPTER XII—Next morning Lindsay meets Quashy and sets out with him for the island. On the way the negro tells him the slaves have risen against their masters. Dick sees Shively and his overseer dragged to torture and death. Helped by Quashy he reaches McAllister's house.

for he let me putty in our hands, we bound him, hand and foot. And next, though moments were precious, Helen snatched the scarf from her neck and bandaged his eyes, then cried: "Quick! To the southerly point. There's a boat there. It's our only chance!" And, rushing to the door, she unbarred it and threw it open.

For an instant I thought that she had lost her wits, for what was the use in attempting to escape, if we thus told the lawyer of our destination? But the next second I understood, for with finger on lip she caught up my rifle and pistol, thrust them into my hands, and motioning me to follow, led the way, on tiptoe, down the hall and into the dining room; then hurriedly explained: "There's a pit. Under the flooring. I found it yesterday. We've thrown them off the track. Now we can hide."

Even in this crisis I could not help admiring her cleverness. They would search for us on the island. Night was at hand. The slaves would shortly attack. For a time, indeed, it seemed that we were safe, and without an instant's delay Helen made for the closet in the dining room, dropped on her knees, fumbled for a moment in the darkness, then rose, swinging



Then Rose, swinging up a Trap Door. up with her a trap door. I gazed downward into impenetrable blackness. I surveyed the chasm doubtfully, speculating as to its probable depth. But this was no time to hesitate, and, handing my rifle to Helen, I slid downward until I held it by my hands

alone; then, striving to relax as much as possible, I let go. To my relief I struck bottom almost instantly; the pit could not have been more than eight feet deep. At once I stretched my arms upward, and after a few moments of quick maneuvering the door had closed over us, and we stood side by side in the gloom.

Immediately I groped about me with outstretched hands. On three sides I struck bottom almost instantly; the pit could not have been more than eight feet deep. At once I stretched my arms upward, and after a few moments of quick maneuvering the door had closed over us, and we stood side by side in the gloom.

Presently, after what appeared like an interminable time, but which was, I suppose, in reality only a few minutes, I suddenly encountered solid earth ahead, and, judging that this must mark the end of the passage, I groped above us, pushed upward on the wood that met my hands, and the next instant clear starlight, never more welcome, shone down upon us. A second later we were scrambling up the sides of the narrow opening, to find ourselves again above the earth, with the night air blowing fresh and cool upon our faces. I knew at once where we were—in the clearing among the mangroves where McAllister had crept to view his treasure, and had nearly met his death at the hands of the giant ape.

By this time it was pitch dark around us; moonrise was still far off; and accordingly we crept back a little distance from the clearing, and, making ourselves as comfortable as possible, proceeded to await developments. And now, for the first time, I had a chance to consider our position, and to wonder whether or not we had bettered ourselves by our flight. In one way, of course, I myself had greatly benefited, for I was, at least, still alive. But beyond that the outlook seemed dubious. I had shown McAllister that I was not his nephew; had admitted my deceit by running away. Nor was this the worst of it, for Helen, through her courage and quickness of wit, had joined her fortunes irrevocably with mine. And how we were now to escape from the island and reach the mouth of the river, where Barclay awaited us, was more than I could see.

The hours dragged on. From the river, to the westward, we could hear, from time to time, the sound of low voices and the splash of oars. Clearly the slaves would attack from that quarter also. From the plantation, on the east, rose the yelling and shouting of the avengers, and presently the light of a huge bonfire flared against the sky, then died away, and darkness again enshrouded the world.

"Helen," I whispered, "this tunnel is McAllister's last resort—his refuge in emergency. That is plain as day. It's a means of escape from the island, and where there's a burrow there must be a boat. I'll go to the north, you to the south; if you find anything call to me, but softly, on your life."

Without another word we separated, and I began groping my way through the tangle, but had not gone, I think more than fifty feet when I heard Helen's low call, and, retracing my steps with all possible speed, found her standing by a little inlet in the swamp, while before us, in the darkness, we could discern the dim outlines of two boats, one a small canoe, the other perhaps thirty feet long, built on the lines of a whaleboat, and capable of holding a dozen men. To handle this latter craft was, of course, beyond our powers, and accordingly I lost no time in launching the canoe through mud and slime, until she lay ready at the very entrance to the river. And then, despite the danger, a sudden reckless thought flashed through my mind. The treasure chest! Who could foretell the future? The slaves might permanently possess and guard the island. This might be the last chance to secure the gold and gems. And thus, with a hurried whisper to Helen, I sped back to the big boat, found the grapple in the bow, and, making my way to the familiar spot where I had saved the life of McAllister, I used my novel spade to such advantage that within five minutes I had returned to the canoe, and had placed the small but heavy chest safely aboard.

And now I prayed for darkness. But while the whole eastern sky was barred with clouds, the moon had so far managed to evade them, and continued to shed her light upon island and river. And presently, as we waited, in a fever of impatience, it became evident that the attack upon the fortress had at last begun. From the eastward came a tumult of frenzied shouting, the beating of drums, the

crack! crack! crack! of rifles and his tobs; while from the mangroves, close at hand, fire-tipped arrows soared up and down, curved and descended upon the roof of the house. To me the course of events seemed plain. The garrison, hopelessly outnumbered, would either be massacred at their posts, or, taking to the tunnel and emerging among the mangroves, would add to the dangers of our predicament. "We must risk it," I cried, and even as the words left my lips, the moon as if in eclipse was suddenly engulfed in cloud. Our chance had come! In an instant we were aboard had shoved the canoe clear of the mangroves and the next moment had begun our journey toward the sea.

Whether our adventures were ended or were only just beginning, it was hard to say. Behind us the tumult seemed to have slackened, but whether this meant victory or defeat for McAllister we could not tell. A boat in our path was our greatest dread, and I was so busy peering forward through the blackness that I had no thought for anything else until, after twenty minutes of steady progress, and with the mouth of the river near at hand, Helen suddenly stopped paddling, and turned her head. "Hark!" she whispered.

I sat motionless, paddle suspended in midair. Instantly I became aware of the unmistakable sound of oars, and again my heart sunk like lead. Up and then down, had flowed and ebbed the tide of our hopes and fears, and now—to be caught with safety almost in our grasp—it was too much to be borne.

Without a word, we bent to our paddles again with a will, and no longer keeping a lookout for imaginary dangers, we made the canoe fairly boil through the water. And then, all at once, the moon shone forth through a rift in the clouds, and to my horror I heard, behind us, a wild yell from our pursuers. One hurried glance told me all I wished to know; it was the whaleboat, with half a dozen maroons at the oars, and in the bow, rifle in hand, the wizened figure of McAllister. Wholeheartedly I cursed myself for not leaving the treasure.

Only one hope remained. I had agreed to meet Barclay in the evening, and it was now close to daylight, yet if his patience had lasted, and he was still lying off the mouth of the river, all might yet be well. Once more the moon was engulfed in clouds, suddenly effacing our pursuers in the gloom, and a minute later the long, slow heave from the ocean told us that we had passed the limits of the river, and were fairly on the sea.

Presently, not far ahead of us, something loomed faintly through the haze, and for an instant my heart leaped with the belief that it was the long boat, but a moment later, as we drew swiftly nearer, I perceived that it was but one of the many sandy islets that fringed the shore, barren save for a clump of reeds in the center. Had our pursuers been fewer in number, we might have beached the canoe and taken refuge, for a last stand, in the reeds; but, with a half-dozen assailants, doubtless fully armed, our rifle and our two pistols would scarcely have sufficed. And so, like hares harried by a falcon, we swept out to sea.

Nearer and nearer drew the whaleboat. I could hear McAllister shrieking imprecations, and could imagine that the loss of the treasure must have driven him nearly mad. I felt sure that he was within range of us and wondered why he did not shoot until I reflected that if he shot and wounded me, I might, in my struggles, upset the canoe and lose the treasure. Doubtless it was this thought that stayed his hand.

Wild plans darted through my brain. I might stop paddling, poise the chest over the side, and demand our lives in payment for its safety. But how make McAllister keep his word? Plainly a crisis of some sort was close at hand, and in desperation I had laid down my paddle and reached for my rifle, when all at once I heard a hail, and as the moon once more emerged from its dark barrier I saw a sight that I shall never forget—the longboat of the Black Panther shooting out from the cove where it had lain concealed, four men bending their sturdy backs at the oars, and in the stern the familiar figures of Burford and of Captain Barclay.

In an instant the whole aspect of affairs had changed. I imagined, at first, that McAllister would stand and fight, but I think that to his guilty conscience there must have been some thing terrifying as well as supernatural in Barclay's sudden appearance upon the scene, for almost immediately the bow of the whaleboat swung toward the islet, the maroons putting forth all their strength in an effort to gain the protection of the reeds. Was the stranger among them, I wondered. I could see no sign of him, and suspected (what I found, long afterward to be the truth) that he, with Bill and Quamino, and three more maroons, had fallen in the attack upon the fortress. This meeting by the whim of fate, a tragic death in a quarrel not his own.

A second later the longboat swept alongside of us, and I shall never forget the captain's courtly bow to Helen. Yet this was no time for ceremony, and he said quietly, "Are you with us, Richard? I think we may have need of you."

I did not hesitate—I did not answer, even—but sprang at once into the longboat's bow. Even Helen—and I blush to say it—was for the instant a secondary thought. This was a man's fight, and in it I meant to play my part.

A wave of farewell, and we were speeding toward the island. Looking aft, I could see that the captain's gaze

never left his quarry, and that his dark face gleamed with exultation. "The Black Panther"—even in these tense and thrilling moments I realized the aptness of the phrase.

Nearer and nearer we came until at length our bow found its resting place in the smooth sand. Beside us lay the whaleboat, careened upon its side, as the fugitives had left it. No trace of them was to be seen; only the level sweep of the sand, and a hundred yards away the dark and sinister outline of the reeds, among which our foemen lay concealed. There was no dallying, no delay. So well did Barclay's followers know their savage game that he had no need of wasting words. "Take him alive!" was his one command. Then, out of kindness to an unskilled hand, he assigned me to a place on the left of the line, and told me briefly: "Keep your distance from the man next you; when I give the word to charge, run crouched and leap from side to side. And above all, hold your fire. The light is bad. Cold steel will tell the tale."

An instant later we were advancing toward the ambush, traversing perhaps half the distance in perfect silence. Then I heard Barclay's trumpet voice, "Charge!" and mindful of his counsel, I bent double, and went leaping, zigzag fashion, up the beach. No sound came from the reeds, and I

began to feel a hot resentment, as though they were not giving us a chance for our lives, when suddenly two flashes of flame seared the darkness, and the man to right of me pitched forward, gave a twist or two, and then lay still. On we swept, and had nearly reached the edge of the ambushade before we got the rest of their volley, almost, as it seemed, in our faces. Sometimes, as I look back upon it, it appears strange that they did not annihilate us; but, on the other hand, fate was against them. For one thing, the light could not have been worse, and they were drawing bead on moving objects, almost as black as the night itself. Moreover, they had already undergone one desperate fight, and had, on top of that, proved themselves almost to the point of exhaustion, so that their fingers must have been unsteady on the trigger. Again, something, I think, of their leader's panic must have communicated itself to the superstitious blacks. And, last of all, our mercenary, no matter how brave, can never hope to fight like the man who battles for his own hand. In any event, their volley did us little damage, and the next instant they had leaped up from their hiding places and had received our fire in return. And then we closed.

All that followed was blurred and distorted, like an ugly dream. The flash of pistols, the gleam of steel, dark forms meeting hand to hand—it was all bewildering and unreal. I was

conscious that Barclay was raging in collision among the foe; I heard oaths and cries of pain; but, unskilled as I was in such warfare, it seemed as though I should be of small assistance, until finally, more through accident than design, I was drawn into the very center of the fray. Barclay, with his enemy almost within his reach, had struck down the man who guarded him, but the maroon, in his death agony, gripped the captain's coat, and nearly brought him to the



Instantly a Bent but Wiry Figure Leaped Forward.

ground. Instantly a bent but wiry figure leaped forward, a knife flashed high, and I saw, to my horror, that it was McAllister. I still grasped my empty rifle in my hand, and more quickly than I have ever acted before or since, I clubbed it and dealt McAllister such a blow that it crashed through his guard and sent his knife spinning through the air, my gun stock fairly splintering his skull.

In a fraction of a second Barclay had wrenched himself free, and was bending over his enemy. I was aware of sudden silence about us. The conflict was ended; not one of our adversaries was left alive. Barclay, rising, replaced his knife in his belt and turned to me with a half-reeful shake of his head.

"Richard," he said, "I would that your strength were less. You have both given and taken away. You have saved my life, but you have robbed me

did not answer him, for now the fight was over, my thoughts sped swiftly back to Helen. Every moment the light was growing clearer, and I could see that she was paddling westward toward the island. Presently Barclay came nearer and laid his hand on my shoulder, and I saw that he was gazing eastward. A great change came over his face; he looked like a man awakening from a dream.

"Richard," he said, "I'm glad to ever. For all this time, night and day, I've thought only of revenge. Now we must look ahead. You and your ass are safe; you'll marry, and you'll bear away to the northward. When his trouble with the blacks is over, I'll take charge of the plantation, and treat them as I'd like to be treated in their place. Then there's the treasure—we must get that."

I pointed to the approaching canoe. "It's there," I answered, "and at your service."

His clasp on my shoulder tightened. "I thank you, Richard," he said. "The treasure, then, for me, and for Burford and my men. But I will give you the bearings, and when you come to Stratsmouth, the other chest will be for you and your bride."

Later I was to appreciate the intelligence of his gift, but at the moment I think I hardly understood. For the canoe had almost reached the beach, and I started swiftly down to the eastward, far beyond the hills, clouds, tinged with rose, foretold the coming of the dawn.

(THE END)

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