

THE BLACK BUCCANEER

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The Black Buccaneer by Stephen W. Meader

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STEPHEN W. MEADER

**THE BLACK
BUCCANEER**



“If a man starts to haul on that line, I’ll shoot him
dead!” [See page 62.]

THE BLACK BUCCANEER

BY
STEPHEN W. MEADER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR



NEW YORK
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FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

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|---|----------------|
| “If a man starts to haul on that line, I’ll shoot him dead!” <i>Frontispiece</i> | |
| | PAGING PAGE |
| “Ho, ho, young woodcock, and how do ye like the company of Stede Bonnet’s rovers?” . . . | 23 |
| “Don’t say a word—sh!—easy there—are you awake?” | 143 |
| A sudden red glare on the walls of the chasm . . . | 223 |
| Job had bracketed his target | 247 |

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THE BLACK BUCCANEER

CHAPTER I

ON the morning of the 15th of July, 1718, anyone who had been standing on the low rocks of the Penobscot bay shore might have seen a large, clumsy boat of hewn planking making its way out against the tide that set strongly up into the river mouth. She was loaded deep with a shifting, noisy cargo that lifted white noses and huddled broad, woolly backs—in fact, nothing less extraordinary than fifteen fat Southdown sheep and a sober-faced collie-dog. The crew of this remarkable craft consisted of a sinewy, bearded man of forty-five who minded sheet and tiller in the stern, and a boy of fourteen, tall and broad for his age, who was constantly employed in soothing and restraining the bleating flock.

No one was present to witness the spectacle because, in those remote days, there were scarcely a thousand white men on the whole coast of Maine from Kittery to Louisberg, while at this season of the year the Indians were following the migrating game along the northern rivers. The nearest settlement was a tiny log hamlet, ten miles up the

bay, which the two voyagers had left that morning.

The boy's keen face, under its shock of sandy hair, was turned toward the sea and the dim outline of land that smudged the southern horizon.

"Father," he suddenly asked, "how big is the Island?"



"You'll see soon enough, Jeremy. Stop your questioning," answered the man. "We'll be there before night and I'll leave you with the sheep. You'll be lonesome, too, if I mistake not."

"Huh!" snorted Jeremy to himself.

Indeed it was not very likely that this lad, raised on the wildest of frontiers, would mind the prospect of a night alone on an island ten miles out at sea. He had seen Indian raids before he was old enough to know what frightened him; had tried his best with his fists to save his mother in the Amesbury massacre, six years before; and in a little settlement on the Saco River, when he was twelve, he had done a man's work at the blockhouse loophole, loading nearly as fast and firing as true as any woodsman in the company. Danger and strife had given

the lad an alert self-confidence far beyond his years.

Amos Swan, his father, was one of those iron spirits that fought out the struggle with the New England wilderness in the early days. He had followed the advancing line of colonization into the Northeast, hewing his way with the other pioneers. What he sought was a place to raise sheep. Instead of increasing, however, his flock had dwindled—wolves here—lynxes there—dogs in the larger settlements. After the last onslaught he had determined to move with his possessions and his two boys—Tom, nineteen years old, and the smaller Jeremy—to an island too remote for the attacks of any wild animal.

So he had set out in a canoe, chosen his place of habitation and built a temporary shelter on it for family and flock, while at home the boys, with the help of a few settlers, had laid the keel and fashioned the hull of a rude but seaworthy boat, such as the coast fishermen used.

Preparations had been completed the evening before, and now, while Tom cared for half the flock on the mainland, the father and younger son were convoying the first load to their new home.

In the day when these events took place, the hundreds of rocky bits of land that line the Maine coast stood out against the gray sea as bleak and desolate as at the world's beginning. Some were

merely huge up-ended rocks that rose sheer out of the Atlantic a hundred feet high, and on whose tops the sea-birds nested by the million. The larger ones, however, had, through countless ages, accumulated a layer of earth that covered their gaunt sides except where an occasional naked rib of gray granite was thrust out. Sparse grass struggled with the junipers for a foothold along the slopes, and low black firs, whose seed had been wind-blown or bird-carried from the mainland, climbed the rugged crest of each island. Few men visited them, and almost none inhabited them. Since the first long Norse galley swung by to the tune of the singing rowers, the number of passing ships had increased and their character had changed, but the isles were rarely touched at except by mishap—a shipwreck—or a crew in need of water. The Indians, too, left the outer ones alone, for there was no game to be killed there and the fishing was no better than in the sheltered inlets.

It was to one of the larger of these islands, twenty miles south of the Penobscot Settlement and a little to the southwest of Mount Desert, that a still-favoring wind brought the cumbersome craft near mid-afternoon. In a long bay that cut deep into the landward shore Amos Swan had found a pebbly beach a score of yards in length, where a boat could be run in at any tide. As it