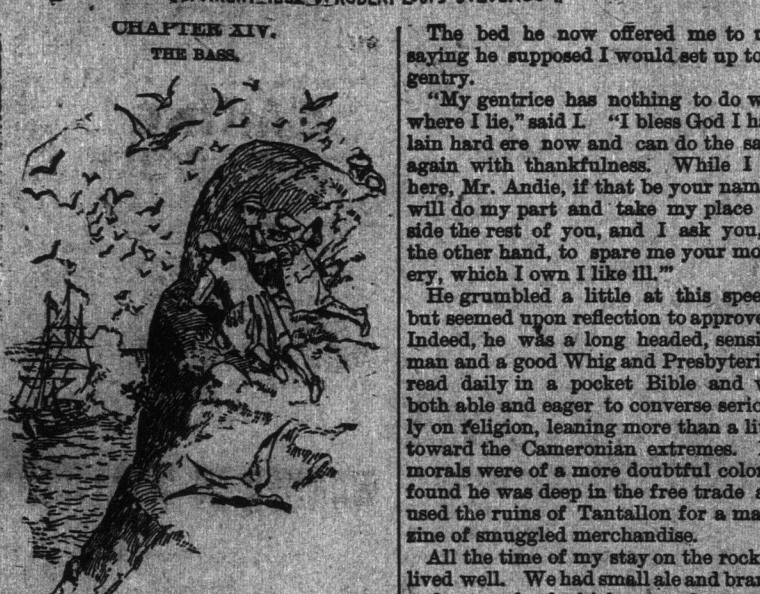


JACK BAUFOR

A STORY OF ADVENTURE

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



The Dase.

I had no thought when they were talking me; only looked here and there for the appearance of a ship. If I were to be exposed a second time to that same former danger of the plantations, I judged it must turn ill with me. There was no second Alan, and no second shipwreck and spare yard to be expected now, and I saw myself hoe tobacco under the whip's lash. The thought chilled me. The air was sharp upon the water, the stretchers of the boat drenched with a cold dew, and I shivered in my place beside the steersman. This was the dark man whom I have called hitherto the lowlander. His name was Dale, ordinarily called Black Andie. Feeling the thrill of my shiver, he very kindly handed me a rough jacket full of fish scales, with which I was glad to cover myself.

"I thank you for this kindness," said I, "and will make so free as to repay it with a warning. You take a high responsibility in this affair. You are not like these ignorant, barbarous highlanders, but know what the law is and the risks of those that break it."

"I am not just exactly what you would call an extremist," the lowlander said, "at the best of times, but in this business I act with a good warranty."

"What are you going to do with me?" I asked.

"Nae harm," said he, "nae harm, ava. Yell have strong freens, I'm thinking. Yell be richt enough yet."

There began to fall a grayness on the face of the sea. Little clouds of pink smoke came from the pipe of the boat, and at the same time the geese awakened and began crying about the top of the Bass. It is just the one cry of rock, as everybody knows, but great enough to carry a city from. The sea was extremely little, but there was a low, low, low round the base of it. With the growing of the dawn I could see it clearer and clearer. The stray crabs painted with sea birds' droppings like a morning frost, the sloping top of it green with grass, the clan of white geese that cried about the sides, and the black, broken buildings of the prison sitting close on the sea's edge.

At the sight the truth came in upon me in a flash.

"It's no there you're taking me," I cried.

"Just to the Bass, mannie," said he. "When the wind shifts were afore ye, and I misadvised if ye have come so fairly by your prison."

"But none dwells there now," I cried, "the place is long a ruin."

"It'll be the main pleasant change for the solan geese, then," quoth Andie dryly.

The day coming slowly brighter, I observed on the ledge, among the big stones with which fisher folk ballast their boats, several eggs and baskets and a provision of food. All these were discharged upon the crag. Andie, myself, and my three highlanders (I call them all men, although it was the other way about) landed along with them. The sun was not yet up when the boat moved away again. The noise of the oars on the tholepins echoed from the cliffs and left us in our singular seclusion.

Andie Dale was the prefect (as I would jokingly call him) of the Bass, being at once the shepherd and the gamekeeper of that small and rich estate. He had to mind the dozen or so sheep that fed and fattened on the grass of the sloping part of it, like beasts grazing the roof of a cathedral. He had charge besides of the solan geese, then, and the fowls, and a part of the minister's stipend of North Berwick was paid to him in solan geese, which makes it (in some folk's eyes) a parish to be coveted.

To perform these several businesses, as well as to protect the Bass from the sea, Andie had frequent occasion to sleep and pass days together on the crag, and we found the man at home there like a farmer in his steading. Bidding us all shoulder some of the packages, a matter in which I made haste to bear a hand, he led us in by a locked gate, which was the only admission to the island, and through the ruins of the fortress to the governor's house. There we saw, by the ashes in the chimney and a standing bed in one corner, that he made his usual occupation.

lamentations of his wife. Then indeed passion began to work in me; I could not forgive myself to sit there idle; it seemed (if I were a man at all) that I could fly or swim out of my place of safety, and it was in such humors and to amuse myself reproaches that I would set the more particularly to win the good side of Andie Dale.

At last, when we two were alone on the summit of the rock on a bright morning, I put in some hint about a bribe. He looked at me, cast back his head and laughed out loud.

"Aye, you're funny, Mr. Dale," said I, "but perhaps if you'll glance an eye upon that paper you may change your note."

The stupid highlander had taken from me at the time of my seizure nothing but hard money, and the paper I now showed Andie was an acknowledgment from the British Linen company for a considerable sum.

"Now then, Andie, what's your name?" I said.

"I thought that would vary your opinions," said I.

"Hout!" said he, "it shaws me ye can bribe, but I'm not to be bribed."

"Yell see about that yet awhile," I said. "I'll see about that yet awhile."

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I was in this frame, my heart beating the gray eyes plain before me like two stars, when Andie broke in upon my musing.

"I see ye have gotten guid news," said he.

I found him looking curiously in my face. With that came before me like a vision of James Stewart and the court of Inverary, and my mind turned at once upon its hinges, like a door.

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(so far as the least material) depends on the bare word of Alan or of James, the two accused. In short, you do not at all break, but only lengthen by one personage the chain that binds our client to the murderer, and I need scarcely say that the introduction of a third accomplice rather aggravates that appearance of a conspiracy which has been our stumbling block from the beginning.

"I am of the same opinion," said Sheriff Miller. "I think we may all be very much obliged to Prestongrange for taking a most uncomfortable witness out of our way. And chiefly, I think, Mr. Baufor himself might be obliged. For you talk of a third accomplice, but Mr. Baufor (in my view) has very much the appearance of a fourth."

"Allow me, sirs," interposed Stewart the writer. "There is another view. Here we have a witness—never fast whether material or not—a witness in this cause, kidnapped from the lawless bandit crew of the Glenlyg Macgregor, and sequestered for near upon a year in a burrow of old cell ruins on the Bass. Move that and see what dirt you find on the proceedings. Sirs, this is a tale to make the world ring with it! This is nothing new, such a grip as this, if we could not squeeze out a pardon for my client."

"And suppose we took up Mr. Baufor's cause tomorrow?" said Stewart Hall. "I am much deceived or we should find so many impediments thrown in our way that James Baufor would have changed before we had found a court to hear us. This is a great scandal, but I suppose we have none of us forgot a greater still. I mean the matter of the Laid Grange. The woman was still in Durand. My friend Mr. Hope of Rannoch told me that James Baufor had been changed before we had found a court to hear us. This is a great scandal, but I suppose we have none of us forgot a greater still. I mean the matter of the Laid Grange. The woman was still in Durand. My friend Mr. Hope of Rannoch told me that James Baufor had been changed before we had found a court to hear us. This is a great scandal, but I suppose we have none of us forgot a greater still. I mean the matter of the Laid Grange. The woman was still in Durand. 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