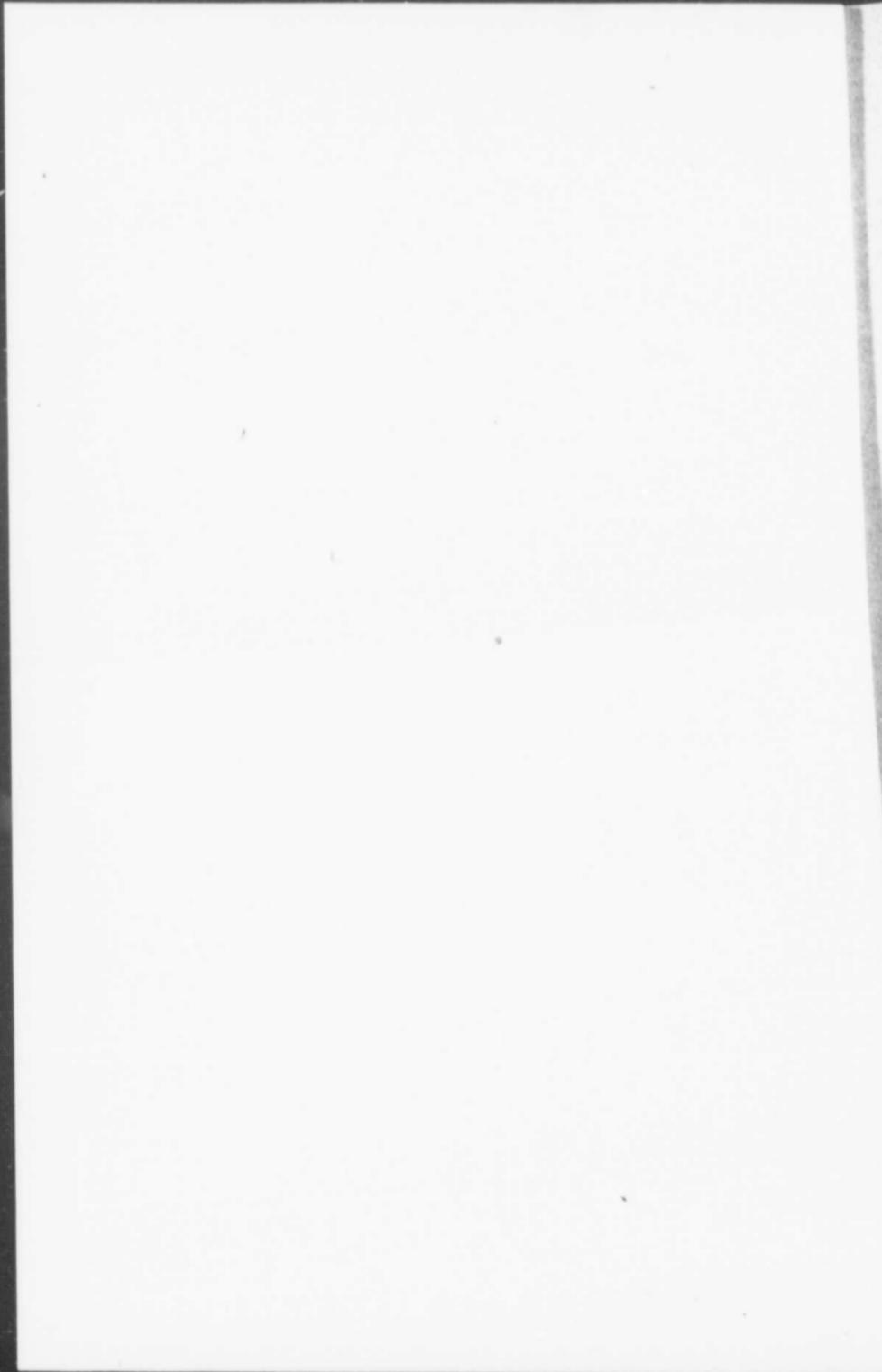
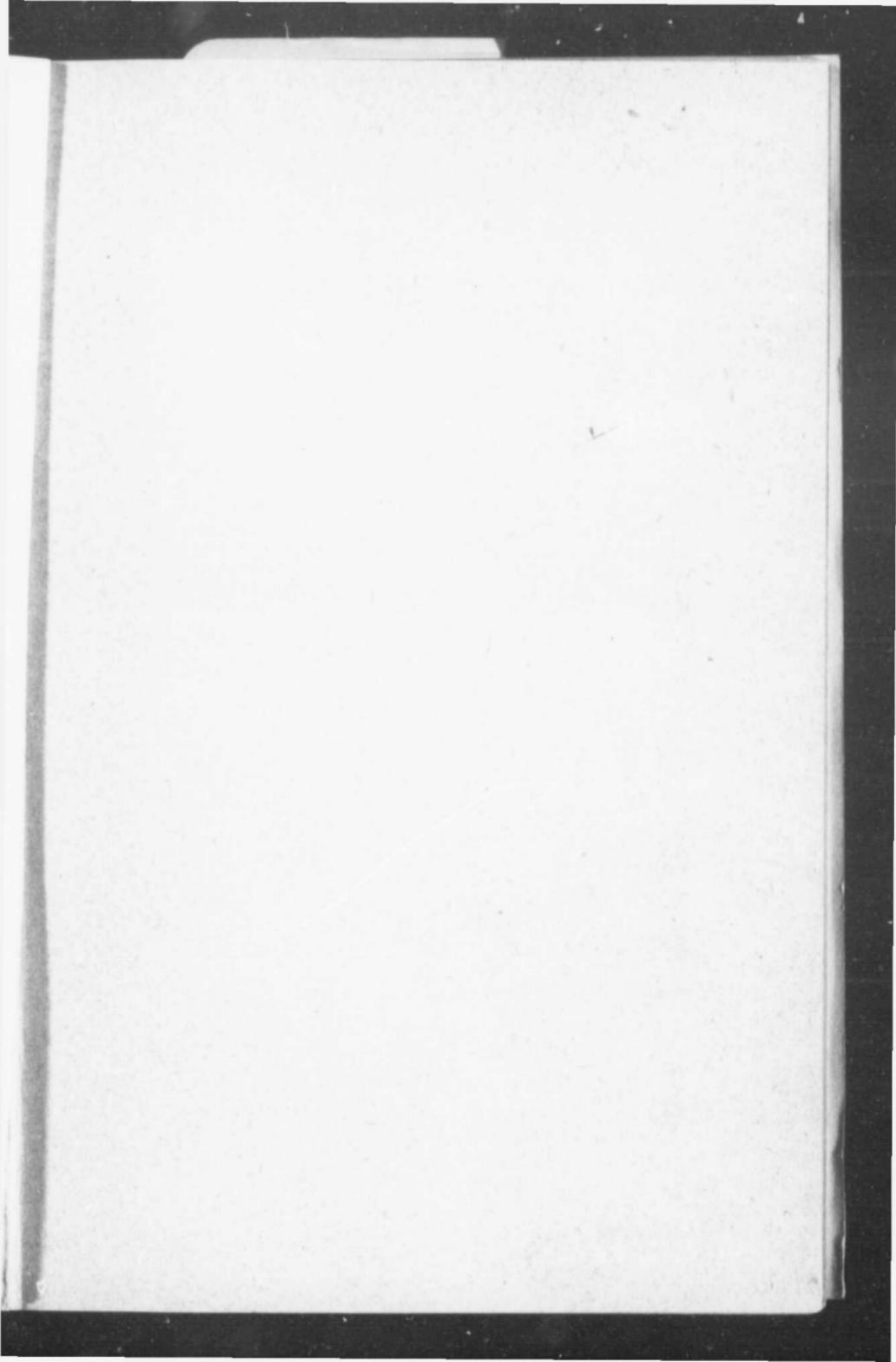


DONALD BLANE of DARIEN



J. MACDONALD O'LEARY







"HE PLACED THE CHILD UPON THE CHEST, AND HELD HIM THERE THAT HE MIGHT NOT FALL OFF."

[p. 38.]

DONALBLANE OF DARIEN

BY

J. MACDONALD OXLEY,

Author of

"Norman's Nugget" "In the Swing of the Sea"

etc., etc.

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DONALBLANE OF DARIEN.

CHAPTER I.

BY WAY OF BEGINNING.

IT was not just an ordinary sort of name, but one of those which made you think "thereby hangs a tale." In this case the thought goes to the mark, and the tale in question will be told after a fashion in the following pages.

At the outset a quick glance back to times long past is necessary in order to a fair start, and without a fair start it were hardly worth going ahead.

As the seventeenth century drew to its close there came into prominence in England a remarkable Scotsman named William Paterson, among whose notable achievements was having a large

share in the founding of the Bank of England, which subsequently grew to be the greatest monetary institution in the world.

He was a member of the board of directors at the opening of the bank, but appears to have sold out not long after, and with his money in hand to have looked about him for some way of investing it that would be for the public good.

Now, these were the days of vexatious monopolies and irritating restrictions in commerce. The trade of Britain with the distant parts of the globe was divided between two great grasping corporations—the East India Company and the African Company—which, although they were at deadly enmity with each other, heartily co-operated in crushing every free-trader who dared to intrude within the elastic limits of their “spheres of action.”

William Paterson was an ardent free-trader, and he became inspired with the noble mission of freeing commerce from the hurtful restraints laid upon it by short-sighted selfishness. With a keenness of instinct that makes it easy to understand his previous success, he surveyed the then

known world and put his finger upon the spot best suited for the carrying out of his beneficent design.

The Isthmus of Panama, or Darien, is, beyond a doubt, one of the most interesting, as it is certain yet to be one of the most important bits of *terra firma* on this round globe. The connecting-link between the continents of North and South America, it is also the barrier dividing the Atlantic from the Pacific Oceans, and, in fact, one side of the world from the other.

From the time of its discovery and occupation by the Spaniards, it has been a matter of general belief that whoever had command of this narrow neck of land held the key to the commerce of the world. Here would naturally be concentrated the mutual trade of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of America. Moreover, it would necessarily form an important stage in the shortest route between Europe and the Indies, as well as the innumerable islands lying far to the south of the equator.

Little wonder, then, that the Spaniards wanted to keep the isthmus to themselves, and always did their very best to make it particularly unpleasant

for anybody who sought to share its advantages with them ; and in fine contrast to their dog-in-the-manger policy—for they really made little use of their splendid opportunities—was the spirit in which William Paterson conceived his great Darien project, and with characteristic energy proceeded to carry it into effect. It was in the year 1695 that he obtained from the Scottish Parliament an Act for the incorporation of “the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies,” which thenceforth became popularly known as “the Darien Company.”

This company was granted very extensive powers, and had the imposing capital of £600,000, one-half of which, it was shrewdly stipulated, must ever be held by *Scotsmen residing in their own country*, thus ensuring the permanence of the national character of the undertaking.

As it turned out, however, this provision might have been omitted, for when, after the Scotch half of the stock had all been subscribed, the books were opened in London for the other half, there came such a rush of applicants for shares that it was soon all taken up. This so aroused

the hostility of the two great English companies already mentioned that they actually called upon the House of Commons to assist them in crushing their Scottish rival, and the House of Commons unfortunately was weak enough to yield to the pressure brought to bear upon it.

The London subscribers to the new company were threatened with prosecution for concerting to infringe upon the rights enjoyed by the other companies, which so alarmed them that with one consent they backed out and forfeited their holdings.

With ordinary people this would have meant the collapse of the whole enterprise. Not so, however, with the sturdy Scots who were behind it. The provoking action of their English cousins only served to arouse the national spirit. Their expected allies had failed them. Well, what if they had? Scotland was not to be daunted. She would go on alone, and reap for herself all the glory and the more substantial rewards of the great undertaking. Accordingly another hundred thousand pounds of stock was subscribed by this thrifty, determined people, and so, with a capital only two-thirds as

big as had been counted upon, the Darien Company proceeded to carry out the chief purpose of its formation.

But all these disappointments and difficulties had, of course, meant delay, and consequently it was not until the year 1698 that the first expedition was made ready to start.

Among those most warmly interested in William Paterson's project was Alexander Blane, of Leith, a worthy and enterprising shipowner, who had won a snug fortune in the service of that fickle mistress, the sea. After working his way up from cabin-boy to captain, he had settled down on shore, while others commanded his craft for him, and being a shrewd, far-sighted, close-fisted man of business, had prospered from year to year, in spite of occasional inevitable losses.

He had held aloof from the Darien scheme at the start, as was indeed characteristic of him, but when the London folk acted so shabbily his Scottish blood was set a-boiling.

"Hech!" he exclaimed, in high indignation, "the Southrons would have the world to themselves, eh? They're just dogs in the manger, and we Scots

shall teach them the lesson they need. I hadna thought of taking ony shares in Mr. Paterson's company, but if it's only to spite the English I'll put me doon for five hundred pounds." And he was not only as good as his word, but he interested himself actively in securing other subscriptions to a considerable amount.

Not having been blessed with bairns of his own, Mr. Blane had adopted a nephew from the Inverness Highlands, whose own name had been foregone in favour of his second father's.

Donald Blane, or Donalblane, as he soon came to be called for short, was a pretty uncouth specimen of a boy when, at the age of ten, he was taken into the Blane household. The term "halffin" would describe him sufficiently to Scots folk, but for others some further particulars may be required.

The son of a shepherd, whose tiny shieling with only a "but and ben" seemed to shelter an impossible number of children, he had practically run wild upon the mountains.

Bare-headed and bare-footed the greater part of the year, he had grown up as sound, strong, and sturdy as one of the shaggy ponies which he loved

to bestride in a wild gallop over moor and heather, and although his most partial friends could hardly pronounce him handsome, he bore a frank, fearless, wide-awake countenance that did not fail to make a good impression upon those who took the trouble to look into it. His thick, tousled hair showed a slight tinge of red in the sun; his eyes were deep-set and of a fine, clear grey; his mouth a trifle large, but firm; his chin square, and full of character.

But the most attractive feature of the boy, if so it may be called, was his smile. When Donalblane was pleased or amused his face lit up wonderfully, and his parting lips revealed a double row of snow-white teeth that were a gift of beauty in themselves.

Five years of city life wrought many changes in his outward appearance without in any wise impairing the fineness of his nature. He learned to endure the at first irksome restraints of such troublesome things as trousers, collars, hats, and shoes, and—still harder lesson—to become accustomed to the daily drudgery of school, so that both in body and mind he showed very decided improvement.

But his love of outdoor life lost none of its

strength, and there being no moors near by to range over, he took to the water instead, spending as much of his free time as possible with the sailormen, who had such marvellous yarns to spin, climbing up and down the rigging of brigs and barques and ships, and now and then getting a short trip about the Firth of Forth when his uncle permitted. Thus he became filled with a passion for the sea that was at its height when the proposed Darien enterprise set Scotland afire, and down in his heart Donalblane determined that he would do his very best to join the brave band of adventurers into the wonderful New World.

CHAPTER II.

DONALBLANE CARRIES HIS POINT.

IT was one thing for Donalblane to make up his mind to go to Darien, and quite another to carry his resolution into effect.

Alexander Blane was a masterful man, who had no fancy for accepting advice or suggestions from other folk. He much preferred thinking of things himself, and Donalblane knew well enough that for him to make a direct request meant its being turned down both promptly and finally. Strategy was therefore necessary, and, after some deep thought and the casting aside of various schemes, he hit upon one that gave promise of success if judiciously carried out.

Thanks to his natural quickness of mind and his interest in his studies, he had quite won the heart of the dominie who with book and birch ruled his little educational kingdom, and so to wise William

Laidlaw he went with his scheme. Now, as it happened, no man in Scotland had been more fired by Paterson's daring project than this school-teacher of Leith. He was a Scot of the Scots, and the bitterest regret of his life was that a crippled leg, which made active movement impossible, barred his own way to joining the expedition.

Disappointed in that direction, he had done what was perhaps even better—he had invested the entirety of his own savings in the stock, and he had by tongue and pen done all in his power to promote the interest of the enterprise. It was therefore only natural that he should listen to Donalblane's bashful confidence with a swelling and sympathetic heart.

"Ay! ay! laddie," he said, regarding the eager, earnest boy with a look of unwonted tenderness, "and so ye wad fain gang tae Darien? I dinna blame ye. Glad wad I be to gang myself, if I were na too auld for sic a far-going. But if I be too old, are ye na too young, Donald?" And he bent a keen look upon him from under his shaggy brows.

Donalblane flushed and moved uneasily on his seat. That was the very argument he most feared.

"I am owre young, maybe," he replied; "but I'm verra strong, and big for my age;" which was true enough, as he looked full two years older than he really was. "And then, ye ken, there'll no be anither such chance as this to see the world for the rest of my life."

The dominie smiled shrewdly. That was the usual talk of youth. He knew much better; but somehow the lad's passion for the adventure took strong hold upon him, and the upshot of their talk together that summer evening was that Donalblane went home joyful of heart because he had enlisted an ally who was pledged to help him in realising his desire.

Mr. Laidlaw was on excellent terms with Mr. Blane, and no excuse therefore was needed for a friendly visit, in the course of which the talk naturally enough came round to the Darien expedition, already in course of being fitted out.

"Hech! but I wad fain be going myself," said the dominie, heaving a huge sigh of regret, "and if it were na for this halting leg of mine, I'd be putting my name down."

Mr. Blane indulged in a sympathetic smile. The idea of the limping dominie venturing to face the perils and privations on sea and land that were sure to be encountered touched his sense of humour, but he was too courteous to betray it.

"I'm inclined a bit that way likewise," he responded, "and were I only twenty instead of sixty, I'd be offering myself to Maister Paterson."

"Have ye thought o' sending any one in your stead?" inquired the dominie, as innocently as if no hidden purpose inspired him.

"Ay, I have thought something of it, but I've not made up my mind at all," was the reply.

Having thus secured his opening, the wily dominie, by strategic devices, which did infinite credit to his ingenuity and knowledge of human nature without putting any strain upon his conscience, at last succeeded not only in filling Mr. Blane's mind with the idea of Donald being sent out in some sense as his representative, but in so doing it that the worthy shipmaster quite supposed he had conceived the notion himself.

Accordingly, a few days later Mr. Blane called Donald into his own room, and began asking him

some questions that made the boy's eyes glitter with hope.

The sagacious dominic, knowing Mr. Blane, had counselled Donald not to let on in any way how eagerly he desired to go to Darien, but to seem simply willing to do whatever he was told. He therefore put a strong curb upon himself, and responded respectfully to what was asked of him.

"Ye've got a great liking for the sea, they tell me, lad," began Mr. Blane, with a keen glance at the bright face and sturdy figure.

"Oh, yes, sir," answered Donald emphatically.

"And wad ye care to go away altogether on a ship?" asked his uncle.

"Ay, that I would, sir," was the hearty reply; and then, in a sly, apologetic tone, "But of course I'd like to come back again."

Mr. Blane smiled grimly. He quite understood the boy's eagerness to be rid of the restraints of school and of town life, and did not take at all amiss the readiness he expressed to leave the roof that had sheltered him so comfortably, and fare forth into unknown difficulties and dangers.

"And what wad ye say to going with Mr.



"'YE'VE A GREAT LIKING FOR THE SEA, THEY TELL ME, LAD,' BEGAN MR. BLANE."

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Paterson away out to America, if he'll let you?" was the next question; and Donald could feel his uncle's deep-set eyes piercing him like arrows.

But he controlled himself wonderfully, and in a quiet, steady voice, that touched no chord of opposition, said, "I wad like it verra weel, if *you* will let me go, sir."

Mr. Blane was better pleased by this response than he showed, and, after a brief silence, he got up, saying, "Well, well, we'll think about it—we'll think about it. Ye're owre young, maybe, to be leavin' your friends to gang among strangers; but ye're a likely lad, and it may go towards making a man of you. Say naething about it—do you hear?—for the present—not a word."

Donald promptly promised, and left his uncle with a heart full of hope. Only to the dominie did he mention the interview, and then for nearly a week he was kept on tenterhooks of anxiety.

In the meantime Mr. Blane conferred with Mr. Paterson, and having been assured by him that he would take a kindly interest in the boy, and allow him to return at the end of the year if he wished, he fully decided to let him go.

When this was communicated to Donald, he had great difficulty in restraining the impulse to give a great shout and fling his tam-o'-shanter to the ceiling, but by an heroic effort he kept himself in hand, and, after expressing his gratitude to his uncle, hurried away to the dominie with the good news. Thus was this momentous matter settled, and now came the business of getting ready.

Owing to the withdrawal of the English subscribers and the consequent decrease in the amount of capital aimed at, the expedition could not be fitted out on so large a scale as Mr. Paterson had at first intended. Nor was this the only difficulty he had to encounter. If the funds were somewhat deficient, there was no lack of enthusiasm. The chivalry of Scotland had been aroused, and hundreds of men of high family were ready to exchange their prospects in their own country for the golden hopes held out by America, recking little of doubts and dangers.

It became a delicate and troublesome task to select from such a throng of eager volunteers, for, of course, all could not go, and, alas! for the success of the enterprise, in too many cases family interest

or personal influence prevailed to find a place for some good-for-nothing scapegrace instead of an honest, hard-working man, who would have been a valuable addition. If only Mr. Paterson had been able to inspire those associated with him with his own unselfish zeal and high integrity, there might have been a different story to tell. Unhappily, he stood almost alone in seeking no advantage or profit. Everybody else had a keen eye to number one. As a natural consequence, numberless jealousies, suspicions, and antagonisms arose. Instead of working harmoniously together, the council in charge of affairs plotted and counterplotted, wrangled and fought, until poor Paterson's patience was utterly exhausted, and he had good reason to wish himself well out of the business.

Not only were the members of the expedition ill-selected, for the reasons given, but the ships that were to carry them, the arms, provisions, goods, and entire equipment, were all contracted for in a manner that greatly enriched the merchants at the expense of the enterprise, and led to the loss of many a life in the after-days.

The ships were old and rotten, but so painted

and fixed up as to disguise the fact. The arms were of inferior quality, the provisions adulterated so shamefully as to be hardly fit for human food, and the merchandise taken for traffic with the natives of the Land of Promise consisted mainly of shop-worn remainders; yet for everything the highest price was charged and paid.

To crown all, the ships were commanded by coarse, brutal, and ignorant captains, jealous of and hostile to one another, and caring little for the authority of the council. But Donalblane knew nothing of this, and, beyond warning him to be very careful to keep his own counsel and to be chary of making new friends, his uncle had not given him any hint of it.

Proud of his substantial wooden chest, containing not only an excellent outfit of clothes, but a good pair of pistols, a sword, and a small quantity of beads and trinkets wherewith to do a little trafficking with the natives on his own account, he stood on the deck of the largest of the little fleet of five vessels one bright day in July 1698.

CHAPTER III.

OFF TO DARIEN.

FIVE ships, not one of them really fit for the long and perilous voyage, composed the expedition, and they looked gay enough as, bedecked with flags and crowded with excited people, they swung at their moorings ready for departure.

The heart of Scotland beat high with hope. It was her first attempt at founding a colony, although her sons had done so much to help in the founding of English colonies, and now all the glory and the gold to be won in the new world would be hers, and hers alone: no other nation should have any share in them.

Donalblane felt something of this patriotic enthusiasm stirring his young heart. He was not wholly selfish in his desire to be a member of the expedition. Of course, his head was full of wild

dreams of what wonders he would see, and the great things he would do in his own interest. But above it all rose a national pride that did him credit. He was a Scot to the backbone; and whether he realised all his own expectations or not he was passionately eager that the great scheme itself should be accomplished, and that his country should take a proud place among the nations.

His uncle, having bidden him good-bye and God-speed, had returned to the quay, and Donalblane, leaning over the bulwarks, was waiting somewhat impatiently for the anchor to be hoisted and the sails set, when a hand was laid gently on his shoulder, and a deep voice said in a kindly tone, "Beginning to feel a little homesick already, lad?"

Looking up quickly, Donald found beside him the master-spirit of the enterprise, William Paterson, to whom he had been once introduced in his uncle's office.

"Na, na, sir!" was his prompt, respectful reply; "I'm wearying to be off. Will the ships be ganging soon, sir?" and he fixed his big grey eyes upon Mr. Paterson's face.

"Oh! is that the way the wind lies?" was the response, as the great man smiled approvingly at the boy, for he was much pleased with his spirit. "You are eager for adventure, eh? Well, my lad, you are likely to have your fill of it." And his handsome countenance clouded as he spoke, for the execution of his scheme had been marked by many disappointments which boded no good for its ultimate success. By his frank, honest way and earnest efforts to do what was best for the interests of the expedition, not for the profit of those supplying the outfit, he had aroused the hostility of many who had not hesitated to plot against him, with the result that latterly he had been practically set aside, and had been compelled to witness gross imposition and fraud which he was powerless to prevent. No wonder, then, that his downcast face presented a striking contrast to that of the enthusiastic boy as they stood on the deck together; and, influenced by the other's contagious confidence, he brightened a little before continuing. "We can hardly fail to have adventures, for it is a new world we are going to, where savages, and, worse than savages, the cruel, grasping Spaniards,

are already, and we shall have to reckon with them before we can succeed in our scheme. But with the providence of God protecting us, we shall succeed," and his voice took on a triumphant tone that revealed his faith in the Divine approval of his project. "Be careful what friends you make on board here," he added, once more laying his hand upon the boy's shoulder. "There are many to be shunned, and remember that, for your uncle's sake and your own, I shall always be glad to be of such service to you as may be in my power." And ere Donald could get out his thanks, Mr. Paterson hastened away to speak to one who had just come on board.

The interview had been a short one, but it made a deep impression upon Donald. That the great man of whom his uncle and the dominie always spoke in such terms of admiration should address him so graciously, touched the lad to the core, and from that moment he was ready to yield to Mr. Paterson the same passionate devotion that the Highland clansmen used to hold for their chieftain.

At last, amid fluttering of flags, booming of cannon, and solemn offering of prayer, the ships

weighed anchor and, with all sails set, stood out to sea, the favouring breeze taking them in a few hours well out of the sheltered Firth of Forth into the exposed expanse of the North Sea.

They had not long been tumbling about amongst ever-troubled waters when Donalblane, in common with very many of his shipmates on the *Bonnie Scotland*, had a new experience. Hitherto his personal acquaintance with the sea had been limited to short trips between Leith and neighbouring ports, and now for the first time he was out of sight of land and entirely at the mercy of wind and wave. An old salt would have called the wind before which the ships of the expedition bowled southward just "a fresh breeze," but Donalblane thought it a gale, and the *Bonnie Scotland* had not long been pitching and tossing in lively fashion before something began to go wrong inside of him, making him feel so uncomfortable that he was fain to leave the quarter-deck, where he had been enjoying himself, and to seek a snug corner in which he could curl up unnoticed. By the end of an hour he was completely overcome, and if Mr. Paterson had happened along then with his question, he

certainly would not have received so prompt and resolute a response. Not one day's illness had Donald known in the whole course of his life, and this misery of sea-sickness made him as angry with himself as was possible in his prostrate condition.

As the ships got down towards the English Channel they tumbled about more than ever, until the poor boy began to think he was really going to die, and heartily wished himself back upon solid ground. But once they were out in the Atlantic matters improved. Fine, bright weather succeeded, the vessels moved steadily along before a favouring wind, and Donald was soon established on his sea-legs.

He now had a chance to become acquainted with some of his fellow-passengers, the majority of whom had shared his sufferings. They were certainly a very mixed company of men, women, and children. Highlanders and lowlanders, peers and peasantry, grave ministers and gay scapegraces, shaggy shepherds from the hills, and bronzed sailor-men from the coast—a motley throng indeed, the members of which Donald

studied with keen interest, for he had a sociable nature, but bore in mind the good advice given him by Mr. Paterson in regard to making acquaintances.

As it fell out, his first friend was won in a decidedly dramatic fashion. Among the occupants of the first cabin was a gentleman by name Henry Sutherland, whose wife and child, a beautiful boy of four years, accompanied him. Donald was greatly attracted by the child, and anxious to make friends with him, but had no opportunity, until one day a startling thing happened.

It was fine and warm, and the little fellow was playing happily about the quarter-deck near his mother, when a sprig of the nobility, the Hon. Hector Simpson, who had been sent out by his family in the hope of improving his habits, sauntered along, and, moved by a spirit of mischief, picked up the child, and held him over the bulwarks, saying teasingly, "How would you like to go and play with the fishes?" The mother screamed and started forward, and the child, terrified on his own account, gave so sudden and violent a wrench as to free himself from his tormentor's grasp and fall into the sea, leaving a portion of his

dress in the latter's hands. Appalled by the utterly unexpected outcome of his foolish act, and unable to atone for it by springing after the child, for he could not swim a stroke, the Hon. Hector joined his shouts for help with the shrieks of the frenzied mother.

At that moment Donalblane was leaning over the bulwarks near by and feeling very lonely. He longed for friendly companionship, but was bashful about breaking the ice with any of those to whom he felt drawn, and so far no one, save Mr. Paterson, who always had a pleasant smile and kindly word for him, had taken any particular notice of him.

Now Donald was a strong, expert swimmer. He had dared the depths of many a dark loch before he left his native mountains for the coast, and at Leith he had always been one of the first to take a dip in the spring, and one of the last to give it up in the autumn. Without a question of fear, therefore, but thinking only of the pretty boy in peril of death, he threw off his coat and leaped over the bulwarks into the heaving waters. Happily the little one was still afloat when

Donald's powerful strokes brought him within reach.

"There now, dearie, I've got you all safe! Dinna fear; ye'll no' droon. Keep still and ye'll be a' richt," panted Donald, as he put his left arm about the terror-stricken child.

Whether the little fellow really understood or was paralysed by fright he certainly obeyed. And well was it for them both that he did, for having cleared the brine from his eyes and got a good look at the *Bonnie Scotland*, Donald realised with a sinking of heart that many minutes must elapse before they could be rescued. The ship had already been brought up into the wind, and efforts were being made to lower a boat; but in the meantime his helpless burden was becoming heavier and heavier.

CHAPTER IV.

A RESCUE AND A RETREAT.

WELL was it for both Donalblane and the child that all those on board the *Bonnie Scotland* did not lose their heads so completely as the young fellow whose foolish action had caused the trouble.

Among the first to take in the situation was William Paterson, and instinctively he looked about him for something to throw over after the brave boy which might serve to buoy him up until help reached him. As it happened, some one had brought on deck an empty wooden chest to serve for a seat.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Mr. Paterson when his eye fell upon it, and, without pausing to ask permission, he lifted it up and flung it over the bulwarks.

It fell not far from where Donald struck the

water, and, although he did not see it at first, it presently attracted his attention.

"Eh! what's that?" he asked himself, as the black thing bobbed up and down on the waves. For a moment he feared it might be the back of a shark coming to the attack, but on a second look fear gave way to joy. "It's a box!" he cried, "and it will keep us up, if I can only get to it."

The child lay like a log, whimpering a little when the water splashed in his face; and it seemed to demand all Donald's strength just to keep from sinking, so that he did not see how he was to reach the chest, which was at least twenty yards distant.

"Wae's me!" he groaned, "but I'm near spent, and if I canna lay hold of that box, I maun droon."

Happily the wind was blowing towards him, and, although he could not make much progress against it, the chest was helped by it in his direction, so that, just when he thought he could keep up no longer, it bobbed within his reach, and, with a sigh of unutterable relief, he laid hold of it.

"Noo then, my bairnie, just get atop o' that," he said cheerfully, as he placed the child upon the

chest, and held him there that he might not fall off.

The chest accepted the responsibility and bore it bravely, taking all the strain off Donald's tired arms, and enabling him to recover his strength and wind in a measure. Of course it was no easy matter to keep the little one in place with the waves so full of motion, but it was ever so much less strain than it had been before, and the sturdy boy could have maintained the struggle a little longer still, when the welcome rattle of oars and the encouraging shouts of men told him that rescue was near.

The boat came dashing up under the strenuous strokes of four brawny oarsmen, and in her bow stood William Paterson, his eager glance bent upon the two imperilled ones, and his arms outstretched ready to grasp them.

"God bless you, my noble boy!" he exclaimed, as, after tenderly lifting the child into the boat, he caught Donald under the arms to help him in. "You've taught us a lesson in heroism this day."

Donald sat down in the bow so utterly exhausted that he was hardly conscious of Mr. Paterson's

warm words, nor of the hearty praise of the men, but he had an exquisite sense of relief and of having become a person of importance.

The first to greet him on the deck of the vessel were the parents of the child, and Mrs. Sutherland turned from hugging her rescued darling to throw her arms around Donald's neck and kiss him again and again, greatly to the bashful boy's embarrassment, while her husband was thumping him on the back, and exclaiming huskily, "How can I ever repay you for saving my child's life?"

It was really very trying to Donald to be the subject of such demonstration, and he was quite glad to get away from the grateful parents and the applauding crowd to his own cabin to put on some dry clothes. But when the first excitement subsided and he found that he had not only won the respect of his shipmates, but also the warm friendship of the Sutherlands, who were very fine people, he felt that the game was well worth the candle, and that he was splendidly repaid for the risk he had taken.

The first part of the long voyage across the great Atlantic Ocean was devoid of special incident.

The ships presently scattered, so that each was alone in the vast expanse ; and the days followed one another monotonously enough until the *Bonnie Scotland* sighted the Azores Islands, and, to the delight of all on board, it was announced that a call at Fayal would be made in order to replenish the supply of water.

By this time Donalblane had got a pretty good understanding of all his fellow-voyagers. His likes and dislikes were clearly defined, and, young as he was, his natural shrewdness told him that there were only too many in the company it would have been far better to have left at home.

The Sutherlands were his special friends. He had won their hearts completely, and he took great delight in the company of their little son Walter, who loved him as though he fully understood that he owed him his life.

At Fayal the four of them went ashore together, and Donalblane thought he had never before realised how pleasant it was to be on the solid ground as after these weeks of tossing about in an overcrowded ship.

"Eh, but this is bonnie!" he exclaimed en-

thusiastically, as his big eyes roamed over the novel and picturesque landscape. "I'd like well if this were Darien, and we need gang no farther."

Mr. Sutherland smiled at the boy's frankness. "You've evidently had enough of the *Bonnie Scotland*, Donald," he said. "So, too, have I. I'd be right glad to be rid both of the ship and many of her company. But we're not half-way to Darien yet."

The striking combination of rugged grandeur with tropical beauty which the Azores presented delighted Donald, and during their stay he spent the whole day ashore exploring the islands, usually in company with Mr. Sutherland. They revelled in the oranges and other fruit that were to be had almost for the asking, and Donald used to amuse Mr. Sutherland exceedingly by his lively effort to make himself understood by the inhabitants, who were chiefly Portuguese.

One adventure befell him that might have had a serious result. He had gone off wandering on his own account, and lost his way amidst the ravines which pierce the mountains in every direction, and lead one into another in a puzzling

fashion. The harder he strove to extricate himself from the maze, the deeper he got into it, until at last, a little before sundown, he found himself in a regular *cul-de-sac*, from which there appeared to be no exit save by climbing the precipitous cliffs which shut him in, and it would soon be too dark to attempt that. "Losh me!" he sighed ruefully, "but I'm fair trapped, and what shall I do for the nicht?"

The question was more easily asked than answered. Of course to a son of the Highlands the spending of a night in the open was not a serious matter, so far as exposure was concerned; but how about danger from wild animals? This was what concerned Donalblane, and he was glad that he had put a pistol in his belt before leaving the ship. Wearied and perplexed, he had thrown himself down on the sward, when there suddenly hove in sight a big boar leading a small band of sows and piglings. He was a tusker of most forbidding appearance, and the instant his wicked little eyes fell upon Donalblane he bristled up and began gnashing his tusks ominously.

The boar sprang to his feet and drew his pistol,

while he looked anxiously about him for a way of escape. "Save us a'!" he cried. "What a fearsome brute! He means ill to me, I'm thinking."

There seemed nothing for it but to stand firm and trust to his pistol. So, after a swift glance to make sure that the priming was in its place, he braced himself for the attack.

The boar did not waste much time. Having satisfied himself that this intruder upon his domain deserved no mercy, he charged fiercely at him, the foam flying from his gleaming tusks, and the thick bristles standing out on his mighty front.

Donalblane wisely waited until the fierce creature was within a few yards of him, and then fired, taking aim at the very centre of the forehead. At the report of the pistol the boar pitched forward, driving his snout into the ground, so great was his impetus, and Donalblane, thinking him dead, shouted triumphantly, "Noo, ye fool! will ye be trying to scare folk who meant ye no harm?" But his words had hardly left his lips when the boar, which had been only stunned, his tough, wrinkled hide proving an effectual shield, got upon his feet again and renewed the charge so furiously

that Donalblane barely saved himself by a sudden spring aside. Baffled for the moment, the maddened brute swiftly swung round for a fresh onset, and Donalblane was fain to flee towards the cliffs, followed by the boar and his whole family, grunting and squealing.

There was no boy in Leith could out-foot him, and he dashed away at such a speed as gave him a good lead. But where was he to go, in order to escape the relentless monster that sought to rend him? And if it came to a question of endurance, the boar would assuredly run him down in the end.

CHAPTER V.

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

RUNNING as one runs whose life is at stake, Donalblane looked hither and thither for some break in the cliffs that would give him a chance to climb out of his fell pursuers' reach. At last, with a thrill of joy, his eye perceived one, and, summoning all his energies for a supreme effort, he darted thither.

The ravening swine were gaining upon him at a rate which meant his soon being overtaken, and if he should stumble his fate was certain.

But the sure-footed faculty of the Highlander stood him in good stead. He neither slipped nor tripped, and kept steadily on, until well-nigh spent he won his race for life by so scanty a margin that the baffled boar drove hard against the friendly rock up which his intended victim had sprung to safety.

It was little more than a ledge which afforded Donalblane such timely sanctuary, and it did not lead far; but, about twenty feet from the ground, he found a sort of niche wherein he could dispose his exhausted body with some degree of comfort.

"Eh, man, but I'm well-nigh dead!" he panted, as he stretched out on the moss-covered rock. "Anither ten yards and he'd have had his tusks into me. Ah, weel, he'll no' get anither chance, though I stay here a' nicht!"

As the boar was grunting and gnashing, and his squealing family were evidently determined to invest the place, Donalblane proceeded to settle down as comfortably as he could.

Happily the moss lay thick on the rock, and really made quite a soft couch. It was a fine, warm night, and if he had only had food and drink he would not have greatly minded. But the pangs of hunger, and especially of thirst, took possession of him, and he had a wretched time of it as the long hours dragged slowly by. Some time during the night the pigs disappeared, and when day dawned the coast was clear.

Feeling very stiff and sore and out of sorts,



"THE RAVENING SWINE WERE GAINING UPON HIM." [P. 45.]

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Donalblane clambered down into the valley, and set off to find his ship. By a lucky chance, after a couple of hours' vain wandering, he came upon a couple of natives laden with oranges evidently intended for market.

They, of course, could not understand his words, but by vigorous pantomime he got into their heads the two facts, that he wanted some of their oranges, and to be shown the way to the harbour.

For a bit of silver they filled his hands with the fruit, which the starving boy found very refreshing if not quite satisfying; and then, by keeping them company, he came in due time to where the welcome sight of the *Bonnie Scotland* gladdened his eyes. On his return to the ship he found his friends in great concern about him, and Mr. Sutherland actually organising a party to go in search of him.

They were considerably amused at his story, and thereafter he had to endure many a joke in regard to his supposed fondness for pork.

Leaving the lovely islands with good stores of fruit, fresh provisions, and water, the *Bonnie Scotland* pursued her way westward through storm and

calm until the drawing near of the New World was announced by tropical things that came out to meet her on the bosom of the deep.

Thenceforward every eye scanned eagerly the horizon, and Donalblane spent most of his time high up the mainmast, it being his ambition to be the first among the passengers to sight the land. Mr. Paterson, whose kindly interest in the boy had increased during the voyage, promised him a golden guinea if he did sight land first, and this of course intensified his desire.

His patience was sorely tried, for when the ship reached the dreaded Sargasso Sea her onward progress was checked for many a weary day by the provoking seaweed which held her fast.

"I'm afraid you'll not soon win your guinea, Donald," said Mr. Sutherland, after they had been apparently motionless for several days. "We're bound to stay where we are until a strong wind is good enough to spring up and help us out."

But the wind seemed in no hurry to come, and the gulf-weed kept them prisoners until at last something in the nature of a hurricane struck the *Bonnie Scotland*, and she scudded helplessly before

it under bare poles for a whole day, her passengers' impatience to sight land being for the time replaced by a lively fear of foundering.

In spite of being so poor a craft, however, the *Bonnie Scotland* braved out the peril, and the following morning Donalblane, who had taken to the mast as soon as he had swallowed his breakfast, made the hearts of all on deck thrill with joy by the cry of—

“The land! the land! I can see it! Look! Look!”

An instant later the look-out at the bow confirmed him by shouting—

“Land ho! on the weather bow!” and the ship-wearied folk forgot for the moment their mutual animosities which had abounded during the long voyage, and rejoiced together that the end of their trials was at hand.

“Here's your guinea, my lad,” said Mr. Pater-son, as he handed Donalblane a bright new coin. “You've earned it well, and I hope that good fortune may always befall you.”

As Donalblane thanked his kind friend he vowed to himself that that beautiful gold piece should not

be hastily spent, but that he would keep it as long as possible in memory of the giver, and the reason for the gift.

It was one of the West India Islands they were approaching, and as they passed within half-a-league its wealth of tropical vegetation presented so pleasing a picture that the passengers besought the captain to make a landing in one of the tempting coves, so that they might have a run on shore, and probably get some fruit. But he was a surly fellow, and refused the request with an oath, saying that he was sick of the whole lot of them, and wanted to be rid of them with as little delay as possible.

So the *Bonnie Scotland* kept on her course, leaving the lovely islands astern, and out of sight as she passed into the wide expanse of the Caribbean Sea.

Coarse and brutal as he was, her captain understood navigation, and knew how to get the best out of the old hulk of which he had command. Now, as the end of the voyage drew near, and the seas seemed kind, he cracked on all the sail the ship would carry, greatly to the delight of Donal-

blane, who loved to have the vessel plunging along at full speed.

More than half the breadth of the sea had been traversed when the look-out one morning shouted—

“Sail ho! Sail ho!”

“Where away?” roared the captain from the poop.

“Right abeam, and coming towards us,” was the response after a moment’s hesitation.

At once there was much excitement on board. The members of the expedition took it for granted that this was one of the other ships from which they had long parted company, and began to speculate which one it was, and whether it would overtake them.

“I was hoping ours would be the first vessel to reach Darien,” said Mr. Sutherland to Donalblane. “It would be something to boast of considering what a poor thing she is. I wonder which one of the others this is?”

“Ye canna tell so far away,” responded Donalblane. “Maybe it winna catch us. We’re sailing fine now.”

The *Bonnie Scotland* certainly was doing wonders, but in spite of every inch of canvas her sticks could carry being spread, the other ship gained steadily, and the captain's grim countenance grew darker and darker.

Mr. Paterson's fine features also became perturbed, although he kept his own counsel, and those who noticed supposed he was simply anxious that the *Bonnie Scotland* should win the race to Darien.

As the afternoon advanced the pursuing vessel, which seemed to be sailing two knots to the other's one, came fully into view, and everybody on board saw that it not only was not one of the five which had set out from Leith, but that it bore a strange look which somehow seemed to bode no good.

They were not long left in uncertainty. "Yon's one of they buccaneers," growled the captain; "and if ye're going to fight him off ye'd better be gettin' ready."

At once the ship was filled with alarm and confusion, women weeping, children wailing, men threatening. The very name of buccaneer sent a chill of terror to every heart, and if the blood-

stained butchers of the sea had ranged alongside at that moment, the *Bonnie Scotland* would have proved an easy prey. But there was one man on board equal to the emergency. William Paterson had been shamefully treated by his associates, his advice flouted, his authority denied, his confidence betrayed. Now he rose superior to them all. He alone was calm amid the pitiful panic, and the first to respond to his call for concerted action were Mr. Sutherland and Donalblane.

"We must resist to the death," were his earnest words, steadily spoken. "There can be no question of surrender. The buccaneers do not know the meaning of mercy."

CHAPTER VI.

A BRUSH WITH BUCCANEERS.

THERE was no lack of arms on board the *Bonnie Scotland*, but they were curiously assorted, and by no means all of the best quality. Muskets and pistols, claymores and short swords, battle-axes and boarding-pikes, they were all hurriedly got out on deck, and each man chose the weapon he thought he could handle to the best advantage.

Donalblane, whose Highland spirit rather rejoiced at the prospect of a fight, snatched up a sword, which he hung at his belt in addition to his own pair of pistols.

“Can we beat the buccaneers, do you think?” he asked, looking up eagerly into the grave face of Mr. Sutherland, whose one thought was for his wife and child.

Mr. Sutherland glanced over the confused crowd of agitated men, many of whom were evidently in a state of unmanly terror, and there was an undertone of contempt in his voice as he replied—

“We ought to, if we keep our heads. There are certainly enough of us.”

Counting her crew the ship carried three hundred men, and if these stood to their weapons they should prove a match for the enemy, whose numbers would probably not exceed one hundred. But the utter lack of discipline or order amongst the expedition filled both Mr. Paterson and Mr. Sutherland with fears as to the result.

In addition to small-arms, the *Bonnie Scotland* carried eight carronades which had been neglected during the voyage, but were now hastily got in order and double-shotted under the direction of Mr. Paterson, who seemed to know how everything should be done.

Meanwhile the buccaneer was steadily coming on, and evidently manœuvring to approach astern so as to prevent the *Bonnie Scotland* using her broadside.

But the veteran captain saw through the trick,

and at once changed his vessel's course, saying with a sardonic smile—

“Red Angus is no sae simple as ye think. He kens your wicked wile, and just how to fool ye.”

Mr. Paterson, disgusted as he had been by the brutality of the captain during the voyage, could not help now admiring the consummate skill with which he handled his clumsy craft, for the *Bonnie Scotland* was far from being what she ought to have been.

He seemed to be able to divine every movement of the buccaneer, and to meet it by a counter-movement which prevented the latter obtaining the advantage sought. Thus the two vessels dodged about among the white-caps, for a strong breeze was blowing, until at last the buccaneer apparently gave up all strategy, and bore directly down upon the *Bonnie Scotland* at the risk of a broadside.

“Now then, gunners, be ready to fire when I give you the word,” was Mr. Paterson's command, and, matches in hand, the men he had selected for the duty, stood beside the carronades, waiting his word. He did not speak until the buccaneer was not more than a hundred yards distant, and then

the captain, by a sudden turn of his wheel, throwing the *Bonnie Scotland* around so that she presented her beam to the advancing vessel, Mr. Paterson shouted—

“All together! Fire!”

The three carronades roared as one, and their iron missiles went hurtling into the rigging of the buccaneer and along her crowded decks, bringing a lot of the rigging down by the run, injuring the foremast so that it showed signs of tottering, and killing and wounding a number of the scoundrels, who were evidently not expecting so heavy a broadside. Certainly the immediate effect of the discharge was most encouraging, and Donalblane clapped his hands gleefully as the damaged vessel fell off, while the *Bonnie Scotland* kept on her course.

“They got it then, didn’t they?” he exclaimed. “That’ll teach them to leave honest folk alone, eh?” and he waved his sword exultantly towards the enemy.

“It is wise not to hurrah until you are out of the wood, my boy,” said Mr. Paterson, who just then chanced to be passing. “That is only first blood

for us. The buccaneers will soon return to the attack, and then may Heaven defend us!"

If the *Bonnie Scotland* had been anything but the slow-going tub she was she might have made her escape while the buccaneer was repairing damages. But it was not in her to do this, and she wallowed cumbrously in the waves until the enemy once more ranged close.

Although her sides were pierced for many guns whose black muzzles were thrust threateningly out, the buccaneer, for some reason, reserved her fire. Perhaps, having no doubt as to the issue of the struggle, her commander wished to save the other vessel as far as possible uninjured.

Approaching more warily this time, he so managed as to come up astern of the *Bonnie Scotland*, and, in spite of the latter's efforts to avoid the onset, bore down upon her, the two ships colliding with a grinding crash and the rattle of interlocking spars.

The sight of the buccaneers as they crowded the bulwarks, ready to spring on board their prey, was certainly enough to affright the stoutest heart. Every countenance seemed that of an incarnate

fiend, rendered more hideous by the blood-red handkerchief which was their only head-covering. They were seething with rage at the loss they had already suffered, and shook their cutlasses fiercely, while they shouted like madmen.

Donalblane's eagerness for a fight was decidedly chilled by the appalling appearance of these assailants, but he did not lose control of himself, and when Mr. Paterson gave the command, fired his pistols one after the other into the yelling horde of scoundrels. With what effect he never knew, for the next instant all was the wildest confusion, the men of the *Bonnie Scotland* opposing the buccaneers with boarding-pike, battle-axe, sword, and claymore, and beating them back again and again with much shedding of blood on both sides.

Whatever other virtues they lacked, these adventurers were certainly not deficient in brawn or bravery. They stood their ground splendidly, and Donalblane's heart thrilled with pride as he saw that the buccaneers were gaining no advantage.

He himself was no idle spectator. Throwing aside his pistols he seized a big boarding-pike, and taking his place near Mr. Paterson, made it his

business to be ready to protect him so far as might be in his power. Nor did he fail of an opportunity. In spite of the determined defence, a few of the buccaneers forced their way on board, and one of them, a powerful fellow, with the face of a tiger, made a rush upon Mr. Paterson, whom he no doubt recognised as the person in command. At the moment Mr. Paterson was looking in another direction, and the ruffian's cutlass would infallibly have cloven his head had not Donalblane perceived the peril in time to swing his boarding-pike across the buccaneer's shins, bringing him headlong to the slippery deck, where Donalblane followed him with another crack, this time on the skull, that rendered him senseless and harmless for the time being.

Mr. Paterson knew nothing of his danger until the miscreant fell clattering at his feet, and then he realised how narrow had been his escape.

"God bless you, my boy!" he exclaimed fervently, throwing his arm about Donalblane's neck. "I owe you my life. I shall never forget the service you have done me."

Donalblane's face flushed with delight. He felt

proud of himself and proud of his patron. He would rather have saved his life than that of any one else on board.

"I'm verra, verra glad, sir," he replied. "Losh! but he was a fearsome creature. He thought fine he wad cut ye in two."

"Well, you have done for him, Donald. May we all do as well. Thank Heaven we're still keeping the rascals off our decks!" and so saying Mr. Paterson rushed into the thick of the fight again.

The stubborn, sturdy defence of the Scotsmen began to tell. Only a few of their assailants had broken through their ranks, and these were speedily put *hors de combat*. The buccaneers, who had judged from the appearance of the *Bonnie Scotland* that she would prove an easy prey, were amazed by the number of men on board, and the fierceness with which they fought. As one after another of their crew was killed or wounded, their fury slackened, and when after half-an-hour's hand-to-hand struggle they had gained no advantage, they were fain to sheer off to reconsider the situation.

Hearty cheers rose from the *Bonnie Scotland* as the buccaneer ship sullenly slid astern. Donalblane,

who had been so lucky as to escape all injury, springing into the rigging, and waving one of the buccaneer's blood-red kerchiefs as he shouted jeeringly—

“Noo then, ye murdering villains, have ye got your fill? Ye'll ken better than to be attacking honest folk like us again.”

A hearty laugh from below showed that the boy's taunts expressed the feelings of his shipmates; but when the next instant a bullet whistled perilously near his head, he realised how he was exposing himself, and slid down the rigging much faster than he had climbed up. Considering the heat of the conflict it was remarkable how slightly the defenders of the *Bonnie Scotland* had suffered. Three killed, and a dozen wounded, none of them mortally, made up the list of casualties, and when these had been given proper attention, and the decks cleaned and cleared up, the ministers, of whom there were several on board, called upon all to join with them in giving thanks to Providence for their deliverance.

And so, with the baffled buccaneers still in sight, they sang triumphant Psalms, and lifted up fervent praise to Almighty God who had given them the

victory. The women and children, who had been shut in the cabins during the fight, came out to join in this service of praise, their pallid faces showing how they had suffered from fear and anxiety while thus cooped up.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FOUNDING OF THE CITY OF DARIEN.

WHETHER the buccaneers went off for reinforcements, or simply withdrew sadder and wiser, if not better, men, cannot be said. They certainly disappeared before sunset, and no more was ever seen of them. For once at least the blood-stained Brethren of the Coast had met more than their match, and been foiled in their villainous work.

Having repaired the damage done to the spars and rigging, the *Bonnie Scotland* continued her course, and on the first day of November came in sight of the long-desired Golden Island—the goal of their hopes, the end of their weary voyage.

Wonderfully refreshing was the sight to the delighted eyes of the expedition, sick of the monotonous sea. Clothed with rich green sward, from which rose lofty trees laden with fruit, and sur-

rounded by still waters of crystalline purity, this island stood forth like a beautiful specimen of the vast regions beyond, which it was hoped were some day to become a province of Scotland.

Donalblane's freckled face glowed with joy. "Eh, but it's bonnie—it's verra bonnie!" he exclaimed, grasping Mr. Sutherland's arm. "There's naethin' like that in Scotland."

"No, indeed, Donald," responded Mr. Sutherland, smiling at the boy's enthusiasm. "It's very different from Scotland, and far more beautiful; and if its fulfilment only equals its promise we shall have done well to come here."

By a clever bit of strategy Donalblane managed to get into the first boat that left the ship, and, curled up in the bow, waited until they touched ground, when he sprang out, recking naught of wet feet so long as he was really the first one of the expedition to set foot on the New World.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, waving his cap as he raced up the beach. "Come along and see the land!"

There were plenty to follow his example, and before long the little island which lay at the

mouth of the Golden River had been pretty well explored.

It was indeed a lovely spot, but it did not afford the good harbour or the natural facilities for defence which were necessary for the permanent establishment of the expedition. Mr. Paterson, however, thought it best for the *Bonnie Scotland* to remain there until the other ships put in an appearance. This they did in the course of the next few weeks, one at a time straggling in, each with its own tale of storm and stress, of baffling winds and disheartening calms, but none of them having shared the *Bonnie Scotland's* experience with the buccaneers.

After all had been rested and refreshed, Mr. Paterson, who had well employed the interval of waiting by exploring the surrounding region, Donalblane being usually permitted to accompany him, announced that he had decided upon the site of the city whose foundations they were to lay, and under his directions the little fleet moved thither.

The spot was so admirably adapted for their purpose that it seemed as if it had been destined

by nature. About a cannon-shot southward from the Golden Island a peninsula, having a deep harbour at its extremity, stretched out into the sea. The outer arm of the harbour was lofty and commanding, affording protection to the water within. The other arm was low, and well fitted for the construction of forts and other defences; while between the two lay a wide, calm, sheltered bay capable of containing all the fleets of Europe.

The shores of the bay were of bright yellow sand that suggested gold to the eager eyes of the new settlers; and the waters were so clear that full five fathoms deep you could see the shells and coral fragments as through the purest glass. In many places mangroves dropped into the pellucid water, their boughs laden with a strange kind of fruit, for they bore oysters that were good to eat.

Beyond the golden beach rose stately palms interspersed with orange and other fruit trees, and here and there spread rich savannahs ready for homes to be built upon them.

It seemed an earthly paradise indeed, and Donalblane expressed the feelings of the rest when he exclaimed in his characteristic way—

“Here we’ve come and here we’ll bide, for there can surely be no bonnier place on all the earth!”

Only one member of the entire expedition had any knowledge of the country. This was William Paterson, the founder of the expedition; and so at the outset all his counsel and directions were unquestioningly obeyed.

When, just before sunset, the ships came to anchor in the noble harbour, and with utmost haste the boats were filled and urged ashore, Mr. Paterson was the first to land. His first action was to fall on his knees and offer up fervent thanksgiving for their safe arrival. Each Scotsman as he landed followed his example, until the whole expedition formed one great congregation worshipping upon that shore which had never before heard the name of God.

Their prayer ended, they rose and embraced one another in the impulse of mutual congratulation. Every heart beat high with hope; and that night there was not a single member of the party who was troubled by the slightest doubt as to the success of their great undertaking.

They had arrived in the very best season of the

year, it being the springtime of that climate, when Nature was at her best in every way, and they made haste to get out of their cramped quarters on shipboard and put up temporary huts and tents in the shade of the trees in which they could live until permanent homes were built.

Donalblane was immensely happy. He had no hut to build. He could sleep on the ship or ashore just according to his fancy, so he was a gentleman of leisure, and he thoroughly enjoyed himself exploring the wonderful New World.

By common consent the settlers took holiday at first. They hunted the wild boar in the depths of the forest; they fished in the neighbouring streams and surrounding seas; they threaded the woods, where almost every bough bore some kind of fruit with which they were glad to make acquaintance.

Then they turned their attention to work, and, after huts had been provided for all, a fort was built commanding the harbour, and threescore guns, taken from the ships, mounted upon its battlements. Their next proceeding was to cut a canal across the isthmus, thereby rendering their

peninsula an island; and having named the fort St. Andrews, and the surrounding region Caëdonia, they began to feel more at home.

While they were thus occupied, and everything seemed to be going on smoothly and prosperously, Mr. Paterson thought it well to make a journey into the interior in order to open up friendly relations with the natives, and by effecting treaties with them to secure a proper title to the land upon which the expedition had settled. He accordingly made up a party for this purpose.

It included Mr. Sutherland, and he was thoughtful enough to let Donalblane know of the project.

“Ay; but I’d like fine to be going with you,” said the boy, his face full of eagerness. “Can ye no’ tak me?”

“It’s not for me to say, Donald,” replied Mr. Sutherland kindly; “but suppose you have a word with Mr. Paterson? We’re starting in the morning.”

Donalblane needed no second hint. He set off at once in search of Mr. Paterson, and, happening to find him disengaged, promptly proffered his request.

"Can I gang wi' you to-morrow?" he said, fixing his big grey eyes upon him, his whole frame trembling with the eagerness that possessed him.

Mr. Paterson woke from the reverie in which he had been lost, and, regarding Donalblanc with a half-puzzled, half-amused smile, asked—

"To-morrow? Where?"

"I dinna ken, sir," was the odd response. "But wherever ye're going yersel'. Away off yonder," he added, pointing inland, where, in the remote distance, a range of mountains, blue and vague, enclosed the horizon. Mr. Paterson now fully understood him.

"And why do you want to go with me, Donald? Are you not content here?" he inquired in the gentle, winning tone that was one of his many personal charms.

"Ay, to be sure," responded the boy heartily. "But you're ganging to see the Indians, and I'd like fine to see them too."

Mr. Paterson laughed at this frank confession of curiosity, and then was silent for a brief space while he seemed lost in thought.

Donalblane, thrilling with anxiety, kicked a hole in the turf as he waited.

"I think you may come with us, Donald," said Mr. Paterson presently, laying his hand upon the other's shoulder. "But you must be a very good boy, and do just what you are told."

"You may be sure I'll do that!" cried Donalblane, giving a jump of delight. "Mony thanks, sir, for your kindness."

Thus it was settled to Donalblane's satisfaction, but to the great envy of others who would have liked to be in his place.

Bright and early the following morning the party set forth. It comprised twelve of the Scots all fully armed, and half as many of natives whose friendship had been already secured; these latter serving in the double capacity of guides and bearers of the presents intended to be given to the Indian chieftains. They were all in high spirits, the hard work of founding St. Andrews having made a holiday very welcome, while the novelty and interest of the trip certainly promised to be sufficient to satisfy the most enterprising.

Mr. Sutherland kindly took Donalblane as his

companion, and they trudged along together, their attention alert for everything in nature that was strange or beautiful. For the most part their route lay through shadowy forests, into whose dim recesses the hot rays of the sun never penetrated, with here and there a grassy glade that brought them into sunlight again. They travelled at a leisurely pace and in short stages, as they were not pressed for time, and Donalblane enjoyed every moment. He was as happy as a humming-bird.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUCCESSFUL EMBASSY.

DURING his previous visit to the Darien region Mr. Paterson had gained some knowledge of the native language, and this now stood him and his companions in good stead, as it caused them to be received not only with kindness, but with honour, by the Indians when they met them.

It was towards the close of their second day's journey that the quick ear of Donalblane, who was in the lead with the guides, caught a sound that was different from anything he had hitherto heard.

"Eh! but is na that music?" he cried, turning to the nearest guide, who smiled assent, although in truth he did not understand the question. "I maun gang and tell Mr. Paterson;" and he raced back with the information.

Mr. Paterson was very pleased at the news, for

he understood it to mean that the report of their expedition had preceded them, and that the Indians were coming to welcome them in their own way ; and so it proved, for the music grew louder as they advanced, until, on entering one of the long forest aisles, they beheld a group of musicians playing upon reeds, accompanied by a chorus who joined in from time to time with a kind of musical humming.

Donalblane's eyes opened wide at this. He had never expected to find an orchestra and a choral society among savages, and he expressed his surprise to Mr. Sutherland, who smilingly replied—

“ Don't be astonished at anything in this strange New World, my lad. It is as full of wonders as it is of perils.”

When the Scotsmen had come up to them, the musicians changed their march into a curious kind of dance, which continued until they crossed a small savannah and drew near a lofty grove standing by itself, within whose recesses it was understood the king awaited his visitors.

Then the dancing ceased, the music resumed, and there issued from the grove a bevy of graceful girls, glittering with golden ornaments, and carry-

ing garlands of flowers which they threw over the necks of Mr. Paterson and his companions, not neglecting Donalblane, who blushed to the roots of his sandy hair at this unlooked-for adornment.

Guided by them, the visitors at length were ushered into the presence of the King of Darien, and Donalblane caught his breath at the imposing sight. Seated upon a huge throne of mahogany logs, decked with Spanish crimson cloth, and wearing a great crown of gold, the dusky potentate—albeit his robes were only of some light cotton stuff, and big shining rings dangled from his ears and nose—looked every inch a king.

So royal indeed was his appearance that the Scotsmen, moved by a common impulse, not only bowed, but knelt before him, which mark of respect evidently impressed his Majesty very favourably. Standing about him were fine-looking men, whose stature was heightened by diadems of the gold plumage of the mocking-bird, out of which rose two long feathers from the scarlet macaw. They leaned upon gleaming spears, and were no doubt ready to execute the commands of their master for life or death.

Thanks to Mr. Paterson's acquaintance with the

native language, there was no need of an interpreter, and he proceeded to explain the purpose of his visit.

"We are come," said he, "from the other side of the globe to greet you, O King! We are come as friends, not as enemies. We would take nothing from you without due payment. We offer to purchase from you sufficient land for our settlement, and we want not only your land, but your friendship. If you treat us kindly, if you deal with us honourably, we will help to make you and your people greater and richer, and we will also aid you against your enemies. We will be your allies; and if you are attacked, our guns and our swords will be at your service, for your cause will be ours. What say you, O King?" And without waiting for a response, the shrewd leader of the expedition proceeded to exhibit the presents of beads, trinkets, and scarlet cloth which he had brought.

The dignity of the monarch was not entirely proof against this tempting display. His dark eyes gleamed with eager desire, and it was by a manifest effort that he controlled the impulse to make a hasty descent from the throne in order to take the presents into his royal hands.

Suddenly the ceremony, which had been proceeding so auspiciously, was interrupted by an extraordinary disturbance that thoroughly startled every member of the visiting party save Mr. Paterson.

During the progress of the solemn function there had gathered in the trees overhead a curious congregation, to wit, a large troop of monkeys, whose curiosity had evidently been excited by what was going on below. They came in thousands, leaping from bough to bough, and from tree to tree, until they assembled right above the king and his visitors.

Here they remained tolerably quiet for awhile, until, just as his Majesty was about to reply to Mr. Paterson, the impudent intruders broke into a deafening chorus of chattering and screaming which made every other sound inaudible. Not only so, but, in utter fearlessness of human presence, they began a series of wild antics, which culminated in their forming living chains, one holding on to the other's tail, and then they let themselves down from the lofty trees until they were actually within reach of the people below.

One of these animated chains swung to and fro so near to Donalblane that he thought the grinning,

grasping creatures meant to attack him, and he drew his cutlass to strike at them, when happily Mr. Paterson divined his intention, and with a quick movement caught his arm.

"Let them alone, my lad," he said almost sternly. "They will do you no harm. They are sacred here. Be careful."

It was well he had been so quick, for already some of the stalwart attendants of the king had observed Donalblane, and were lifting their long spears menacingly.

Donalblane's weapon went back into its sheath ; and, bracing himself up, he said under his breath—

"Ye grinning loons, ye'll not scairt me, but gin ye do lay hands on me, I'll gi'e ye a clout that'll teach ye manners."

The uneasiness of the Scotsmen at the monkeys' antics must have been amusing enough to the natives, who not only tolerated the saucy creatures, but looked upon them as sacred, and therefore regarded their appearance on the scene as a favourable omen ; in fact, nothing more fortunate for the success of the embassy could have occurred. The pawarress, or priests, were particularly pleased.

So, too, was the king; and when at last the monkeys, doubling up their chains again, returned to the tree-tops and scampered off in high glee, both he and the priests were ready to enter into negotiations.

A treaty was accordingly drawn up and ratified, whereby full freedom was given to the Scots to settle in the land and enjoy it, and between them and the natives there was declared to be peace "as long as rivers ran, and gold was found in Darien." Then followed a banquet prepared and served in true native style. The roast flesh of the peccary, broiled fish from the mountain streams, and luscious fruit from the trees all around composed the bill of fare; and the hungry visitors needed no urging until there was produced the dish of honour, being a huge lizard, called the iguana, carefully baked and served up with tomato sauce.

One look at it was quite sufficient to make the Scotsmen suddenly lose their appetites. With one consent they began to invent excuses for letting the *tempting* dish go by them. All except Mr. Paterson. He had tasted iguana before and knew it was not at all unsavoury. Moreover, good



"GLARING DOWN UPON HIM . . . THE MOST APPALLING EYES HE HAD
EVER BEHELD."

[p. 86.

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manners required that this item should not be treated with disgust. So he bravely helped himself to a goodly slice, and when it came round to Donalblane, he, by way of atoning for his mistake in regard to the monkeys, did likewise.

It was a hard job getting down the first morsel, but the flesh proving white, firm, and of fine quality, with a flavour somewhat resembling chicken, he actually managed to polish off his portion, being rewarded therefor by a look of warm approval from Mr. Paterson.

The following morning the embassy set forth on their return to the coast, attended by all the honours and marks of goodwill that had marked their arrival; but before they reached their destination Donalblane had an adventure that came within an ace of costing him his life.

The purpose of their mission having been so satisfactorily accomplished, Mr. Paterson readily assented to the request of his companions, that they should linger on the way back in order to enjoy some hunting.

This delighted Donalblane, who was impatient to try what he could do as a sportsman, and, in

company with Mr. Sutherland and a native guide, he set out joyously. There was no lack of game to be feared. From the harmless iguana or more attractive *corrosou* (wild turkey) up to the fierce wild boar or terrible panther or jaguar, the forest simply swarmed with fair subjects for his bullets. It was only a question of picking and choosing.

Following their guide he and Mr. Sutherland had been tramping for several hours, and securing a creditable "bag," when, feeling weary, they threw themselves down to rest under a big tree, and quite naturally fell sound asleep. An hour slipped by, and Donalblane, from a troubled dream, awoke to find glaring down upon him from an upper branch the most appalling eyes he had ever beheld. Their baleful gleam seemed to freeze his blood. He was for the moment paralysed. He could not turn aside to glance at his companions, who lay like logs a few feet away, and his tongue refused to act. He could just discern through the deep shade a great dark body crouched behind the eyes, and his instinct told him that the most dreaded denizen of the forest—the black panther—was preparing to spring upon him!

CHAPTER IX.

IN PERILOUS FLIGHT.

DONALBLANE'S paralysing panic was only for the moment. The power of action presently returned to him, and, grasping his gun, he aimed at the diabolical eyes, while he shouted to his companions: "Up wi' ye!—up wi' ye! We're in danger!"

So heavy was their slumber, however, that neither of them stirred at his call; but when the report of the gun rang out, they both bounded to their feet just in time to see a great dark body fly through the air with a fearful scream, and light upon poor Donalblane, who fell back beneath it! They realised at once what had happened, and Mr. Sutherland, seizing his musket, and the Indian his spear, sprang to the boy's assistance.

So completely did the panther cover him that Mr. Sutherland dared not fire, lest the bullet

should penetrate both bodies; but he sought a chance to use the butt of his musket on the brute's head, while the Indian made play with his spear, stabbing it into the creature's side. Meantime Donalblane, into whose shoulder the terrible teeth had sunk while the merciless claws were tearing his clothes to ribbons, fighting for his life, with both hands buried in the soft, thick fur, strove frantically to throttle his mighty assailant.

Had he been alone there could have been no doubt as to the issue of the struggle—the panther must have done him to death; but the stunning blows from Mr. Sutherland and the repeated stabs of the Indian's spear soon began to tell.

They had not only weakened the brute's strength, but they turned his attention from Donalblane to his other opponents, and, after a space of time that seemed an eternity to the boy, but was in reality barely a minute, the panther, giving a hideous growl, relaxed both teeth and claws in order to prepare for a spring at Mr. Sutherland.

This gave the latter the opportunity for which he had been waiting. He was an expert shot, and never had had more need of his skill than at this

moment. Quickly throwing his gun to his shoulder, and aiming full at the panther's breast, he pulled the trigger.

Happily the musket did not miss fire, and the heavy charge sped straight to its mark, going clean through the animal's heart. With one last fiendish scream the fearful creature sprang straight up into the air, and fell back a limp, lifeless mass of fur. Not waiting to look at his quarry, Mr. Sutherland rushed to Donalblane, who lay senseless on the sward, with the blood streaming from nearly a score of wounds.

"My poor boy," he exclaimed, as he took Donald's head upon his knees, "surely that black brute has not killed you!" Then to the Indian, who was wonderingly examining the panther, he called indignantly, "Leave that thing alone, and get me some water—quick!"

When the Indian returned with the water Mr. Sutherland tenderly washed the boy's wounds, which he was glad to find were none of them very deep—those made by the teeth on the shoulder being the worst—and did his best to bind them up with handkerchiefs and what other linen was

available, the Indian proving a very helpful assistant. Before it was quite done Donalblane recovered consciousness, and at first was so dazed that he had no idea as to what had happened.

"What's the matter?" he asked, starting to put his hand to his head, and then dropping it because of the pain in his shoulder. "I'm verra sore. Ah! I ken—I ken—that awfu' black thing. I fair thought it wad kill me." And he groaned deeply, for his sufferings were keen.

"Not a bit of it, my boy," responded Mr. Sutherland cheerily, as he patted his pale cheek. "You're not even half killed, and that awful black thing is killed completely. But you've had a very narrow escape, and you've got some nasty wounds, and you must keep very quiet here until we can get you back to St. Andrews."

Mr. Sutherland was a man of thought as well as of action, and it did not take him long to arrange matters. The Indian was dispatched to the settlement with a note telling what had happened, and asking that a litter be sent back for the sufferer. In the meantime he himself would stay by the wounded boy until the litter arrived.

Happily they were not at the time a very great distance from St. Andrews. Another Indian, having been promised liberal payment if he was very quick, ran the whole way thither, and the litter party lost not a moment in making the return trip. It was indeed well for Donalblane that they were so prompt, for he presently began to be feverish, and to require the utmost skill of the physicians who had accompanied the expedition to combat the effect of the serious wounds he bore.

There was great sympathy felt for him, as he was a general favourite, owing to his bright, frank, manly ways; and both Mr. Paterson and Mr. Sutherland were as concerned about him as if he had been their own child.

Even with the best of care some weeks must elapse before he would regain his former vigour, and while he lay in his hammock, a not too docile and submissive patient, affairs went on not at all prosperously at St. Andrews.

Although absent only a week, Mr. Paterson found on his return that a spirit of discontent and dissension had already broken out in the colony. All the men were not workers. Some were useless

drones, and those who had toiled hard laying the foundation of the new city began to grumble and protest. There was no settled or acknowledged authority. Once the novelty of the situation had passed away, Mr. Paterson ceased to be looked up to and obeyed, and it seemed impossible for any one to be agreed upon as supreme governor.

The settlement certainly presented a curious appearance at this time. Over a thousand persons, all foreign to the soil, were lodged in rude wooden huts roofed with palmetto leaves, the inside furnishing of which were of the simplest description. Chests and lockers did duty for seats and tables; tartan shawls of brilliant hues, hung up as curtains, formed the only partitions; spades, mattocks, axes, and hatchets littered the walls, while carefully disposed in the dryest corners were the claymores and muskets which formed their weapons of defence.

One large building was set apart for public worship, and here services were daily held by the Presbyterian ministers, several of whom had accompanied the expedition, and were much given to lengthy sermons. Another building was the storehouse, to which the provisions brought out

by the ships were removed. Now, mention has already been made of advantage being taken by those who supplied the expedition to palm off much inferior stuff than they had contracted to furnish; and this rascality became revealed when it was discovered that the greater part of the stores, upon which the colonists must depend until they had raised their own harvests, was absolutely unfit for human food, and had to be cast into the sea, where it attracted swarms of sharks that henceforth infested the harbour, rendering its waters full of danger.

This was a terrible blow to the hopes of the settlers, who were already disappointed at the failure of their expectations in the matter of gold, which they had counted upon being able to obtain in abundance, whereas all the gold they had seen were the ornaments of the King of Darien.

It was determined to dispatch one of the ships to the island of Jamaica for a fresh supply of provisions, and in the meantime, through the influence of Mr. Paterson, the King of Darien placed the services of a large body of Indian hunters at his disposal, and these men, through

their knowledge of the country and their skill, were able to secure game and fish in abundance when the Scotsmen could get nothing.

As soon as Donalblane had recovered from his wounds, nothing daunted by his thrilling experience, he devoted himself to hunting, as that suited his taste far better than tilling the ground or working on the fortifications.

Keen of eye, quick of ear, light of foot, long of wind, and well-nigh tireless, he set himself to learn from the Indians their hunting wiles and devices, and was so apt a pupil that ere long he became a match for the best of them, particularly as his musket and pistols, always kept in perfect order, were immensely superior weapons to their spears and arrows.

The magnificent region round about afforded a hunting-field vast and varied enough to satisfy the most exacting sportsman. The forests were full of animals, from the amusing, harmless monkeys up to the fierce wild boar or the terrible jaguar ; while the waters fairly teemed with fish, from the delicious mullet up to the gigantic manatee, or sea-cow—if this can be properly called a fish. The first time

Donalblane saw a manatee he was filled with amazement—it seemed so huge, so hideous, so extraordinary a monster; but when he got over his first surprise, he became possessed with the notion of adding one to his list of trophies.

“Do so, by all means,” said Mr. Paterson, when he mentioned his purpose to him. “The manatee’s flesh, in spite of the creature’s ugly appearance, is equal to the best pork, and we cannot have too much of it for our hungry people.”

“Then I’ll just do my verra best to get ye one, and maybe two, for they tell me they are in plenty up yon river,” said Donalblane, pointing towards the so-called Golden River.

“Good luck to you, my lad,” rejoined Mr. Paterson, patting him on the shoulder. “Be sure that the chief hunter goes with you, for the manatee can give plenty of trouble, if you do not know how to handle him.”

Donalblane promised to be sure of having Raymon, whose heart he had already won by various little kindnesses, and hastened off to make arrangements for a start the following morning. He had no difficulty in securing the co-operation

of Raymon, who was only too glad to join him, and who undertook to procure a canoe and two of the best paddlers in his tribe. Accordingly, at dawn of the next day Donalblane set out on his hunt for a manatee.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHASE OF THE MANATEE.

SEVERAL hours' steady paddling brought the hunting party, ere the full heat of the day, to a part of the river where the banks were densely clothed with mangroves, broken here and there by bayous, whose shallow bottoms were lush with rank vegetation.

"We get him there," said Raymon, pointing to one of these bayous. "When sun going down. Plenty of manatee in dat place."

Donalblane was impatient to begin the hunt right away; but Raymon knew his business better, and so they sought a landing in one of the cool, dark recesses of the mangrove forest, and, after eating their lunch, lay down for the inevitable siesta.

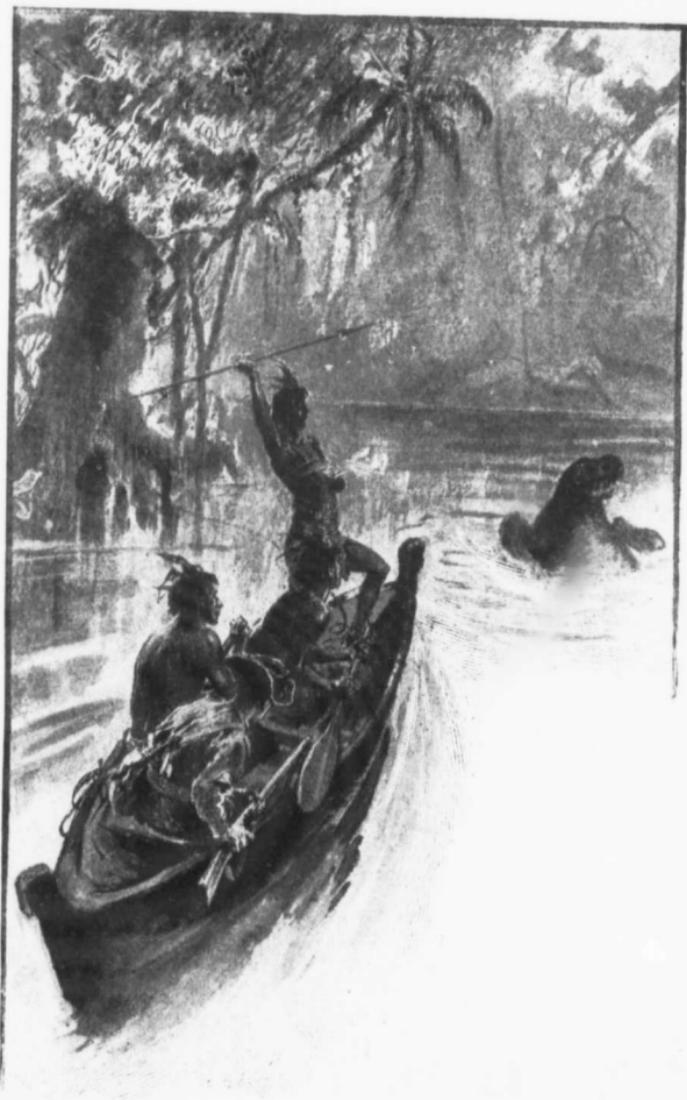
It was well on in the afternoon before Raymon pronounced it time to get to work, and, thrilling

with eagerness, Donalblane took his place in the stern of the canoe, his musket ready for a quick shot, while Raymon crouched in the bow, holding a harpoon to which was attached a long, thin rope. Noiselessly the expert paddlers sent the canoe over the bosom of the bayou, turning this way and that, in accordance with whispered directions from Raymon, whose keen eyes searched the still waters in front.

Several times Donalblane thought he saw ripples which suggested the presence of their prey, but Raymon took no notice of them, and he was beginning to grow impatient, when, at a signal from the Indian, the paddlers suddenly plied their blades with tremendous energy, and the light craft shot ahead at an amazing pace.

Donalblane could perceive nothing to explain this action, but rejoiced at it nevertheless, and held his musket in readiness to fire.

On dashed the canoe, and presently Raymon rose in the bow, harpoon in hand, and poised himself for a throw. Still Donalblane could make out nothing, and he marvelled at the keenness of the Indian's vision, until suddenly, not twenty



"PRESENTLY RAYMON ROSE IN THE BOW, HARPOON IN HAND." [p. 98.

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yards in front of the canoe, the smooth surface of the water was broken by the emergence of the hideous head and broad shoulders of a monstrous manatee.

"Hurrah!" shouted the boy, quivering with excitement. "There he is; and, my sakes, what a big fellow! Shall I fire at him, Raymon?"

But Raymon, without turning round, intimated by a warning gesture of his free hand that Donalblane was to keep still, and the latter was accordingly fain to curb his impatience.

In spite of his clumsy form, the manatee had a wonderful turn of speed, and the sinewy paddlers strained every nerve to bring Raymon within striking distance. The creature was evidently making for the deeper waters, and if he succeeded in doing this before the harpoon struck him, there was a good chance of his effecting his escape. For a few minutes the issue of the race seemed much in doubt, and then, to Donalblane's delight, the canoe began to gain. Yard by yard it drew nearer, until at last, raising the harpoon as high as he could, Raymon, with the whole strength of his arm, hurled it at the manatee.

It was a splendid throw, and the keen barb buried itself deep in the thick, wrinkled grey hide, while at the same moment the stricken creature sank out of sight, leaving a stain of blood upon the water.

“Grand!—grand!” cried Donalblane, putting down his gun for a moment that he might clap his hands enthusiastically. “Ah! I wad like fine to be able to do that.”

Raymon's usually sombre countenance lit up with a pleased smile, as he replied—

“We got him all right, if rope no break.”

When, a moment later, the manatee, having recovered from the first shock of the wound, set off through the water at a rapid pace, towing the well-laden canoe as though it was a trifle, Donalblane began to wonder if the rope, which was only a thin one, would stand the strain. But Raymon did not appear at all anxious about it.

Straight out towards the deep water went the manatee, and as the canoe ploughed through the water in its wake, Donalblane thought that this must be something like the whale-hunting about

which some of his sailor friends at Leith had told him such thrilling tales.

For a full half-mile the powerful creature kept on, rising every now and then to the surface for breath, and sinking again as soon as relieved. But presently its speed began to slacken, and Raymon was able to get a pull upon the rope, which brought the canoe nearer.

"Now, señor, you fire when I call," he said to Donalblane, who nodded back at him joyfully, for he was burning to take part in the hunt, instead of sitting idle.

Little by little the rope came back, until soon there were not more than ten yards of it separating the canoe and the manatee.

"Next time he come up, you fire," was Raymon's next order; and Donalblane, every nerve thrilling with excitement, braced himself in the stern of the canoe for a careful shot.

With a swirl and splash the manatee appeared, and as Raymon excitedly shouted, "Now, señor—now!" Donalblane pulled the trigger. But alas, for the pride of youth! The prized musket, hitherto so trusty, played him false. It flashed in

the pan. There was no report, and its intended victim sank out of sight unharmed.

Just how it happened Donalblane never understood. Perhaps either he or Raymon, in their chagrin at the failure of the shot, made some sudden movement ; but, however it was, the next instant the canoe overturned, and all the four of its occupants were tumbled into the water, Donalblane holding on to his gun, although the additional weight helped to deepen his involuntary dive into the turbid current.

Up he came, gasping and angry, to find that the Indians had happily been quick enough to secure the canoe and to cut the harpoon line, which otherwise would have torn it away from them. Still grasping his gun, which he was determined to save if possible, Donalblane struck out for the others, and when he neared Raymon, the latter said cheerfully, " Me help you—they get canoe all right," and, taking the heavy firearm from the boy, swam as easily with it as if it were a walking-stick.

Meanwhile the paddlers, with a skill that astonished Donalblane, proceeded to right the canoe,

free it of water, and clamber in, Raymon following their example and then assisting the young Scotsman to do likewise. Donalblane took it for granted that the untoward upset put an end to the manatee hunt, but Raymon had no such notion.

"Manatee soon die—we go after him," he said, and, after a keen scrutiny of the surrounding water, he gave directions to the paddlers, who resumed their work as stolidly as if nothing had happened. Donalblane thought it would be very much like hunting for a needle in a hay-stack, but kept his own counsel while the canoe sped shoreward.

They were more than half-way thither when Raymon, who had fastened the remainder of the rope on to a small spear, showed signs of excitement.

"Me see him!" he exclaimed in a stage whisper. "We get him this time."

Sure enough, just as he spoke, the ugly grey head of the manatee rose above the water, and it was evident from the slowness of its movements that its strength was fast failing.

Steadily the canoe gained, until once more it

was within striking distance, and Raymon hurled his spear with no less accuracy than he had the harpoon. The poor manatee made one furious plunge forward as the sharp steel reached a vital part, and then all motion ceased. The hunt was ended.

One of the paddlers instantly sprang into the water and caught the end of the severed harpoon line, which was at once secured to the canoe, for otherwise the great body would sink and all the trouble be in vain. Then the bulky prize was towed ashore, and Donalblane had the satisfaction of having taken part in a successful manatee hunt, even if he had been denied the privilege of getting a shot.

The Indians had good reason to be proud of their quarry, for he was a monster of his kind, and would afford a fine supply of excellent meat. As he would prove altogether too heavy a cargo for the light canoe, the paddlers were dispatched to the settlement for assistance, while Donalblane and Raymon remained on guard, the former taking the opportunity to dry his dripping clothes, and feeling very well pleased with the success of the hunt.

Indeed, he had enjoyed it so keenly that he went again and again in the weeks that followed, Mr. Sutherland sometimes joining him, and many a plump monster was thereby secured for the benefit of the colonists.

It was well for him that he could thus divert himself, as the state of affairs at St. Andrews was rapidly growing worse. Not only were the Scotsmen threatened with famine, but with disease also. The hot, damp climate, so different from that to which they were accustomed, bred deadly fever. Every day the number of the men who strove to complete the fortifications and to till the ground for the harvest they were destined never to reap grew less. Many of the pale, gaunt, but still resolute labourers passed quickly from their work to the overcrowded hospital, and thence with little delay to their graves, until the burial-ground came to have more occupants than the huts.

And yet, despite their double danger, the colonists kept up their petty strifes, their jealousies, their mutual antagonisms, and refused to admit of any settled authority. Then came back the ship

which had been sent to Jamaica for provisions as empty as she had gone, and bringing the astounding news that, by a royal edict obtained through the evil influence of the rival companies, all the English colonies in America and the West Indies were strictly forbidden to afford any assistance whatever to the struggling Scotch colony at Darien, whose utter ruin now seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MIDNIGHT ATTACK.

DONALBLANE took these difficulties and disasters deeply to heart, not so much on his own account, for, like all brave-spirited boys, he had no doubt that *he* would pull through all right somehow, but because of his hero, Mr. Paterson, who had won the affection and loyalty of his young heart. He considered him the noblest of men, and more than once had got into trouble by hotly resenting the undeserved slurs and sneers that were too freely cast upon him.

“Ye dinna ken what ye’re saying, ye sneakin’ loon!” he had once retorted to a lanky youth who was meanly making charges against Mr. Paterson that were no less false than frivolous; and when the other responded with a blow, Donalblane, taking no account of the disparity in size and age, flung himself at him so fiercely and used his fists

to such good purpose that the slanderer was soon fain to flee the field.

“Ye lee, ye lee, and ye ken weel ye're leeing!” he cried indignantly on another occasion; but this time, his antagonist being a powerful man, Donalblane did not fare so well—in fact, he got a bad thrashing; but as he nursed his bruises he found comfort in the conviction that they were suffered in a good cause, and that he would never allow Mr. Paterson's reputation to be blackened if he could in any wise help it.

Among the early victims of the fever had been Mrs. Sutherland and her little boy, and, broken in heart and spirit, Mr. Sutherland not long after joined them in the grave, so that Donalblane felt he had only one friend left, for somehow he had not taken kindly to any of the other men. He therefore attached himself closely to Mr. Paterson, and thus had the opportunity of rendering him a supremely important service.

Mr. Paterson had invited him to share his hut—a mark of esteem that made him very pleased and proud, as may be imagined. They had thus lived together for a fortnight, Mr. Paterson devoting

himself to the trying difficulties that surrounded him, while Donalblane spent his time in fishing and hunting, so that they might always be supplied with food. One day Donald chanced to overhear a conversation between two of the worst characters in the colony, which made it clear that they had designs upon Mr. Paterson's life. He at once made known his suspicions, but Mr. Paterson treated the matter lightly.

"I am very much obliged to you, my boy," he said, with his rare smile, "but there is nothing to be feared. I understand those fellows. They would be well pleased, no doubt, to have me out of the way, but they'd never have the courage to do what you fear."

This made Donalblane feel a little easier in his mind ; nevertheless, he resolved to keep a watch upon the rascals, and to be alert for any danger that might threaten.

"They'll never do Mr. Paterson any harm if I can help it," he said to himself, and certainly no Scottish chieftain ever had a more loving or loyal clansman than he.

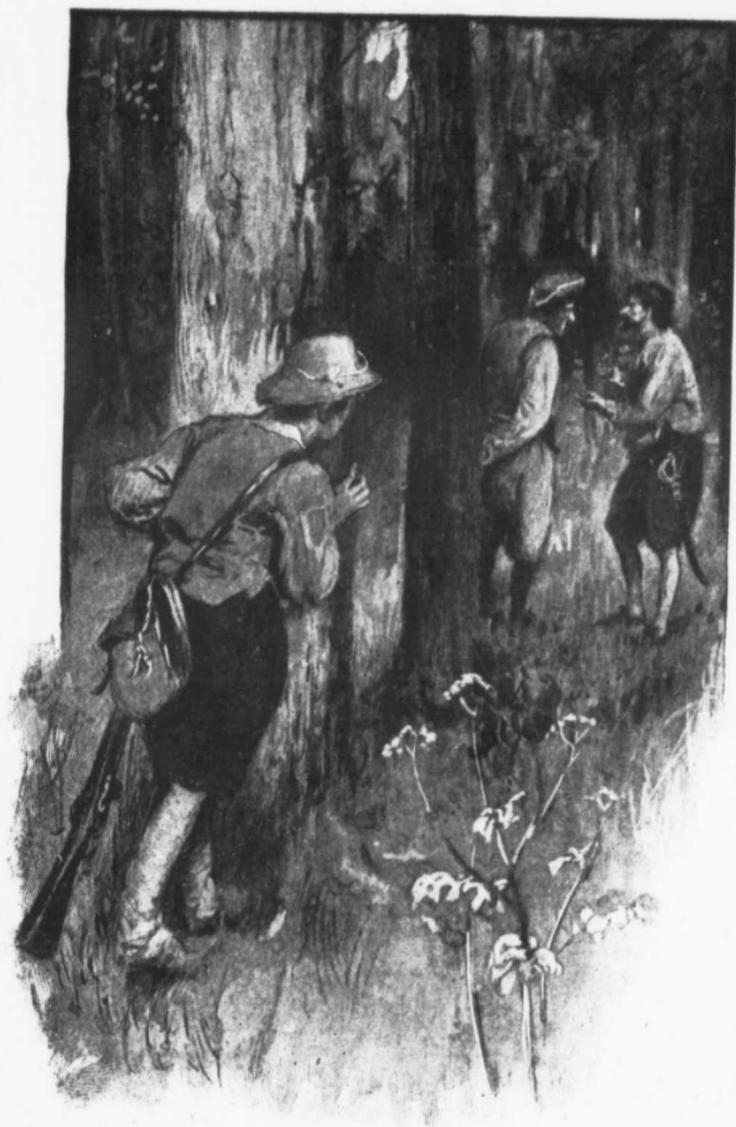
One stormy night when the wind blew and the

rain fell as though they had combined in an attack upon the hut, which was none too strong or tight, Donalblane felt restless and wakeful.

Mr. Paterson, wearied with toil and trial, was sleeping soundly, but his companion tossed about in his hammock with wide-open eyes. Presently his quick ear caught a sound that he did not think was caused by the storm, but by some person or creature trying to effect an entrance into the hut.

“What can that be?” he asked himself as he sat up in his hammock, and strained both eyes and ears to discover something in the surrounding gloom.

The suspicious sound continued, and Donalblane was just about to waken Mr. Paterson, whose hammock swung on the other side of the hut, when the door gave way, and two men rushed in with manifest evil intent. Had Donalblane not been awake at the moment, the villains might have had easy work; but he was not only awake, but alert, and with a quickness which did great credit to his wits he took instant action. Springing from his hammock, he shouted—



"CHANCED TO OVERHEAR A CONVERSATION WHICH MADE IT CLEAR THAT
THEY HAD DESIGNS UPON MR. PATERSON'S LIFE." [p. 111.

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“ Mr. Paterson, wake up! there’s danger!” and hurled himself at the foremost man, grasping him about the knees. Down went the scoundrel on his face, and the other was so close behind that he tripped and fell also, the two getting tangled up together and giving vent to fearful words, while Donalblane, somewhat bruised from the encounter, crawled away, and darted to the side of Mr. Paterson, who was now fully awake.

They had nothing in their hands wherewith to defend themselves, and the would-be assassins were no doubt well armed; but neither of them had any thought of flight. Not so with the intruders. Realising that their foul plot had failed of its purpose, thanks to Donalblane’s vigilance, their one idea was to get away, and the fellow that entered last did succeed in regaining his feet and rushing out into the darkness; but the other had been half stunned by his head coming into contact with a heavy chest, and ere he could escape Mr. Paterson had thrown himself upon him and pinned him to the ground.

“ A light, Donald—quick, a light!” he called, as he put his whole weight on the struggling form.

Donalblane hastened to obey, and the lighting up of the hut revealed the fact that Mr. Paterson's prisoner was one of the very men Donalblane had overheard conspiring against him. When they had bound the wretch securely, Donalblane could not resist saying, in a tone of exultation—

“Noo, sir, didn't I tell ye? and yet ye wadna listen to me. He's ane o' them, and I can point ye out the other one any day.”

Mr. Paterson, who had already recovered his composure as completely as if nothing had happened, took both the boy's hands in his own, and shook them warmly as he replied, with a look full of gratitude and love—

“You were right, Donald, and it was wrong to make light of your warning. God be thanked that you were able to baulk the scoundrels to-night, for if you had not been awake at the moment, I and perhaps you also would be no longer alive. But evidently it is not the will of Providence that we should die yet. Let us kneel and give thanks to God for our deliverance.”

And so with the foiled assassin scowling and cursing them as he strained at his bonds, the two

knelt down, while Mr. Paterson poured forth in prayer his gratitude to God for their merciful deliverance.

There was no more sleep for either of them that night. In the morning Mr. Paterson called the council together, and producing the prisoner, told the story of the night attack.

Great was the indignation of all who heard him. Although there were many who blamed him for the failure of their high hopes, and others who were jealous of his fine qualities and resented his authority, none were so base as to desire his death; and if it had not been for his earnest entreaty, the prisoner would have been condemned to be shot that very day as a terrible example. But Mr. Paterson magnanimously interceded, with the result that the prisoner and his confederate, if he should be found, were banished from the colony, on pain of death if they dared to return.

With the passing of the days matters grew steadily worse at St. Andrews. The plan had been that other ships carrying reinforcements of men and supplies should follow the first little fleet after an interval of some months, and these were

now long overdue ; yet although the high hill above the settlement was never without watchers, who eagerly scanned the face of the waters, no sign of sail appeared.

As a matter of fact, only one ship had been dispatched, and this one unfortunately foundered in mid-ocean. Meanwhile, deaths were taking place daily, and those who managed to keep alive were little more than haggard, sickly skeletons.

No wonder that in spite of Mr. Paterson's earnest protest they at last determined to depart from the fatal spot, which, instead of proving a paradise, had been the grave of all their high hopes and of so many of their companions. Mr. Paterson, still hopeful of the success of the great scheme, pleaded with them not to abandon it. He claimed that to do so would be to be false to the trust placed in them by their countrymen.

But they would not listen to him. Their first duty, they retorted, was to themselves. They must save their own lives. To remain was to die.

Accordingly, having provisioned the ships as best they could, they prepared to depart. For the last time they gathered in the rude church, while

the sole surviving minister prayed for the Divine blessing and protection. It was a sad congregation, and Donalbane, whose loyal heart had sympathised to the full with Mr. Paterson's endeavour to stay the retreat, felt heavier of heart than he had ever done in his life before. Right willingly would he have remained behind with Mr. Paterson if any good could have been gained thereby. But if all the others departed, they must needs go too; and after the mournful service ended, the boats bore them to the ships, Mr. Paterson being the very last to leave the shore, which none of them would ever set foot upon again.

CHAPTER XII.

NEW YORK AND HOME.

THE ships were in no condition to cross the Atlantic, and by the royal decree the British West Indies were closed against them, while, of course, they dare not trust the mercy of the Spaniards. Their only alternative, therefore, was to make their way up to New York in the hope of finding their way back to Scotland from there later on.

Donalblane quite approved of this plan. He had had quite enough of South America to last him for the rest of his life, and, now that he had left, it was quite clear in his mind as to never returning.

But of North America he knew nothing, and he was eager to learn.

“Nae doot there’ll be Indians there like those at

Darien," he said to Mr. Paterson, "and we'll be going to see them. Have they kings, too?"

An amused look lightened Mr. Paterson's face for the moment as he replied—

"There are Indians, of course, in the country, very many tribes of them, and we may see some of them at New York, but we will not have anything to do with them. We are of no account now," he went on sadly. "We shall be little better than beggars when we reach New York, and shall have to trust to the kindness of our countrymen there to afford us the help we need. Ah, Donald, Donald! it is a sore thing to fail—a sore, sore thing!" and he turned away to hide the emotion that mastered him.

Donalblane was touched to the heart, and in his passion of loyal love would not have hesitated to give his very life if thereby the fortunes of his hero could have been retrieved. But no sacrifice could save them now. The great scheme that was to have been a blessing to the world and to make Scotland mighty among the nations had failed utterly.

Creeping cautiously along the coast, the two

ships made their slow way northward, and, after passing through many a peril, at length reached New York, with the rotten rigging dropping from the masts, the pumps going steadily to keep the leaky hulks afloat, and scarce two days' scant supply of food and water. With inexpressible joy the wearied voyagers hastened to land, Donalblane of course accompanying Mr. Paterson.

Although for a quarter of a century in possession of the British, New York was still for the most part a Dutch town, and the keen-eyed Scotch boy saw much that was novel and interesting in the quaint ways of the people and the odd appearance of the houses. He was quick to notice the aspect of comfort and neatness that marked the place, and made 'so pleasing a contrast to the squalor and misery of the settlement at Darien.

"Oh, but it's verra bonnie here!" he said to Mr. Paterson as, strolling through the streets in the cool of the evening, he saw the prosperous burghers with their plump wives and rosy children sitting out at the front of their houses, so evidently enjoying life in their simple, sober way.

"Do you think you'd like to stay here, then?"

Mr. Paterson asked, with a kindly twinkle in his eye. "I dare say it could be managed. One of these well-to-do merchants might be glad to take you as an apprentice."

Donald smiled and shook his head. There was indeed something attractive in the idea, but he did not feel free to entertain it.

"Wad ye be thinkin' of staying yer ain sel'?" he inquired in turn.

"Oh, no, Donald," replied Mr. Paterson with a deep sigh. "I must return to Scotland to give an account of my stewardship."

"Then if ye're going back, I'm going wi' ye," responded the lad in a tone of absolute decision; and Mr. Paterson, patting him affectionately on the shoulder, said in a voice whose unwonted tremor showed how strongly he felt—

"You're a good boy, Donald, leal and true, and I believe that in the providence of God you will come to greatness yet."

The survivors of the unfortunate Darien expedition were so kindly treated at New York that quite a number of them were glad to settle permanently in the prosperous colony; but Mr. Paterson im-

patiently awaited the opportunity to get back to Scotland.

During the delay Donalblane had an adventure that caused him to retain a vivid remembrance of the place for the remainder of his life. His restless, inquiring spirit kept him constantly on the move, and one fine day he had roamed away up toward the north end of the island, and so overstayed his time that night had fallen ere he reached the outskirts of the city.

There were no street lights in those days, and, save where a friendly gleam came from the window or open door of a house, the streets were dark as pitch ; hence there were many good chances for highwaymen to practise their evil profession, which they were not slow to seize upon.

Donalblane had just got well into the city, when, as he passed through a dark, narrow street, he heard a cry for help, followed by the sounds of a violent struggle. At once the impulse to render aid took possession of him, and he darted in the direction whence the sounds came, grasping tightly his pistol, which he always carried with him. A short run brought him to where three persons were

struggling together, one crying out for help, while the other two strove to smother his cries and knock him senseless with their bludgeons.

“Hi, there, ye scoondrels!” shouted Donalblane.
“Hands off, or I’ll shoot ye!”

As the words left his lips, one of the highwaymen got in so brutal a blow that his victim fell limply to the ground; but the next instant the report of the pistol rang out, and its bullet buried itself in the ruffian’s shoulder.

Completely taken by surprise—for neither of them had been aware of the boy’s swift approach—the rascals were so panic-stricken that they took to their heels and disappeared around the corner, leaving Donalblane with the seemingly lifeless form.

“The puir man, they’ve killed him, nae doot,” he murmured sadly, as he bent over the prostrate figure to feel if there were any signs of life left.

He was thus engaged when a door near by opened, and out sprang a couple of men, who rushed upon him and grasped him roughly, exclaiming—

“Ah—ah! now we’ve caught you red-handed! You’ll swing high for this, you villain!”

"Hoot, man, ye're quite wrong!" retorted Donalblane hotly. "I'm no' the villain. I ran to help this man. 'Twas the robbers that killed him."

But they refused to believe him, and others coming up, the poor boy was like to have been roughly handled, when a grey-haired man, who spoke with authority, commanded that he be brought to his house for examination. When this had been done, and the men realised what a mere lad he was, and what a frank, honest countenance he possessed, the tide of feeling at once began to turn.

"I am greatly disposed to believe the boy," said the elderly man after he had heard Donalblane's story. "But we must keep him in ward until we can find this Mr. Paterson of whom he speaks."

So Donalblane was securely locked up until the morning, when he not only had the joy of being vouched for by Mr. Paterson, and honourably released, but the relief of learning that the highwaymen's victim had been only stunned, not killed, and would soon recover from his injuries.

He proved to be a prosperous merchant, who felt profoundly grateful for the timely service, and,

as it chanced, had a vessel sailing for England in a short time. On learning of their desire to cross the ocean, he at once placed the cabin of the vessel at the disposal of Mr. Paterson and Donalblane, adding to this kindness a substantial advance of money, which the former might repay at his convenience.

Thus the way home was providentially opened up, and in far greater comfort than they had set out for the New World, the two friends returned to Scotland. Here Donalblane was received with characteristic coolness by his uncle, who felt very sore over the loss of his five hundred pounds; and Mr. Paterson had to bear the undeserved reproaches of those who had lost not merely money, but relatives, in the unfortunate enterprise.

Yet there were far brighter days in store for both. Mr. Paterson cleared himself of all blame for the catastrophe, and filled the remaining years of his life with honourable work, while Donalblane, sobered by his experience, devoted himself to his uncle's business with such ardour and intelligence that ere long he came to be his right-hand man.

The step from that to a partnership was an easy

and natural one, and, combining in a rare degree daring enterprise with far-sighted caution, Donalblane of Darien became in time one of the merchant princes of Scotland, winning, through the right use of his wealth and influence, high honour among his fellow-men, and the favour of Divine Providence.

THE END.

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