# THE BLACK BUCCANEER

STEPHEN W. MEADER

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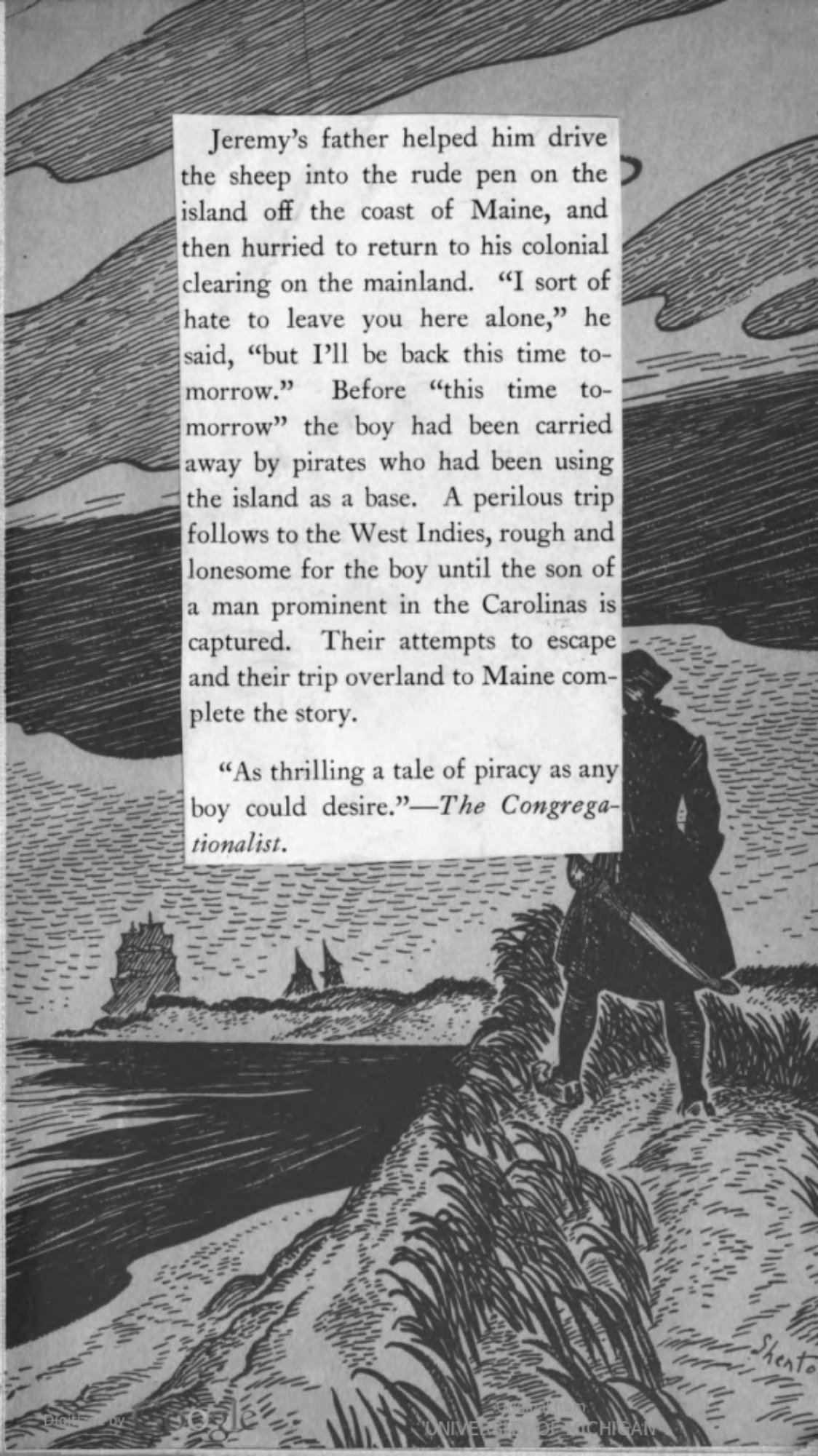

Jeremy's father helped him drive the sheep into the rude pen on the island off the coast of Maine, and then hurried to return to his colonial clearing on the mainland. "I sort of hate to leave you here alone," he said, "but I'll be back this time tomorrow." Before "this time tomorrow" the boy had been carried away by pirates who had been using the island as a base. A perilous trip follows to the West Indies, rough and lonesome for the boy until the son of a man prominent in the Carolinas is captured. Their attempts to escape and their trip overland to Maine complete the story.

"As thrilling a tale of piracy as any boy could desire."—*The Congregationalist.*

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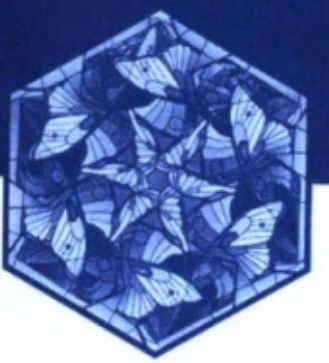

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bay, which the two voyagers had left that morning.

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

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

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

"Huh!" snorted Jeremy to himself.

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

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the top. The ledge on which he found himself was reasonably flat, nearly circular, and perhaps twenty yards across.

Its height above the sea must have been several hundred feet, for in the clear light Jeremy could see not only the whole outline of the island but most of the bay as well, and far to the west the blue masses of the Camden Mountains. He

was surprised at the size of the new domain spread out at his feet. The island seemed to be about seven miles in length by five at its widest part. Two deep bays cut into its otherwise rounded outline. It was near the shore of the northern one that the hut and sheep-pen were built. Southwesterly from the hill and farther away, Jeremy could see the head of the second and larger inlet. Between the bays the distance could hardly have been more than two miles, but a high ridge, the backbone of the island, which ran westward from the hilltop, divided them by its rugged barrier.

Jeremy looked away up the bay where he could still see the speck of white sail that showed his father hurrying landward on a long tack with the

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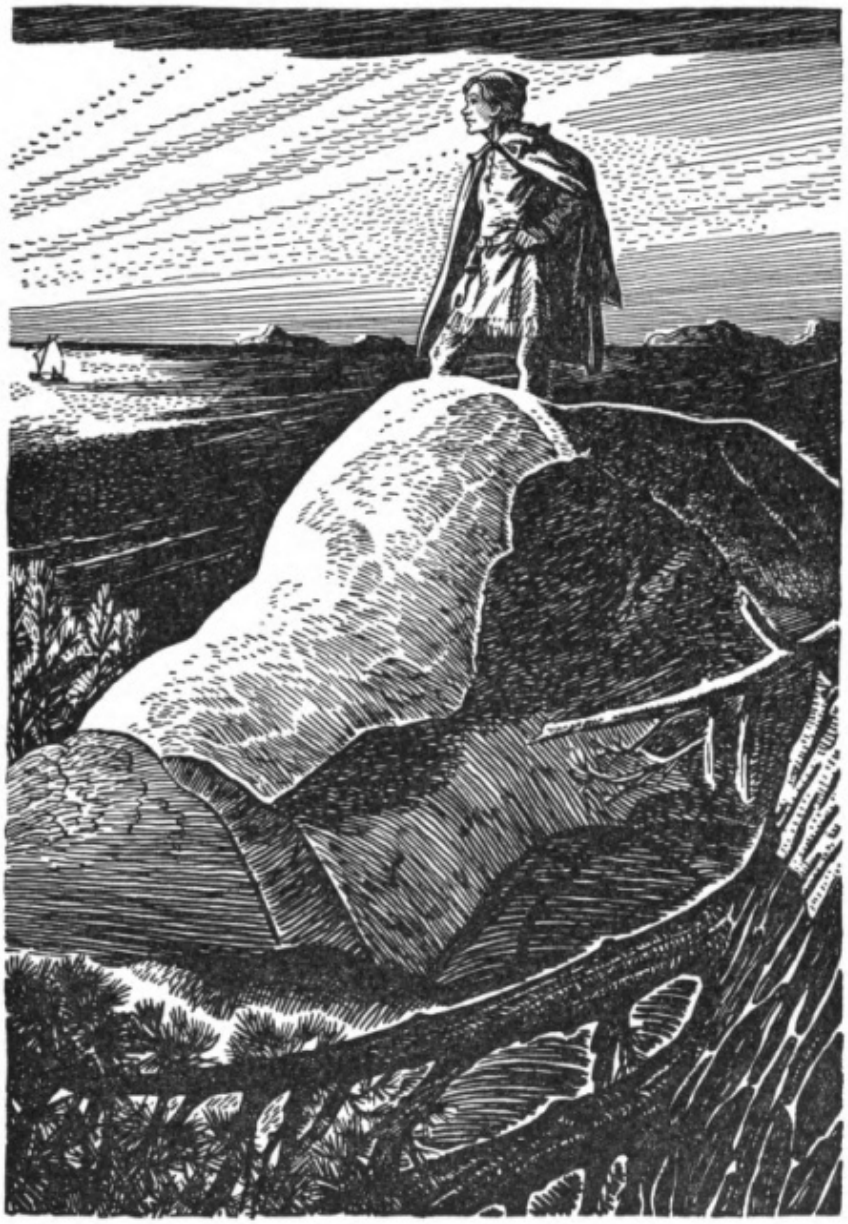

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buccaneering, and I must own I've always found it a fine occupation—not to say that it's made me rich—maybe it might if I'd kept all my sharin's.''

This life-history, delivered almost in one breath, had caused Howland an immense amount of trouble with his quid of tobacco, which nearly choked him as he finished. Except for the sound of his vast expectorations, the pair on the beach were quiet for what seemed to Jeremy a long while. Then on the rocks above was heard the clatter of shoes and the bumping of kegs. Job rose, grasping the hand of his charge, and they went to meet the returning sailors.

To the young woodsman, utterly unused to the ways of the sea, the next half-hour was a bewildering mêlée of hurrying, sweating toil, with low-spoken orders and half-caught oaths and the glimmer of a dying fire over all the scene. He was rowed to the sloop with the first boatload and there Job Howland set him to work passing water-kegs into the hold. He had had no rest in over twenty hours and his whole body ached as the last barrel bumped through the hatch. All the crew

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our round-shot plowed through like so much grass —which was what they was, mostly. Then old Johnny Buck piped the longboat overside and on shore we went, firin' all the time. Cap'n Vane himself, with a dirk in his teeth and sword an' pistol out, goes swearin' up the roadway an' we behind him, our feet stickin' in blood. A few come out shootin' their little arrers at us, but we herded 'em an' drove 'em, yellin' all the time. At close quarters their knives was no match for cutlasses. So we went slashin' through the town, burnin' 'em out an' stickin' 'em when they ran.

Our sword arms was red to shoulder that day, but we was like men far gone in rum an' never stayed while an Indian held up head. Then we dropped and slept where we fell, across a corp', like as not, clean tuckered, every man of us. Come mornin', the sight and smell of the place made us sober enough and not a man in the crew wanted to go further into the island. There was no gold in the town, neither. All we got was a few hogs and sheep. We left the same day, for it come on hot an' we had no way to clean up the mess. That island must ha' been a nuisance to the whole Caribbean for weeks."

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