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CAPTAIN BLOOD

A Romance of the Spanish Main

by RAFAEL SABATINI

Copyrighted, 1922 by Rafael Sabatini. "CAPTAIN BLOOD," a Vitaphone picture with J. Warren Kerrigan in the title role, is an adaptation of this thrilling novel.

CHAPTER I THE MESSENGER

Peter Blood, bachelor of medicine and several other things besides, smoked a pipe and tended the geraniums boxed on the sill of his window above Water Lane in the town of Bridgewater. Mr. Blood's attention was divided between his task and the stream of humanity in the narrow street below. A stream that poured for the second time that day towards Castle Field, where earlier in the afternoon Ferguson, the Duke's chaplain, had preached a sermon containing more treason than divinity.

These straggling, excited groups were mainly composed of men with green boughs in their hats and the most ludicrous of weapons in their hands. Some, it is true, shouldered fowling pieces, and here and there a sword was brandished; but more of them trailed the mammoth pikes fashioned out of scythes, as formidable to the eye as they were clumsy to the hand. There were weavers, brewers, carpenters, smiths, masons, bricklayers, cobblers, and representatives of every other trade of peace among the improved men of war. Bridgewater, like Taunton, has yielded so generously of its manhood to the service of the bastard Duke that for any to abstain whose age and strength admitted his bearing arms was to brand himself a coward or a papist.

Yet Peter Blood, who was not only able to bear arms, but trained and skilled in their use, who was certainly no coward and a papist only when it suited him, tended his geraniums, and smoked his pipe on that warm July evening as indifferently as if nothing were afoot. He laughed and sighed in one; but the laugh dominated the sigh; for Mr. Blood was unsympathetic, as are most self-sufficient men, and he was very self-sufficient; adversity had taught him so to be. A more tender-hearted man, possessing his vision and his knowledge, might have found cause for tears in the contemplation of these ardent, simple, nonconformist sheep going forth to the shambles—scattered to the rallying ground on Castle Field by wives and daughters, sweethearts and mothers, sustained by the delusion that they were to take the field in defence of Right, of Liberty and of Religion. For he knew, as all Bridgewater knew and had known now for some hours, that it was Monmouth's intention to deliver battle that same night. The Duke was to lead a surprise attack upon the loyalist army under Ferguson. Mr. Blood assumed that Lord Ferdinand would be equally well-informed, and if in this assumption he was wrong, at least he was justified of it. He was not to suppose the Royalist commander so indifferently skilled in the trade he followed.

Peter Blood was the son of an Irish mechanic who had early resolved that the boy should follow his own honorable profession, and Peter Blood, being quick to learn and oddly greedy of knowledge, had satisfied his parent by receiving at the age of twenty the degree of baccalaureus medicus at Trinity College, Dublin. His father survived that satisfaction by three months only. His mother had then been dead some years already. Thus Peter Blood came into an inheritance of some few hundred pounds, with which he had set out to see the world. A set of curious chances led him to take service with the Dutch, then at war with France; and a profection for the sea made him elect that this service should be upon that element. He had the advantage of a commission under the famous de Ruyter, and fought in the Mediterranean engagement in which that great Dutch admiral lost his life. After the Peace of Nimeguen his movements are obscure. But we know that he spent two years in a Spanish prison, though we do not know how he contrived to get there. It may be due to this that upon his release he took his sword to France, and saw service with the French in their warring upon the Spanish Netherlands. Having reached, at last, the age of thirty-two, his appetite for adventure surfeited, his health having grown indifferent as the result of a neglected wound, he was suddenly overwhelmed by homesickness. He took ship from Nantes with intent to cross to Ireland. But the vessel being

driven by stress of weather into Bridgewater Bay, and Blood's health having grown worse during the voyage, he decided to go ashore there, additionally urged to it by the fact that it was his mother's native soil. Thus in January of that year, 1685, he had come to Bridgewater, possessed of a fortune that was approximately the same as that with which he had originally set out from Dublin eleven years ago. Because he liked the place, in which his health was rapidly restored to him, and because he conceived that he had passed through adventures enough for a man's lifetime, he determined to settle there, and take up at last the profession of medicine from which he had, with so little profit, broken away. That is all his story, or so much of it as matters up to that night, six months later, when the battle of Sedgemoor was fought.

Deeming the impending action no affair of his, as indeed it was not, and indifferent to the activity with which Bridgewater was that night agog, Mr. Blood closed his ears to the sounds of it, and went early to bed. The arrival came into collision in the neighborhood of two o'clock in the morning. Mr. Blood slept undisturbed through the distant boom of cannon. Not until four o'clock did he awake from his tranquil slumbers. He sat up in bed, rubbed the sleep from his eyes, and collected himself. Blows were thundering upon the door of his house, and a voice was calling incoherently. He reached for bed-gown and slippers, went himself to open. There in slanting golden light of the new-risen sun Mr. Blood recognized him for the young shipmaster, Jeremiah Pitt, who had been drawn by the general enthusiasm into the vortex of that rebellion. The wild-eyed lad plunged, heaving into speech, gasping, breathless. "It is Lord Gildoy," he panted. "He is sore wounded... at Oglethorpe's farm, by the river. I bore him thither... and he sent me for you. Come away. Come away!"

"To be sure, I'll come. But first give me leave to get some clothes and other things I may need." At eight o'clock, dressed and booted, the case of instruments tucked under his arm, the messenger disengaged himself from those who pressed about, shook off his weariness and seizing the bridle of his horse, he climbed to the saddle. "Come along, sir," he cried. "Mount behind me." Mr. Blood, without wasting words, did as he was bidden. Pitt touched the horse with his spur. The little crowd gave way, and thus, upon the crupper, that doctri-lyde hound, clinging to the belt of his companion, Peter Blood set out upon his Olyseus. For this Pitt, in whom he beheld no more than the messenger of a wounded rebel gentleman, was indeed the very messenger of Fate.

CHAPTER II KIRKE'S DRAGOONS

Oglethorpe's farm stood a mile or so to the south of Bridgewater on the right bank of the river. On the bridge, as they had been riding out of Bridgewater, they had met a vanguard of fugitives from the field of battle; horse voices cried a warning that merciless pursuit was not far behind. But as Pitt's direction was a southward one, bringing them ever nearer to Pever-sham's headquarters, they were presently clear of that human fustam and Jesam of the battle. In the spacious, stone-flagged hall, the doctor found Lord Gildoy stretched on a cane day-bed in care of Mrs. Baynes and her comely daughter. Mr. Blood knelt to his task. He was still intent upon it a half-hour later when the dragoons invaded the household. His lordship showed considerable alarm, and the battle-stained Jeremy Pitt sped to cover in a clothes-press. Baynes was uneasy, and his wife and daughter trembled. "Why, what's to fear?" Mr. Blood reassured them. "It's a Christian country, this, and Christian men do not make war upon the wounded, nor upon those who harbour them." And then they came rattling and clanking into the stone-flagged hall—round dozen Jack-booted lobster-coated troopers of the Tangiers regiment, led by a sturdy, black-browed fellow with a deal of gold lace about the breast of his coat. The Captain stamped forward to the day-bed, and scowled down upon the grey-faced sufferer. "A damned rebel, and that's enough for me. Out with him, my lads." Mr. Blood got between the day-bed and the troopers. "In the name of humanity, sir," said he, on a note of anger. "This is England, not Tangiers. The gentleman is in sore haste. He may not be moved without peril to his life." Captain Hobart was amused. "Do you think it to befriend his health we're taking him? There's gallows bait planted along the road from Weston to Bridgewater, and he'll serve for one of them as well as another. Colonel Kirke'll learn these nonconforming cats something they'll not forget in generations." "You're hanging men without trial? Faith, then, it's mistaken I am. We're in Tangiers, after all, it seems, where your regiment belongs." The Captain considered him with a kindling eye and soldier recognized soldier. "Who the hell may you be?" he exploded. "My name is Blood, sir—Peter Blood, at your service." "Are—aye! Godso! That's the name. You were in French service once, were His Majesty's southern plantations,

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you not? Five years ago, or more, you were in Tangiers. "That is so, I knew your colonel." "Faith, you may be renewing the acquaintance." The Captain laughed unpleasantly. "What brings you here, sir?" "This wounded gentleman, I was fetched to attend him, I am a medicus." "A doctor—you? Scorn of that! He— as he conceived it—rang in the heavy, hoarse voice, Mr. Blood's smile annoyed him. "I am a physician practicing my calling in the town of Bridgewater." "Which you reached by way of Lyme Regis in the following of your bastard Duke."

It was Mr. Blood's turn to sneer. "If your wit were as big as your voice, my dear, it's the great man you'd be by this. You'll be remembering, Captain, that Lord Gildoy will have friends and relatives on the Tory side, who'll have something to say to Colonel Kirke if his lordship should be handled like a common felon. You'd go warily, Captain, or, as I've said, it's a halter for your neck you'll be weaving this morning." Captain Hobart swept the warning aside with a blast of contempt, but he acted upon it none the less. "Take up the day-bed," said he, "and convey him on that to Bridgewater. Lodge him in the goal until I take orders about him."

As his lordship was carried out, the Captain became brisk, Mr. Blood saw no profit to himself in lingering. "By your leave, it's a very good day I'll be wishing you," said he. "By my leave, you'll remain awhile, the Captain ordered him. Mr. Blood shrugged, and sat down. The Captain opened the press, took the huddled inmate by the collar of his doublet, and lugged him out into the open. "And who the devil's this?" quoth he. "Another nobleman?" Mr. Blood had a vision of those gallows of which Captain Hobart had spoken. On the spot he invented not only a title but a whole family for the young rebel. "Faith, we've said it, Captain. This is Viscount Pitt, first cousin to Sir Thomas Vernon, who's married to that slut Moll Kirke, sister to your own colonel, and sometime lady in waiting upon King James's queen."

Both the Captain and his prisoner gasped. But whereas thereafter young Pitt discreetly held his peace the Captain rapped out a nasty oath. "Fetch him along to Bridgewater. And make fast that fellow also," he pointed to Baynes. "We'll show him what it means to harbour and comfort rebels. And take this fellow with you." He pointed to Mr. Blood. "Faith it will suit me very well," said he. "For Bridgewater is my destination." "Your destination there will be the goal."

CHAPTER III THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE

It was not until two months later, on the 19th of September, that Peter Blood was brought to trial at Taunton Castle upon a charge of high treason. The hall even to the galleries—throughout with spectators, most of them were ladies—was on a raised dais, sat the Lords Commissioners, the Judges in their scarlet robes and heavy dark periwigs. Baron Jeffreys of Wem enthroned in the middle place. From Baynes, who pleaded not guilty, the clerk passed on to Pitt, who boldly owned his guilt. The Lord Chief Justice stirred at that. The only witness called for the king was Captain Hobart. He testified briskly to the manner in which he had found and taken the three prisoners, together with Lord Gildoy. Upon the orders of his colonel he would have hanged Pitt dead out of hand, but was restrained by the lies of the prisoner Blood, who led him to believe that Pitt was a peer of the realm and a person of consideration. And it was upon this flimsy evidence that the three men were sentenced to death by high treason. The tribulations with which Peter Blood was visited as a result of his errand of mercy to Oglethorpe's farm contained two sources of thankness: one that he was tried at all; the other that his trial took place on the 19th of September. Until the 18th, the sentences pronounced by the court of the Lords Commissioners had been carried out literally and expeditiously. But on the morning of the 18th there arrived at Taunton a courier from Lord Sunderland, the Secretary of State, with a letter for Lord Jeffreys wherein he was informed that His Majesty had been graciously pleased to command that eleven hundred rebels should be furnished for transportation to some of His Majesty's southern plantations,

Jamaica, Barbados, or any of the Leeward Islands. This command was not dictated by mercy. Slaves were urgently required in the plantations. A thousand prisoners were to be distributed among some eight courtyards. These prisoners were to be kept there for the space of ten years before being restored to liberty the parties to whom they were assigned entering into security to see that transportation was immediately effected. Thus it happened that Peter Blood, and with him Jeremy Pitt and Andrew Baynes, were conveyed to Bristol and there shipped with some fifty others aboard the Jamaica Merchant. Eleven died, and amongst these was the yeoman from Oglethorpe's farm.

CHAPTER IV THE SLAVE MARKET

Towards the middle of December the Jamaica Merchant dropped anchor in Carlisle Bay, and put ashore the forty-two surviving rebels captive. They beheld a town of sufficiently imposing proportions. A fort guarded the entrance of the wide harbour, with guns thrusting their muzzles between the crenels, and the wide facade of Government House revealed itself dominantly placed on a gentle hill above the town. On a wide-cobbled space on the sea front they found a guard of red-coated militia drawn up to receive them. To inspect them came Governor Steed. After him, in the uniform of a colonel of the Barbados Militia, rolled a tall, corpulent man who towered head and shoulders above the Governor, with mischievous plainly written on his enormous yellowish countenance. At his side, and contrasting oddly with his grossness, moving with an easy striding grace, came a slight young lad in a modish riding gown. The broad brim of a grey hat with a scarlet sweep of ostrich plume shaded an oval face upon which the climate of the Tropics of Cancer had made no impression, so delicately fair was its complexion. Ringlets of red-brown hair hung to her shoulders.

Peter Blood caught himself staring in a sort of amazement at that pliant face, which seemed here so out of place, and finding his stare returned, he shifted uncomfortably. He was in no case for inspection by such dainty eyes as these. Nevertheless, they continued to inspect him with round-eyed, almost childlike wonder and pity. Their owner touched the scarlet sleeve of her companion. The Colonel plucked gaze here more than the half of his attention. His little heavy eyes were fixed upon fair-haired, sturdy young Pitt, who was standing side Blood. The Governor had also come to a halt. "My dear Colonel Bishop, it is for you to take first choice and at your own price. After that we'll send the rest to auction."

Colonel Bishop nodded his acknowledgement and advanced alone towards the rebels-convict. Before the young Somersetshire shipmaster he came to a halt, and stood an instant pondering. "Fifteen pounds for this one." The master of the convict ship made a face of dismay. "Fifteen pounds! It isn't half what I meant to ask for, sir." "It is double what I had meant to give," granted the Colonel. They bargained and Pitt was taken at twenty pounds. Peter Blood lost himself in unprofitable speculations. He was in no mood for conversation, nor was Pitt, who stood dumbly at his side. To Pitt, this separation was the poignant climax of all his sufferings. Blood noticed that the girl was speaking to Bishop, and pointing up the line with a silver-hilted riding-whip as carried. Then slowly, they came until the Colonel was abreast of Blood. He would have passed on, but that the lady tapped his arm with her whip.

CHAPTER VI SYMPATHY

"One day, towards the end of May, there crawled into Carlisle Bay a wounded, battered English ship, the Pride of Devon. She had been in action off Martinique with two Spanish treasure ships. One of his younger brothers, a soldier, at home reputed something wild. He had advised him to come out to Barbados; and the advice, which at another season William Bishop might have scorned, reached him at a moment when his wildness was beginning to bear such fruit that a change of climate was desirable. William came, and was admitted by his generous brother to a partnership in the prosperous plantation. Some six years later, when Arabella was fifteen, her father died, leaving her in her uncle's guardianship. As things were, there was little love between uncle and niece. But she was dutiful to him, and he was circumspect in his behaviour towards her. "If some other planter had bought me," Mr. Blood explained, as he thanked her. It is odds that the facts of my shining abilities might never have been brought to light. "I perceived your interest when your uncle bought me. At the time I resented it. "You resented it?" There was a challenge in her boyish voice. "I have had no lack of experiences of this mortal life; but to be bought and sold was a new one, and I was hardly in the mood to love my purchaser. "If I urged you upon my uncle, sir, it was that I commiserated you." She proceeded to explain herself. "My uncle may appear to you a hard man. They are all hard men, these planters. It is the life, I suppose. But there are others here who are worse. "This interest in a stranger... he began. Then changed the direction of his probe. "But there were others as deserving of commiseration. "You did not seem quite like the others. "I am not," said he. "Oh!" she stared at him, bridling a little. "You have a good opinion of yourself." "On the contrary. The others are all worthy rebels. I am not." "But if you are not a rebel, how come you here?" "Faith, now, it's a long story," said he. "And one perhaps that you would prefer not to tell?" Briefly on that he told it her. "My God! What an infamy!" she cried, when he had done. "Oh! It's a sweet country England under King James! There's no need to commiserate me further. All things considered I prefer Barbados. Here at least one can believe in God. "Is that so difficult elsewhere?" she asked him, and she was very grave. "Men make it so." She moved on. Her negroes sprang up, and went trotting after her. It was a fair enough prospect, he reflected, that was a prison, and, in announcing that he preferred it to England, he had indulged that almost laudable form of boasting which lies in belittling one's adventures. Of the forty-two who had been landed with him from the Jamaica Merchant, Colonel Bishop had purchased no less than twenty-five. The remainder had gone to lesser planters, some of



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might be rejected. For no reason that he could have given you, he was taken with repugnance at the thought of becoming the property of this gross animal, and in some sort the property of that hazel-eyed young girl. But it would need more than repugnance to save him from his destiny. A slave is a slave, and has no power to shape his fate. Peter Blood was sold to Colonel Bishop—a disdainful buyer—for the ignominious sum of ten pounds. One sunny morning in January, about a month after the arrival of the Jamaica Merchant at Bridgetown, Miss Arabella Bishop rode out from her uncle's fine house on the heights to the northwest of the city. She was attended by two negroes who trotted after her at a respectful distance. Reaching the summit of a gentle, grassy slope, she met a tall, lean man dressed in a sober, gentlemanly fashion, who was walking in the opposite direction. Miss Arabella drew rein. "I think I know you, sir," said she. "Your uncle was crisp and boyish. It arose perhaps from an ease, a directness, which disdained the artifices of her sex, and set her on good terms with all the world. To this it may be due that Miss Arabella had reached the age of five and twenty not merely unmarried but unwed. She used with all men a sisterly frankness. The stranger came to a standstill upon being addressed. "A lady should know her own property," said he. "My property?" "Your uncle's leastways, I am called Peter Blood."

She recognized him then. She had heard that this rebel-convict had been discovered to be a physician. Governor Steed, who suffered damnably from the gout he had borrowed the fellow from his purchaser. Peter Blood had afforded the Governor relief, and the Governor's lady had desired him to attend her for the megrims. Mr. Blood prescribed for her and she had conceived herself better for his prescription. After that Colonel Bishop had found that there was more profit to be made out of this new slave by leaving him to pursue his profession than by setting him to work on the plantation. "If some other planter had bought me," Mr. Blood explained, as he thanked her. It is odds that the facts of my shining abilities might never have been brought to light. "I perceived your interest when your uncle bought me. At the time I resented it. "You resented it?" There was a challenge in her boyish voice. "I have had no lack of experiences of this mortal life; but to be bought and sold was a new one, and I was hardly in the mood to love my purchaser. "If I urged you upon my uncle, sir, it was that I commiserated you." She proceeded to explain herself. "My uncle may appear to you a hard man. They are all hard men, these planters. It is the life, I suppose. But there are others here who are worse. "This interest in a stranger... he began. Then changed the direction of his probe. "But there were others as deserving of commiseration. "You did not seem quite like the others. "I am not," said he. "Oh!" she stared at him, bridling a little. "You have a good opinion of yourself." "On the contrary. The others are all worthy rebels. I am not." "But if you are not a rebel, how come you here?" "Faith, now, it's a long story," said he. "And one perhaps that you would prefer not to tell?" Briefly on that he told it her. "My God! What an infamy!" she cried, when he had done. "Oh! It's a sweet country England under King James! There's no need to commiserate me further. All things considered I prefer Barbados. Here at least one can believe in God. "Is that so difficult elsewhere?" she asked him, and she was very grave. "Men make it so." She moved on. Her negroes sprang up, and went trotting after her. It was a fair enough prospect, he reflected, that was a prison, and, in announcing that he preferred it to England, he had indulged that almost laudable form of boasting which lies in belittling one's adventures. Of the forty-two who had been landed with him from the Jamaica Merchant, Colonel Bishop had purchased no less than twenty-five. The remainder had gone to lesser planters, some of

summoned to their aid. Peter Blood was ordered to bear a hand in this work, and partly because he spoke Castilian (and he spoke it as fluently as his own native tongue) and partly because of his inferior condition as a slave, he was given the Spaniards for his patients. They were shunned, however, by all those charitably disposed inhabitants of Bridgetown who flocked to the improvised hospital with gifts of fruit and flowers and delicacies for the injured English seamen. Rising suddenly from the redressing of a wound, a task in which he had been absorbed for some moments, he saw, to his surprise, that one lady, detached from the general throng, was placing some plantains and a bundle of succulent sugar cane on the cloak that served one of his patients for a coverlet. Peter Blood stood at gaze a moment. The lady, turning now to confront him, her lips parting in a smile of recognition, was Arabella Bishop. "The man's a Spaniard," said he in the tone of one who corrects a misapprehension. She frowned and started at him a moment, with increasing haughtiness. "So I perceive. But he's a human being none the less," said she. "Your uncle, the colonel, is of a different opinion," said he when he had recovered. "He regards them as vermin to be left to languish and die of their festering wounds." "Why do you tell me this?" "To warn you that you may be incurring the colonel's displeasure. If he had his way, I should never have been allowed to dress their wounds." "And you thought, of course, that I must be of my uncle's mind?"

(Continued on Page 13)

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