

CLASSICS TO GO

TALES OF OUR COAST



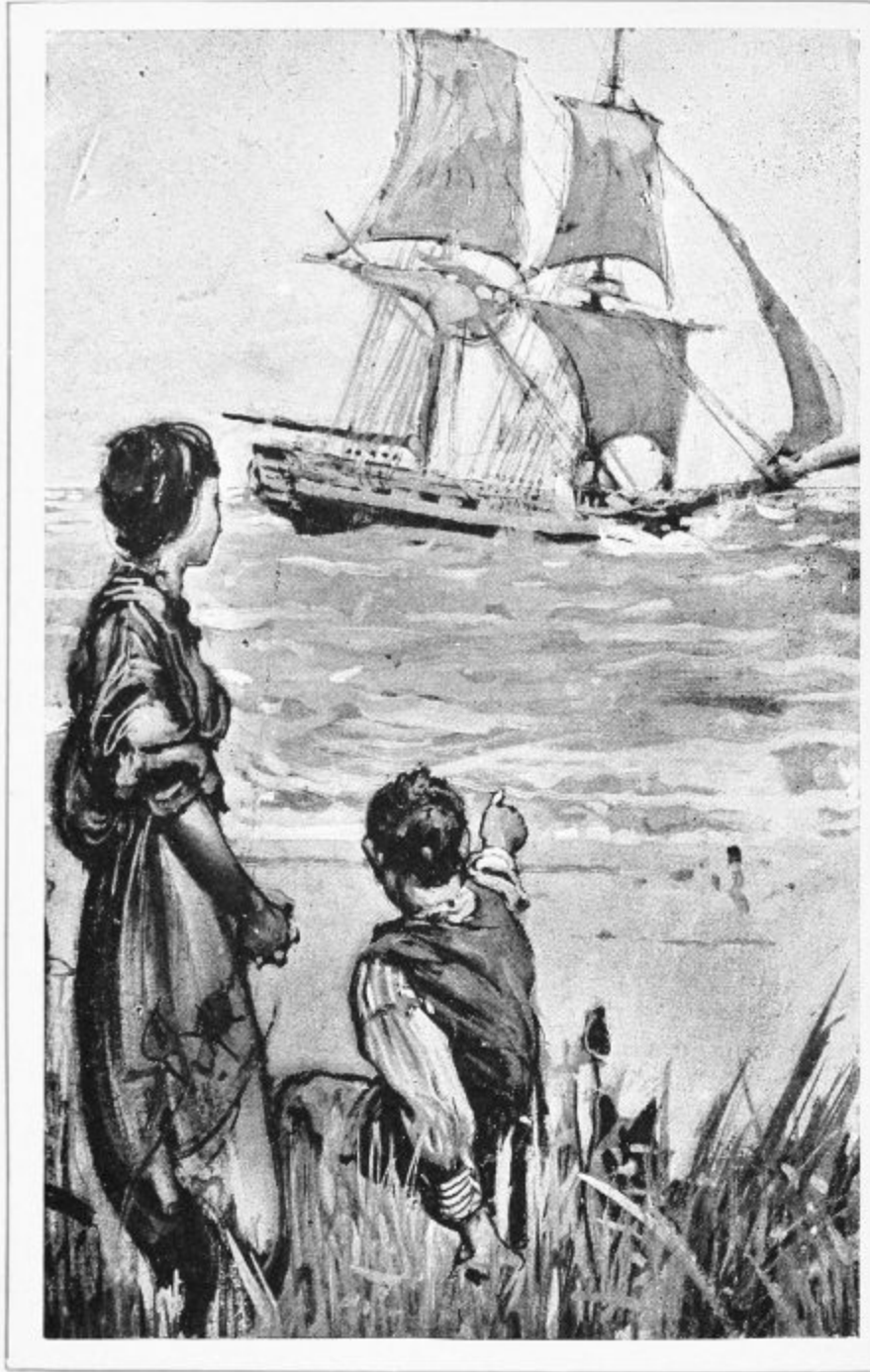
S. R. CROCKETT

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You and I used to watch the Tide come swilling in.

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THE SMUGGLERS OF THE CLONE

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

THE SMUGGLERS OF THE CLONE.

'Rise, Robin, rise! The partans are on the sands!'

The crying at our little window raised me out of a sound sleep, for I had been out seeing the Myreside lasses late the night before, and was far from being wake-rife at two by the clock on a February morning.

It was the first time the summons had come to me, for I was then but young. Hitherto it was my brother John who had answered the raising word of the free-traders spoken at the window. But now John had a farm-steading of his own, thanks to Sir William Maxwell and to my father's siller that had paid for the stock.

So with all speed I did my clothes upon me, with much eagerness and a beating heart,—as who would not, when, for the first time, he has the privilege of man? As I went out to the barn I could hear my mother (with whom I was ever a favourite) praying for me.

'Save the laddie—save the laddie!' she said over and over.

And I think my father prayed too; but, as I went, he also cried to me counsels.

'Be sure you keep up the grappling chains—dinna let them clatter till ye hae the stuff weel up the hill. The Lord keep

ye! Be a guid lad an' ride honestly. Gin ye see Sir William, keep your head doon, an' gae by withoot lookin'. He's a magistrate, ye ken. But he'll no' see you, gin ye dinna see him. Leave twa ankers a-piece o' brandy an' rum at our ain dyke back. An' abune a', the Lord be wi' ye, an' bring ye safe back to your sorrowing parents!'

So, with pride, I did the harness graith upon the sonsy back of Brown Bess,—the pad before where I was to sit,—the lingtow and the hooked chains behind. I had a cutlass, a jockteleg (or smuggler's sheaf-knife), and a pair of brass-mounted pistols ready swung in my leathern belt. Faith, but I wish Bell of the Mains could have seen me then, ready to ride forth with the light-horsemen. She would never scorn me more for a lingle-backed callant, I'se warrant.

'Haste ye, Robin! Heard ye no' that the partans are on the sands?'

It was Geordie of the Clone who cried to me. He meant the free-traders from the Isle, rolling the barrels ashore.

'I am e'en as ready as ye are yoursel'!' I gave him answer, for I was not going to let him boast himself prideful all, because he had ridden out with them once or twice before. Besides, his horse and accoutrement were not one half so good as mine. For my father was an honest and well-considered man, and in good standing with the laird and the minister, so that he could afford to do things handsomely.

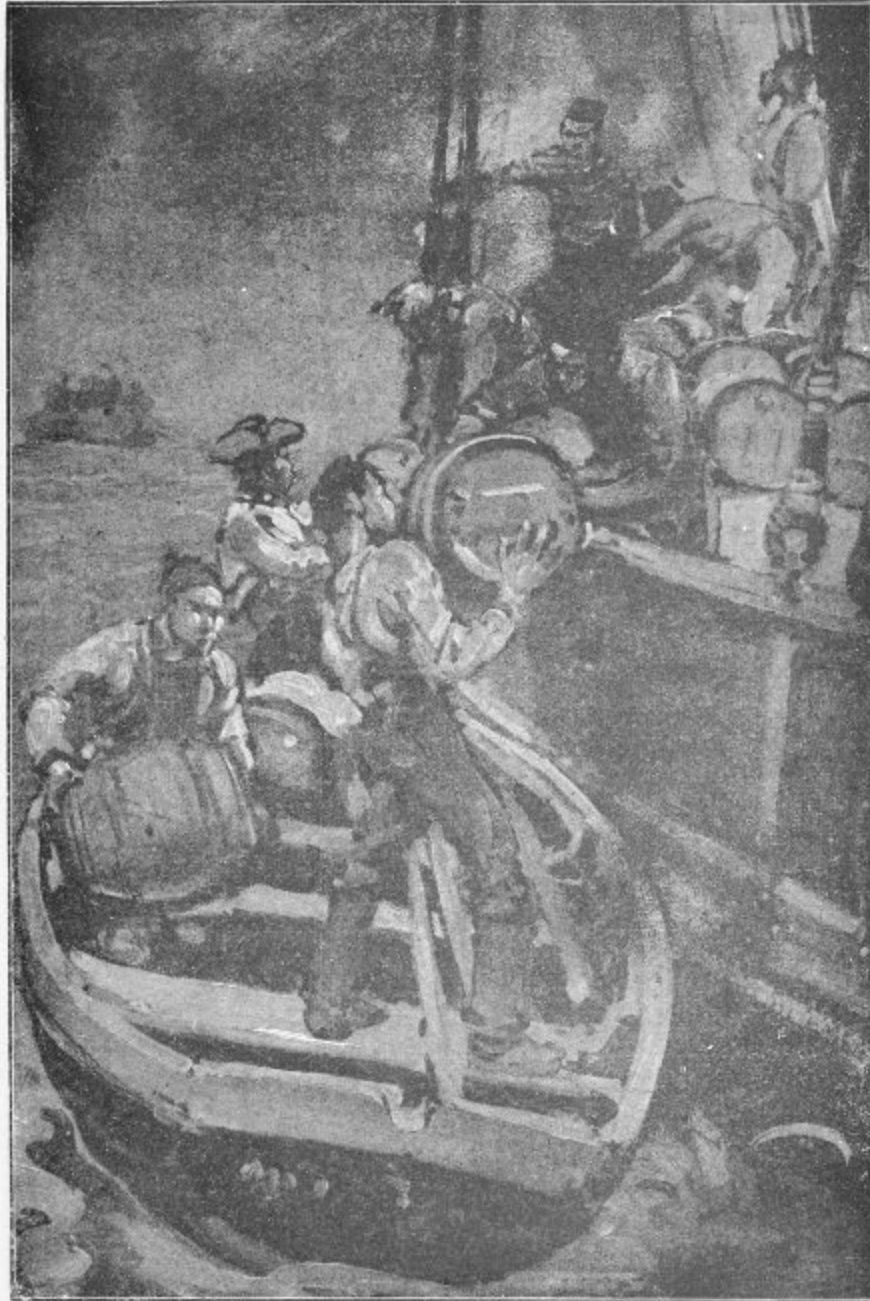
We made haste to ride along the heuchs, which are very high, steep, and rocky at this part of the coast.

And at every loaning-end we heard the clinking of the smugglers chains, and I thought the sound a livening and a merry one.

'A fair guid-e'en and a full tide, young Airyolan!' cried one to me as we came by Killantrae. And I own the name was sweet to my ears. For it was the custom to call men by the names of their farms, and Airyolan was my father's name by rights. But mine for that night, because in my hands was the honour of the house.

Ere we got down to the Clone we could hear, all about in the darkness, athwart and athwart, the clattering of chains, the stir of many horses, and the voices of men.

Black Taggart was in with his lugger, the 'Sea Pyet,' and such a cargo as the Clone men had never run,—so ran the talk on every side. There was not a sleeping wife nor yet a man left indoors in all the parish of Mochrum, except only the laird and the minister.



Black Taggart was in with his luggie.

By the time that we got down by the shore, there was quite a company of the Men of the Fells, as the shore men called us,—all dour, swack, determined fellows.

'Here come the hill nowt!' said one of the village men, as he caught sight of us. I knew him for a limber-tongued, ill-

livered loon from the Port, so I delivered him a blow fair and solid between the eyes, and he dropped without a gurgle. This was to learn him how to speak to innocent harmless strangers.

Then there was a turmoil indeed to speak about, for all the men of the laigh shore crowded round us, and knives were drawn. But I cried, 'Corwald, Mochrum, Chippermore, here to me!' And all the stout lads came about me.

Nevertheless, it looked black for a moment, as the shore men waved their torches in our faces, and yelled fiercely at us to put us down by fear.

Then a tall young man on a horse rode straight at the crowd which had gathered about the loon I had felled. He had a mask over his face which sometimes slipped awry. But, in spite of the disguise, he seemed perfectly well known to all there.

'What have we here?' he asked, in a voice of questioning that had also the power of command in it.

'Tis these Men of the Fells that have stricken down Jock Webster of the Port, Maister William!' said one of the crowd.

Then I knew the laird's son, and did my duty to him, telling him of my provocation, and how I had only given the rascal strength of arm.

'And right well you did,' said Maister William, 'for these dogs would swatter in the good brandy, but never help to carry it to the caves, nor bring the well-graithed horses to the shore-side! Carry the loon away, and stap him into a heather hole till he come to.'

So that was all the comfort they got for their tale-telling.