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"The Smallest Hair Throws a Shadow."

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THE HAUNTS OF "BLACK BEARD."

The Sand Dunes of the Old North State.

THE SCENE OF MANY TRAGEDIES—THE GRISLY SKELETONS FROM HATTERAS TO CAPE FEAR—A RICH FIELD FOR THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

The sand dunes of North Carolina have been famous as the scene of marine tragedies. The bleaching ribs of some of the stateliest craft that ever plowed the deep, bear testimony to the ravages of old ocean. The English merchantman, the Portuguese galleon, the Dutch brigantine, the Spanish treasure ship, the French corvette, the Norwegian bark—representatives of every maritime nation on the globe—are scattered over the beach, from Cape Fear to Hatteras—their grisly skeletons protruding from the sands, like antediluvian monsters in some geological bed. This narrow strip of sand, winding like a yellow ribbon between the inland sounds and the sea, presents a curious study to the geologist. For years it has been gradually sinking, and at the same time becoming narrower, till now its average width is not more than a mile, and the libertine waters of the great sea not seldom rush across the frail barrier to embrace those of the amorous Albemarle. The slender divide has not always been able to withstand the matchless flood, which has in time of unusual commotion literally cut a pathway through the yielding sands. These form "inlets" of which Cannon Hatteras and New are the most important. Through the first, Burnside's fleet of warships of light draught defied on its way to the bombardment of Roanoke Island. The channels are constantly shifting and skillful pilots are required to guide vessels safely over the bar.

The ornithologist may here find much to interest him, and the conchologist revels in a paradise of shells. But the neutral, pale and pearly, and the delicate blush of the sea coach, have small influence on the rude nature of the native "Bankers" isolated from the world on this barren waste of shifting sand, the Banker of forty years ago was almost a barbarian. His savage instincts not only made him consider all flotsam and jetsam his lawful property, but induced him to use every means to lure vessels ashore for purposes of plunder. And when a wreck occurred the wreckers held high carnival. The sparse population turned out en masse, and with demonic yells and curses dire, murdered, without remorse, the hapless victims who escaped the raging surf. In these days, before the friendly life saving stations were established, a wreck was a much more terrible thing than it is to-day. Imagine some doomed ship, about to be hurled to destruction on a haggard reef, the despairing passengers and crew gazing, with horror-distended eyes, into the baleful orbs of the human vampires on shore, ready to impede in every possible way the road to safety, or turning

their eyes, beheld the grim form of pallid mors, sheathed in shadowy form beckon with horrid finger to another world. Besides their occupation as wreckers, the Bankers are born fishermen, and every ten-year-old child is an adept in handling a boat.

Agriculture is little practiced, but by dint of coaxing, watermelons and sweet potatoes are persuaded to grow. "Fish and taters" is the staple diet.

Nag's Head, a favorite resort along the coast, was named from a habit the Bankers had of hobbling a horse, suspending a lantern from its neck and walking it up and down the beach, impressing the unwary mariner with the belief that a vessel was riding safe at anchor. Through this device many a good ship has gone down and much valuable booty secured to the land pirates. The Bankers of today are different beings from their ancestors of former generations. Fellowship with enlightened people has had a humanizing influence and they are now good, useful citizens.

The North Carolina coast is provided with three lighthouses of the first class—Hatteras, Whale's head and Body's island. The last mentioned is my purpose to describe, those at Hatteras and Whale's head being almost exactly similar.

It was my good fortune to spend ten days at Body's island, as a guest of one of the keepers of the light. Body's island is no longer an island, Nag's Head inlet, which formed its northern boundary having been completely closed up by the encroaching sands. It is bounded on south, west and east respectively, by Oregon Inlet, Albemarle sound and the Atlantic ocean. The dunes, for the most part barren of vegetation, have, in some places a stunted growth of forest trees, and in others large marshes, covered with a rank growth of coarse grass, on which herds of wild cattle and "Banks" ponies graze.

Myriads of billions of mosquitoes infest these marshes—mosquitoes microscopic, mosquitoes Brobdignagian, red-lipped mosquitoes, mosquitoes blear-eyed and bloated from the intoxicating effect of human blood. The most extravagant statements fall short of the reality. An old native told me that by swinging a pint cup through a column of these pests you could easily catch a quart.

Thousands of snakes, their eyes gleaming with baleful fire through the watery ooze, inhabit the fresh water lagoons which occur at frequent intervals in the marshes. In the midst of one of the most extensive of these morasses, one and a half miles from Oregon inlet and about twelve miles from Nag's Head, the Body's island light tower pierces the ether to an altitude of 166 feet. It is an imposing monument to civilization, to humanity and to engineering skill. It stands midway between the ocean and the sound, careering havenward. A bed of piles, driven deep in the sand, surmounted by twenty feet of solid masonry, serves as a foundation for the brick work and iron which complete the structure. Its form is that of a cone, the base being fifty and the apex fifteen feet in diameter. It was erected by the govern-

ment in 1871, at a cost of \$300,000. The entrance to the tower, from the long brick walk leading to the \$4,000 dwelling of the principal and assistant keepers, is through the oil room, the office and library. In the centre of the tessellated marble floor, a well ten feet deep, surrounded by a circular iron railing, serves to support the lightning rod, which terminates on the iron roof in a triple point. A spiral staircase of iron, having nine landings and 216 steps, winds its way to the top, and acts as a powerful support to the edifice.

On the outside the tower is painted in alternate broad bands of white and black. The ninth landing forms the iron floor of the watch-room. From the watch-room a short flight of steps communicates with the mighty lamp. Its copper front, highly burnished, contains ten gallons of oil, seven of which are nightly consumed in feeding the wicks. (Who can tell whether the constant rubbing may not sometimes evoke the geni of the lamp, as in the good old days of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid.) The five-inch burner contains four concentric wicks, which, when lighted, forms a volcano of flames, whose powerful, divergent rays penetrate the darkness in every direction to a distance of thirty-five miles.

A magnificent plate glass lens, twelve feet high and six feet in diameter, in form closely resembling the skeleton of the human trunk—the ribs of the latter corresponding to the prisms of the lens—surrounds the light, and magnifies it many hundred times. Through the prismatic ribs the diffused rays blend the primary colors in a white radiance which illumines a region 100 miles in circumference. The lens was imported from Paris at an expense to the government of \$25,000. Spirit of wine and chamois skin are employed in keeping it immaculate. In fact everything in and about the light house, as well as the dwelling, is required to be kept scrupulously clean, and not a speck of dust is visible anywhere. Until a few years land oil was used for illuminating purposes but kerosene has since been substituted as giving a more brilliant light.

At the top of the ninth staircase an iron door gives access to a circular iron balcony, surrounded by a high railing. A narrow ladder, placed at an angle of eighty degrees, leads to the upper gallery, which is inclosed with a net work of galvanized wire, to protect those whose duty it is to clean the glass. Many a fat canvas-back and many a red-head has hurled himself to death against this lattice work, and fallen an easy prey to the watcher below.

From the lower parapet the view in all directions is fine. At sunset, when it is time to light the great lamp, an opaline effulgence rises from the sands, and the sun smiles a crimson smile upon the hoary ocean.

Schools of porpoises deport themselves within half a mile of shore, and dash from their tails liquid sapphires, as they whirl on their course in a succession of summersaults. The horizon seems limitless. Numerous white sails deck the blue mantle of the sea. To the north and south stretches the sandy plain, broken here and there by hummocks, or patches

of marsh. Toward the west lies Albemarle Sound, dotted with picturesque islands. This sound was named in honor of the celebrated Geo. Moak, Duke of Albemarle, one of the early proprietors of North Carolina. It is famous for its immense herring fisheries, the largest seines sometimes capturing as many as 500,000 at a single haul.

It was the favorite haunt of Edward Teach, better known as "Blackbeard" who is supposed to have buried enormous treasures on the shores and islands washed by its waters. This redoubted freebooter terrorized for years the sea-faring population along the Atlantic coast, and sometimes ventured far to sea in his piratical cruises. He was a man of gigantic build, with a colossal black beard reaching to his waist. When the bold buccaneer was about to attack a vessel, he organized a sort of devil's lance on the deck of his schooner, checked glass, so that the blood flowed from his mouth, and stuck lighted candles in his twisted beard. Armed at all points, and brandishing in his right hand a huge cutlass, he rushed among his adversaries with irresistible fury, shouting, "Death and hell! Blood flows!" intimidating by his forbidding appearance his boldest antagonists and paralyzing with dread horror the pusillanimous. He was captured by Lieut. Maynard, of the British navy, decapitated, and his head stuck upon the bowsprit in triumph. After he was beheaded his body is said to have swum three times around the vessel!

To this day a phantom light is often seen in the vicinity of Body's island. The natives call it "Teach's light" and regard it with superstitious awe. When nearly approached it suddenly and mysteriously disappears. The entire landscape viewed from the tower is bleak and desolate in the extreme; the wild scream of the gull mingles with the sobbing of the "sad sea waves," and the surface of the deep seems corrugating and scintillating with the flashing of a billion gems, and as the fiery orb sinks below the horizon, the revolving light at Hatteras, thirty-three miles distant, flashes in response to the beacon at Body's island.

"Social watch fires answering one another through the darkness"—Gaston Pool in Goldwaite's Geographical Magazine

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