

ROANOKE HUNDRED





Roanoke Hundred

In 1584 Elizabeth is approaching the crisis of her reign. The threat of war with Spain grows grave. The shadow of the myriad ships of the Armada lies already across the enisling seas. But England has her grand champions.

Francis Drake has circled the globe and been knighted on his triumphant return. Rich nobles vie for the honour of seeking new lands and wealth under the banner of their Sovereign Queen. Sir Richard Grenville, the most powerful landholder of Devon and Cornwall, is one of these. He is brought to thrilling life as the hero of Roanoke Hundred, Inglis Fletcher's magnificent new novel about the founding of the first English settlement in North America, on Roanoke Island off the coast of what is today North Carolina.

A handsome dynamic personality, Sir Richard is Lord High Sheriff. He sits in Parliament as Knight of the Shire. But guarding his heritage is not enough for such a man. When his cousin Sir Walter Raleigh approaches him with the project of a voyage of colonization to the New World of Virginia, his imagination is fired. The sea is in his blood-and he cannot forget that had it not been for Elizabeth's changeable ways, the glory Drake is enjoying would be his.

The story opens at Stowe Barton in Cornwall. Through the eyes of Colin the herd-boy are introduced members of Grenville's household - gentle Lady Mary Grenville, deeply in love with her magnetic husband; Philippa Tremayne, his worldly, amorous foster-sister; the young squires Richard Prideaux and John Arundell, Sir Richard's wards. Colin himself is in a fortunate position though he is only a servant with no last name. Could his marked physical resemblance to his master be the reason?

The elegant pastoral scene becomes charged with electricity when Sir Richard comes riding home with

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a distinguished retinue-and the beautiful untamed girl from Tintagel, Thomasine. (Colin will carry her brand for the rest of his life, in his heart as well as on his hand. His friend Black John Arundell loves her too.) The setting changes with panoramic variety as the story progresses in ever-mounting suspense. There are scenes of brilliant pageantry, intimate têteà-têtes, passionate moments between full-blooded men and women-and then a marvelous re-creation of the New World as it looked to the Elizabethans. Great names from history-Walter Raleigh, Philip Sidney, Richard Hakluyt, Thomas Hariot, John White, Richard Hooker and Francis Drake - emerge as living, breathing men playing important roles in the Virginia venture.

There are drama and excitement all the way. Excitement when the seven piratical English ships descend on Porto Rico and San Domingo seizing Spanish barques and holding their captains for ransom. Drama on Roanoke-108 Englishmen amid uncharted seas, the silence of vast forests, the threat of innumerable savages. Tragedy in the growing envy which Ralph Lane, appointed to succeed him, feels for the Admiral, Grenville.

Few fictional characters appear in the large cast. Readers of Raleigh's Eden, Men of Albemarle,

History has furnished the author with such rich material that it was scarcely necessary for her to invent people. Inglis Fletcher made an extended visit to England. She roamed Devon and Cornwall, studied original documents in the British Museum, until the Elizabethan age became second nature to her. With the scene in America, residence on the Chowan River, not far from Roanoke Island, the seat of the first colony, and many trips to the outer-banks and up the sounds and rivers have made her thoroughly familiar. Lusty Wind for Carolina and Toil of the Brave know with what imaginative genius Mrs. Fletcher can transmute forgotten lore into vital, exciting novels. The story of the hero of the Revenge and his Roanoke hundred is the most ambitious, the most sweeping and impressive of this Carolina series.

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