



The Thirty-Nine Steps

John Buchan (1875 - 1940)

Read by:	Adrian Praetzelis	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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Genre:	Political Thriller		

The Thirty-Nine Steps is a classic political thriller and one of the earliest examples of the “man-on-the-run” plot archetype. Set on the eve of World War I, expatriate Scotsman Richard Hannay has just returned from a stint in Rhodesia and settled in London when he encounters an American freelance spy who tells of an anarchist plot to assassinate the Greek Premier and destabilize Europe. After two murders in his building he is forced to flee to southwest Scotland but is pursued by police, who suspect his involvement. After numerous surprising twists of fate, chases and escapes, we find him with a group of British military in a coastal village in Kent descending the thirty-nine steps down a path in a cliff to apprehend a group of German spies about to

abscond with key British secrets. Serialized in *Blackwood's Magazine* and published in book form in 1915, the story was a big hit with the soldiers in the trenches and the general public. It has been adapted for radio five times and four times for the cinema and television, most recently in 2008 by the BBC, and appears on the BBC's Big Read poll of the “best-loved novels” in the UK. was translated in nineteen languages within a year. Its message is especially intriguing today in light of the phenomena observed in virtual groups that emerge on social media.

John Buchan, 1st Baron Teedmuir, (August 26, 1875 – February 1, 1940) was a Scottish novelist, historian and politician who served as the 15th Governor General of Canada. The son of a Free Church of Scotland minister, he was born in Perth and raised in Fife, he won a scholarship to University of Glasgow, where he won a scholarship to study classics at Oxford. At Oxford he won the Stanhope essay prize and the Newdigate prize for poetry. After a brief encounter with the legal profession he pursued simultaneous careers as a writer and as a politician and diplomat. He served as secretary to administrations in several African colonies and wrote propaganda for the British war effort in the First World War. He struck gold with *The Thirty-Nine Steps* in 1915 and is best known for his popular spy thrillers. He produced 100 works, including thirty novels, seven short story collections, and several notable biographies. He maintained a lively involvement in public life, serving as president of the Scottish Historical Society, Unionist Party Member of Parliament, as well as other organizations. His name was put forward in 1935 as a prospective governor general of Canada by Prime Minister Mackenzie King, a good friend. Such positions were then off limits to commoners and so he was elevated to the peerage by King George V. He served until his death in 1940 and was given a state funeral in Ottawa.