"CONTRABAND"

By RANDALL PARRISH

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A Thrilling War Story of the North Atlantic

CHAPTER XXXI—Continued.

—20—

Leyord and I were the last, and we left the dinghy swamped behind us, dangling and crushed against the steel side of the schooner, upheld only by the strength of the rope. It was all the work of a feverish minute, in which thought was impossible because of the stress of action. But now, as I clung breathless to those lower mizzen ratlines, the seven of us jammed upon the little platform, the green surge of water below slushing against the wreck we had just left, the strange silence of this vessel which we had boarded struck me with full force. In heaven's name, what could it mean? It was broad daylight; if there was a man alive aboard, he could never have failed to see or hear us in this fierce struggle for life. Yet no one was visible; no sound of voice was heard; no face peered over at us above the rail. It was like a ghost schooner, and I felt the very heart of me chill as I stared into the blank faces of my huddled companions, and along the shiny sides, and the deserted rail.

"This is a rum go, sir," ventured Leyord soberly. "Ain't she got no crew?"

"I don't know what to make of it," I confessed, "but we'll soon find out. Help the lady, Leyord. Olson, come with me."

We footed the ropes, and swung up to the rail, clinging there long enough to gain swift view of the deck beyond. It was as clean as a millionaire's yacht, and had the appearance of one, with *brasswork* glistening, and paint fresh and bright. Every rope seemed coiled in place, the sail gaskets firmly tied, the planks spotless, the canvas as white as though just out of the sail-loft. My eyes surveyed the whole fore and aft—the low forecastle, the cook's galley, with door standing wide open, revealing a fireless stove, the boats in chocks, not one missing, the after cabin on the deck level, its companion door ajar, the wheel astern, outlined against the sky, swinging slightly to a lashing of rope—and nowhere a human being. I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes.

"Heavens, Olson; there's not a sailor on deck," I gasped.

"No, sir; it beats me; I've been at sea a long time, sir, but I never see nothin' like this—they ain't left, fer the boats are all there, an' the wheel is lashed. She's just a sailin' herself."

"There's no sign of any trouble aboard. Why, those decks are scrubbed

"My Heavens, Olson; There's Not a Sailor on Deck."

like a Dutch woman's floor. Hurry up, Leyord; the schooner seems deserted. Come on, mate, we shall have to clear this mystery up."

We sprang down on the deck, and the others came tumbling over the rail after us, each face expressive of mystification. Vera touched my sleeve, her eyes searching mine.

"What can have happened?"

"I do not in the least know," I answered. "The mystery is too deep to guess at. There has been no storm, no fire, no evidence of desertion, every boat seems to be in its proper place. The only thing I can think of as possible is drink. The whole crew may be drunk, but that seems like a dream. However, we can't stand here doing nothing. White, you are not of much use with that broken arm, so remain alongside Miss Carrington. Keep your eyes open, Leyord, you and I will have a peep into that cabin; the rest of you take the forecastle. Be careful, lads, but don't miss anything—scatter now."

I slid back the companion door, and entered slightly in advance. The cabin floor was on a level with the main deck, and its glass front flooded the interior with light. A glance revealed everything, and I stood motionless, my breath caught in my throat, my hand still gripping the edge of the door. I was aware that Leayord peered in across my shoulder, and heard his startled lips utter one muffled exclamation. It was a low-celled apartment, painted white, with ports along the sides, the only staterooms being aft. A bright-hued rug covered the floor, and there were leather divans under the ports. The table in the center was fully set for a meal, covered with a white cloth, and glistening bravely with china and glass. There was food in abundance, partially eaten, and wineglasses half filled. I saw all these details; I recalled them afterwards, yet in that first instant of horror, the impression left upon me was merely of those silent, motionless figures sitting upright in their chairs. It was a grewsome sight! A great monster of a man faced me, his white, ghastly face appearing above a shaggy gray beard, his sightless, open eyes, staring full into mine. A wineglass had fallen from his opened fingers, and lay broken on the deck. Indeed, everyone had apparently died as by a stroke, retaining exactly the posture last assumed in life.

To the right of the broad-shouldered giant was a thin, young fellow, scarcely out of his teens, but with a hard, repulsive face, and at his left a dark-faced man almost a negro, grinned horribly, as though death had stricken him even as he laughed. Nothing could be more awful to look upon than the gleam of his teeth, beneath the fantastic curl of his mustache. There were six altogether, five sitting upright in swivel chairs, screwed to the deck, or leaning forward with heads resting on the table. The sixth, gray-haired and partially bald, had fallen sideways, and lay in a shapeless heap on the rug. They had the look of seamen, and were roughly dressed, three of them plainly foreigners, one with rings in his ears. The big man alone possessed the appearance of leadership.

I saw all this in that one swift glance. Breath had not come sobbing back to me, when Leayord's hand crushed my arm and his voice rumbled in my ear:

"See, captain! they're dead; they're all dead!"

"Yes," I answered, choking over the words, "there is no doubt of that. Something terrible has occurred here. Call—call the other men."

I heard him stumble out through the companion door, and the roar of his voice as he shouted to those forward; I could distinguish the sound of their feet on the deck, but could not remove my gaze from that awful sight in the cabin. The eyes of that giant dead man, staring at me so fixedly across the table, held me as in a vise—there was something so ghastly, so terrible, about their expression, as to rob me of all sense, all courage. The men joined me. Liverpool entering in advance, and pushing past where I stood. I have no recollection of seeing the others, although I felt and heard their presence. But I saw him—marked his sudden stop, the quick blanching of his face, and the sharp oath which burst from his lips, the swift, incredulous look of surprise, of recognition, which leaped into his eyes. He was staring straight into the ghastly face of the giant opposite. I doubt if he even saw any of the others.

"Heart of the devil!" he shouted. "If it isn't Gaston de Lys! So you've got it at last, you old hound."

He leaped forward, circled the table with a single, stride, hate, memory, whatever the impulse might be, conquering all fear, and gripped his hand hard on the dead man's shoulder. And then he stiffened, every muscle of his body rebelled; I could see death strike him, his jaw set, his eyes fixed—an instant he stood rigid; then his whole form seemed to contract and he fell lifeless to the deck.

I sprang toward him, but Masters gripped me, and hurled me back.

"Hands off!—all of you!" he screamed. "Wait! Don't lay a finger on any of them; you are dead men if you do."

"What do you mean? What is it?"

"The most diabolical bit of deviltry ever contrived," he answered. "These men have been killed by electricity—the current is still on. I heard the whir of the dynamo as I came aft. Don't move until I find the switch and disconnect; for God's sake stand where you are."

Perhaps he was gone five minutes; I could never tell; I saw nothing but those dead men; heard nothing but the heavy breathing of my mates in the doorway. No one spoke; but once, it seemed to me, I caught the throb of that deadly dynamo, yet even as I seemed to distinguish the faint sound, it ceased abruptly. Masters pushed in past me.

"Ay, that was the truth," he said, "but it's safe enough now, Lord; did you ever hear of such a d——, cold-blooded crime. See here, men, the villain planned his job well—here are the wires along the deck, pressed into a seam, and connected to each swivel chair. See, the circuit is complete, and no one would ever suspect. All he had to do was stand back there in the steward's pantry and press the switch. Those six men died before they could wink an eye."

"But the fellow who did it? What has become of him?"

Masters shook his head.

"I don't know, sir; but there must have been more than ain't none of these dead men could have turned the trick."

"Perhaps it was that cuss dangling over the side, captain," said White's voice, from back behind the others.

"What is that?"

"There's a fellow got jammed in a small boat alongside, sir. I just happened to look over, and saw him a-hangin' there."

We were glad enough to escape that cabin of horror, and I slid down the companion door to, and bolted it, before following White across the deck to the starboard rail. Excited as I was, obsessed by this awful tragedy, my mind yet grasped every detail—the shining brasswork, the spotless decks, the white boats in their davits, the snowy canvas aloft. The very immaculateness of the vessel seemed to add to the horror, and it was a shock to even read the schooner's name, painted on a lifebuoy—Rose of Gaspe.

A glance below revealed the whole story of the accident. It was clear enough to be read instantly by a sailor's eyes. The man in his efforts at escape had chosen one of the smaller boats, one staunch and well equipped. No doubt it had been secretly prepared in advance, for the lockers contained food and a beaker of fresh water was securely lashed to a front thwart. There was also a spar and sail aboard, safely secured, together with a pair of serviceable oars.

What had happened, as seemed clear to us, was this: a heavy brass-bound chest, of old workmanship and dingy appearance, had been stowed away in the bows. It must have been placed there with rope and pulley, for no single pair of arms could ever have lifted it over the rail. Then the fellow had clambered in, eager to be off, no doubt, and undertaken to lower the boat, standing probably amidships, where he could manipulate both ropes. But the forward rope must have jammed in the pulley, permitting the stern of the suspended boat to sag suddenly enough to send the heavy chest sliding aft. Before he could check the fall, or save himself by leaping overboard, it had pinned his legs against the stern sheets; and there he dangled still, his face buried in the green water alongside, his knees crushed helplessly beneath the weight of the chest—an inert dead body.

"The fellow got his, sir," said Leyord solemnly. "Likely enough killed by the very thing he was tryin' to git away with. What shall we do with the boat and what's in it, sir?"

"Untangle that pulley slowly, and hoist up even with the rail," I answered. "We'll have a look at the man, and find out what's in the chest; it's an odd-looking affair."

I helped balance it, and with White using his uninjured arm, we drew the dead man's body in over the rail. The two mates released his limbs from the grip of the chest, and we laid him out on the deck. He was an ill-looking fellow, deeply tanned, with a livid scar across one cheek, and an anchor tattooed on his forearm. Leayord drew a paper out of the inner pocket of his shirt, and passed it over to me. It was a letter with no dateline or signature, and had been so soaked in salt water as to be almost illegible. The only connecting words I could study out were: "De Lys has all his men but a cook; try to get on! He'll never know you after these years."

"Does it tell you anything, sir?" asked Olson anxiously.

"Not much; only this fellow sailed as cook, and got the job for a purpose. He had known De Lys years before."

"De Lys?"

"Yes; that was the name of the big fellow in the cabin; he must have been at the head of the party; the one Liverpool knew as Gaston de Lys. Get that chest onto the deck; no doubt the secret is there."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A Secret of the Sea.

We were compelled to resort to rope and pulley, and then search through the dead man's clothes to discover the key. Even with that found, it required the sharp edge of a hatchet to force open the lock. As it lifted, the sight was greeted with cries of astonishment.

"Good Lord, sir, it's money, and a stack of it!"

"English and French coins!"

"Aye, and Spanish!"

White's voice broke in above the babble, the old harsh croak I remembered so well:

"Well, see here, lads," he shouted, "whose is all this gold, anyhow? Ain't it just naturally ours? It's sure no good to those yere dead men, an' there wa'n't nuthin' else good aboard when we come. Then why ain't it ourn now to divide share an' share about?"

"We undoubtedly have a claim," I answered, "for salvage; and if the heirs of the rightful owners are unable to prove themselves justly entitled to the gold, perhaps we might hold the entire amount."

"Piffle!" snorted White, "what's the use o' all that poppycock? These fellows likely enough stole the money, or else dug it up somewhere. It never belonged to them—my mate's it does to us. Nobody knows the stuff even ex-

"Do You Agree to This, Mr. Leayord?"

ists. Why should we go around tellin' about it? I'm fer dividin' it up square between the five o' us—no, by heavens, I'll count the girl for a full share—the six, and never sayin' nuthin' about it when we go ashore. Ain't that the best way, mates?"

"Do you agree to this, Mr. Leayord?" I asked suddenly.

He lifted his eyes to mine in bewilderment.

"I don't just know, sir," he stammered, "it doesn't seem exactly the square thing to do, sir?"

"No, it's not," I answered firmly, and I slammed down the cover, locked it, and put the key in my pocket. "Now look here, men, and you particularly, Jim White—this isn't our gold. I do not know who it belongs to, or how these dead men ever came into its possession. But there is a curse on the stuff, which has already cost the lives of eight men that we know of. No one has touched it but to die. I'll tell you fellows plainly just what I'm going to do. I'm going to sail this schooner straight into St. Johns harbor, with those dead men locked in the cabin, and this chest of gold here unopened on the deck. It is going to be English courts which will decide the ownership of this chest and its contents—not Jim White. Are you with me, Leyord?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"And you, Olson?"

"I suppose that's best, sir," reluctantly. "I don't want any trouble."

"I thought not; now fall to, all of you, and shake the reefs out of those

"We Are All Free to Go Now, Dear."

topsails. I'll take the wheel, and we'll point the bow toward port."

The morning of the second day the speeding Rose of Gaspe rounded the northern head, and swept like a fair, white bird into the beautiful harbor of St. Johns. We tied up at Long Wharf, and, within an hour, I had told our story to the port captain, and officers of the marines had taken possession of the vessel. That very afternoon the five of us gave our testimony before the maritime court, and were permitted to go free. Before leaving the courtroom the judge spoke with me privately.

"This is indeed a strange case, Captain Hollis," he said, "and, perhaps, the truth will never be learned, yet it is evident that you and your crew had nothing to do with the death of these men, or the possession of this chest of money."

"May I ask, judge, if anything has been discovered tending to explain the voyage of the Rose of Gaspe?"

"Nothing satisfactory as yet. There were no papers of value found in the cabin—an excellent chart of the Labrador coast, a memorandum in French, so discolored as to be almost unreadable, accompanied by a rudely drawn map, and a list of the schooner's crew."

"What was the name of the cook?"

"He shipped as Gustave Montain of St. Clair. There is no such man known in that village."

"And the leader, Gaston de Lys?"

"We find trace of him only for a few months, Mr. Hollis. Where he came from, and whither he went are thus far unknown. Gaston de Lys appeared in Placentia some two months since, accompanied by one of the men who died with him in the schooner's cabin—the one dark-faced—like an Indian—and sought among the fishermen there for a certain type of boat. They were very particular, stating they wished to leave for a voyage of three months, representing themselves merely as travelers for pleasure who desired to cruise along the Labrador coast. At last they leased the Rose of Gaspe, from a man of wealth, Richard Martin, who had previously used the schooner as a private yacht. It was refitted and provisioned, and the crew arrived from Halifax. None among them was known in Placentia, but the inhabitants say that only two or three among them had the appearance of sailors. They put to sea seven weeks ago. Beyond that we know absolutely nothing."

"But the chest of coins? have you no knowledge as to where it came from?"

"No more than a mere guess; there is no guide. Beyond doubt this Gaston de Lys learned of its existence somewhere in Labrador, and planned its recovery. The men with him also knew what it was they sailed to seek. In my judgment this must be a treasure of the old Hudson's Bay company, lost and hidden a hundred years ago, yet we can get no trace of such a disappearance of coin in the records. We cannot deny its existence; it is here now in our custody, but who its rightful owner may be, will probably never be determined."

"Then what will become of it?"

He smiled.

"That is rather a fine question of law. I should say that you men who recovered it at sea, have the best claim, although it must be held intact for a certain length of time to give any rightful claimant opportunity to furnish proof of ownership. Of course, in case no such claimant appears, the government takes its share."

"And the amount contained in the chest?"

"Exceeded seven hundred thousand dollars."

I rejoined Vera at the hotel, standing beside her in a window looking upon the harbor. Below us was the white schooner in which we had ended our strange voyage.

"We are all free to go now, dear," I said. "The examination is all over."

"Have they found the owner of the money?"

"No; they have not even the slightest conception as to whom it originally belonged, or where it came from. The law compels them to hold it intact for the present."

"For how long?"

"Two years, I think, then the greater proportion is given to those who recovered it—the state retaining a certain share."

Her eyes met mine.

"I wonder if you know where my share will go, if I ever receive it?" she asked softly.

"I think I do, and mine will be added to it—to the mother and sister of Phillip Bascom."

"Yes; and—and we may never know why these men were, or the story of their quest?"

"Most likely not; it will remain a secret of the sea. Who was Gaston de Lys? Where, and how did he learn of this hidden treasure? From where in the Seven Seas did he gather together the men who went with him? To what strange coast did the peaceful Rose of Gaspe sail? What mutiny of hate, or cupidity, led to the murderous crime of Gustave Montain? and how much of the truth did Liverpool Red know? had he lived, could he have lifted the veil?"

She was silent a long while, her hand clasped in mine; then she lifted her face, and smiled.

"It—it has been full of hardship, of sorrow, yet, Robert, I love the sea."

"And I, sweetheart," I answered earnestly, "for out of its mystery into my heart has come the one woman."

(THE END.)

LOANED WATCHES RAN AWAY

Timepieces Borrowed From Jeweler Inherited Odd Habit of One Left to Be Repaired.

There are several kinds of watches—there are gold watches, silver watches, dollar watches and watches the jeweler has to lend his patients while theirs are being repaired.

For the last ten days we have been carrying a borrowed watch, relates a writer in the Detroit Free Press. Our timepiece was not exactly out of order, it would run, but it had no control. It ran wild on the bases. It stole the second and third hour frequently. We would set it at eight o'clock and look at it 20 minutes later and discover that it was 15 minutes past three. We are erratic, but we weren't erratic enough to keep up with that watch. So we took it into the dry dock, where the man squints at it through a sawed-off telescope and tells you that it will cost $2 to fix it.

After he had told us it would cost us $2 we asked him to lend us a watch until we called for our own. This he did. He wound up a ticker and set it. It was 12 noon when we took it from his hands. Two hours later a friend asked us the time, and we showed him our watch. It was quarter to seven.

"Gosh," he said, "I didn't think it was that late. I overlooked dinner time in some way."

So we went back and borrowed another watch from the jeweler. "This one is O. K.," he said with a smile. We carried it for an hour. In that time it had jumped 10 hours. We don't know how when we look at it whether it is Berlin time or tomorrow's time. We can set it at two o'clock, and when the city hall is ringing three our borrowed watch swears it is 15 minutes after four o'clock tomorrow. At first we looked on the watches suspiciously, but now we have begun to suspect ourselves. When three watches begin to lie to your face something is wrong.

Shirk Duty When Hungry.

Hungry jurymen appealed to the judge in a London court. The jury had been kept sitting during the luncheon hour, and had failed to agree on a verdict. One of them suggested to Judge Rentoul that possibly a little refreshment might help them. "Hungry men," he added, "are not disposed to listen to arguments." The judge said refreshments should be supplied if there was any possibility of the jury coming to a verdict, but the foreman replied that there appeared to be no chance of their agreeing. "In my native country," said Judge Rentoul, "a jurryman once took in a quantity of beef and a small bottle of beer and said to his fellow jurors, 'I am for an acquittal,' without waiting for their verdict. And the others had to give in from the sheer necessity of the case."

Carnauba Wax.

Carnauba wax is made from the leaves of the carnauba plant, indigenous to the state of Piauhy, Ceara, and Rio Grande do Norte, in northeastern Brazil, whose roots are used locally as medicine, whose branches are used for bridge and housebuilding because they resist the attacks of insects, and whose fibers are used in rope and paper-making; the wax has been used extensively in adulterating beeswax, but is finding an honest market on its merits, not only for candle manufacture, but for coating the insulating material of electric wires, etc.; the annual production of wax in Rio Grande do Norte is about 450 tons a year, valued at about $250,000; perhaps three-fourths of this is exported; but the forests of carnauba plant can produce, if developed, many times this quantity.

The burglar also has his got-rich-quick schemes.

BIG BATTLE LINE ON WEST FRONT NOW 132 MILES

AMERICAN FORCES IN MIDST OF FRAY—DEFINITE WORD FROM FRONT ANXIOUSLY AWAITED.

ALLIED LINES HOLD FIRM DESPITE DESPERATE ATTACKS

eavy Losses Inflicted on Germans—Allies Give Ground at Several Points, Counter Attacks by British Successful.

London—Gradually the big battle line on the west front is spreading out.

From Vimy ridge to Noyon the line is some 80 miles. Northward from Arras to Armentieres is another 20 miles, and from Noyon to Chauny, the Franco-German flank, is 32 miles, along this front the guns are ceaselessly rumbling.

American forces are now in the midst of this seething cauldron and word from the front is now anxiously awaited.

It is believed that the gradual spreading out of the intense fighting zone is what Hindenburg referred to when he told the Kaiser, March 23, that this battle was planned on a mammoth scale and needed "time to mature."

To the Allies this "maturing" is the most heartily welcome thing since the first spring day; for them it means confession by Teutin high command the break-through on a 50-mile front has definitely failed—that the cost of further efforts on a limited line is too heavy to pay even for Potsdam's lifespenders, and that this attacking front had to be almost tripled, so a new process, that of hammer-and-tongs, of hit-or-miss tactics might set in.

French Lines Are Holding.

London—The French lines have held below Amiens and the Germans have been defeated with great losses in what probably constituted their most desperate effort yet to break in and cut off the communications of this important base from the south.

Simarly, to the east of Amiens, the British have maintained their steadfast defense and prevented the Germans from making any important headway here.

As a whole the entente line may be considered, as the French official statement puts it, maintained in its entirety.

Americans Repulse Raids.

With the American Army in France—Two German raids on different sectors of the American position northwest of Toul were repulsed April 7 with enemy casualties. The Germans were driven off before reaching the American trenches, by accurate machine gun and automatic fire.

At one point Germans laid down a box barrage. As soon as this lifted, Americans came up from shelters and poured a heavy fire into the advancing raiders, who retired after a short period of close fighting with American outposts.

At another point Germans threw hundreds of gas shells before advancing, but Americans donned gas masks and waited for the raiders. These they quickly dispersed by their fire.

British Counter Attack Successful.

London—Successful British counter-attacks were launched April 7 against Germans in Aveluy wood on the west side of the Ancre river north of Albert. The war office statement issued says the British recaptured all their former positions. German attacks on British lines opposite Albert were repulsed and another Teuton assault south of Hebuterne was broken up by British artillery.

80,000 Prisoners Taken, Berlin Claims.

Berlin, via London—Ninety thousand prisoners and more than 1,300 guns have been captured by Germans in their offensive on the western front up to April 5, says a German official communication.

French Turn Back Attacks.

Paris—German troops numbering well over 100,000 delivered a terrific attack on April 4, against the French along a front of nearly nine miles, from Grivesnes to north of the Amiens-Roye road. They were met with a storm of fire from the French guns and, although the assaults were repeated time after time, they succeeded in gaining only a small section of ground.

The announcement by the war office of this offensive also says by a powerful counter-attack the French made progress between Montdidier and Lessigay.

Custer Expects Big Population.

Camp Custer—All messages that come from camp, unofficial though they may be, seem to strengthen the belief that 40,000 or 50,000 men are likely to be stationed at Camp Custer this summer—sent here from other sections of the United States as well as Michigan and Wisconsin.

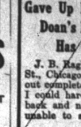
Ocean-Going Lake Ships Ready.

Washington—Thirty-five new ocean-going steamships, from 3,000 to 3,500 tons capacity have been ready to move out of great lakes shipyards since the opening of navigation, F. A. Eustis, expert for the United States shipping board, has reported after two months' study. Incidentally, Mr. Eustis recommended that some of this fleet be designated as the first vessels to carry cargo direct from the great lakes to Europe. Ninety-nine new ships have been taken over.

Had To Quit Work

Gave Up Hope of Recovery, But Doan's Restored His Health. Has Been Well Since.

J. B. Raglen, carpenter, 210 W. 60th St., Chicago, Ill., says: "My back gave out completely and I had to quit work. I could hardly endure the pain in my back and nights I tossed and turned, unable to sleep. Often in the morning my back was as stiff as a board, so that I couldn't stoop to dress myself. When I did manage to bend over, everything before me turned black. My head seemed to be whirling and sometimes I was so dizzy I had to grasp something to keep from falling.



Mr. Raglen

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The Plattsburg Camp Manual advises men in training to shake Foot-Ease in their shoes each morning. Ask your dealer to-day for a 25c. box of Allen's Foot-Ease, and for a 2c. stamp he will mail it to you. What remembrance could be so acceptable?

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