

# "CONTRABAND"

## A Romance of the North Atlantic

By RANDALL PARRISH

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**SYNOPSIS.**

CHAPTER I—Robert Hollis, one-time sea captain, who tells the story, is a guest on Gerald Carrington's yacht, Esmeralda. It is supposed to be a "stagnant" party and Hollis is surprised on discovering a woman, who evidently wishes to remain unknown, aboard.

**CHAPTER I.**

**A Yacht Party.**

So many items bearing upon those strange adventures which have lately befallen me have found publication in the newspapers, oftentimes distorted and untrue, and resulting in letters of inquiry from friends, induce me now to write out the tale while the incidents remain fresh in memory. Indeed, I owe the truth not only to myself but even more to her who so bravely shared with me those days and nights of peril.

The earlier passion of my life was the sea, and when others of my age were grinding away through their courses in college, I was apprenticed to the merchant service in a fleet owned by my father, trading between New York and northern European ports. Loving the work, and, possibly, assisted by the fact that I was my father's son, I rose rapidly, until licensed as captain of steam, and assigned to command the Vulcan, a freighter of 3,000 tons. At thirty, however, the novelty and fascination of a sea life ceased its attraction, and when my father died sufficient property became my share from the estate to enable my resigning this command, and retiring permanently from the service. Circumstances, unnecessary now to relate, caused me to make permanent home in Chicago, where I soon became engrossed in business, finding my sole recreation in yachting upon the Great Lakes. Such were the rather commonplace surroundings of my life, when, at thirty-seven, adventure suddenly called me out into the unknown.

Nothing could have been more unexpected than the occasion which took me to New York. Carrington—Gerald Carrington, the Copper King—had just placed his new steam yacht, the Esmeralda, in commission, and was eager to christen it by a run across to the ports of Spain. He wrote urging me to become one of the party. The temptation was irresistible, for, as I knew Mrs. Carrington was in Europe, the guests on board would undoubtedly all be men, and probably congenial fellows. A bachelor myself, the long hours at sea had left me unaccustomed to the society of women, whose presence I avoided whenever possible. Hence, I accepted Carrington's invitation immediately by wire, hastily packed the few things necessary for the trip, and, unaccompanied even by a valet, caught the Twentieth Century for New York.

Carrington lived on Long Island, and I talked with him on the phone. There were to be twelve in the party, the names of two, who were former acquaintances, alone being mentioned in our brief conversation. The yacht was lying at Tompkinsville, provisioned, and ready for the sea. I must be on board by three o'clock the following day, and he gave me quite explicit instructions as to the best mode of reaching the vessel.

An accident to the ferry caused me to miss the local train which I had anticipated taking the next morning, and I was consequently the last of our yachting party to arrive at Tompkinsville. The others were already safely aboard when I hurried across the gangplank, to receive the cordial welcome of Carrington, who immediately ordered the vessel under way. The guests must have been gathered on the upper deck, enjoying the excitement of departure, for I caught no glimpse of anyone on board, excepting some members of the crew, as the steward led me to the cabin assigned to my use during the voyage.

Even the brief view I had obtained of the boat impressed me strongly, both with its beauty and seagoing qualities. I was sailor enough to appreciate all this at a glance. The Esmeralda was a steam yacht, schooner rigged aloft, of over fifteen hundred tons, constructed for deep-water cruising, well manned, and able to combat the storms of any ocean.

I opened the door and emerged into the main cabin. It was deserted, except for a waiter or two attired in white jackets who had covered a long table suspended by stanchions from the deck beams above, and were spreading it with snowy linen in preparation for the six o'clock meal. Never had I seen a more cozy, homelike interior.

Forward, an open passage, guarded only by silently swinging doors, led to the steward's pantry, and various storerooms beyond, while beside this opening a broad, brass-railed stairway led easily to the upper deck. Sunlight touched the edge of the companionway, and flickered down through a half-opened skylight above, yielding cheerfulness to the scene, yet inviting to the open air. I would meet those with whom I was destined to companion on this voyage across summer seas.

No passengers were visible on the deck, yet this mystery was soon explained as I stepped to one side and glanced aft. The cabin projection was not high, yet sufficiently so to break the force of the headwind, and besides was far enough advanced to give ample deck space at the stern. Here an awning had been erected, and beneath its shelter were gathered the vessel's guests. I recognized but three in the group—Carrington, red-faced and white-haired, a cigar gripped in his teeth, giving some instructions to the steward; Fosdick, tall, slim, thin-lipped, a lawyer well known to corporations who desired to keep just within legal restrictions, sat at a table, his hand fingering a half-filled glass while he talked to the men opposite; and McCann, fat, good-natured, born to his father's millions, who amused himself by the pretense of being a broker, interrupting the game of cards in which he was engaged with three others, to tell the latest story of the street. Personally I cared little for either of these men, yet had known both, in a way, for some time. The others, judging from the outward appearances, had been recruited from about the same class—business acquaintances of Carrington no doubt. I went forward, greeting those whom I knew, and being duly presented to the others.

Whatever they might have been in a business way, and for that I cared absolutely nothing, they proved themselves a most companionable bunch of fellows to meet.

The memory of that first meal in the snug after cabin of the Esmeralda remains a most pleasant recollection. The cabin had been darkened, and the soft light of a swinging lamp gleamed back from snowy damask and glittering silver. The center was banked with flowers, the service was perfection, and the chef was evidently a genius. We lingered over the wine and cigars, the conversation drifting where it would.

I believe I was among the first to leave the table and return outside, and as my inclination was to remain alone and enjoy the calm of the night, I ventured forward along the deserted deck, until I found fancied security from observation in the shadow of a small boat. The others, as they emerged later from the companion, outlined a moment against the light, turned once again aft, and resumed their old places.

Nothing occurred to break the monotony, and finally, wearying of it all, I went below, being in no mind to join at games with the others. I was soon asleep.

Some dormant sense of seamanship, aroused to new life, perhaps, by my brief watch on deck, must have awakened me. For I sat up in bed, conscious that the vessel's motion had ceased. All was silent; no jar shook the keel, no footsteps sounded on the deck above. I switched on the electric light, and glanced at my watch; it was slightly after midnight. Through the open port nothing was visible but the dark waters, and the far-off gleam of a light, alternating in flashes of white. I did not know enough of this coast line to identify the signal, yet it was plainly evident we were some distance from land.

Why the Esmeralda had stopped her engines was no special concern of mine, and I lay down again. But sleep would not return. I tossed and turned, and finally arising in sheer desperation, hastily donned my clothes. The after cabin was deserted, dimly lighted by one shaded electric globe, beneath which the brass stair rails shone dully. I emerged on the deck, gratefully breathing in the fresh night air. As I stood there, a man descended the ladder from the bridge, entered the chart-house and switched on a light. In the



"Anything Going Wrong?" I Asked. momentary gleam I recognized the face of the second officer, and when he finally came out again, I crossed the deck

so as to intercept him. "Anything going wrong, Mr. Seeley?" I asked. "You have stopped the engines." He stared at me through the dark, blinded still perhaps by the glare of the chartroom, and unable to recognize my strange voice. Yet he was a yachtsman, trained above all to courtesy. "Nothing serious, sir," he announced, civilly enough. "The engines are new, and not well adjusted yet; a bit of shaft went wrong, and has to be repaired."

He turned away, but at that instant my eyes caught the flashing of a beacon away off to the southeast.

"What light is that out yonder, Mr. Seeley? We must be well beyond Eaton?"

He glanced in the direction indicated.

"Those white flashes? That is Oldfield point, sir. Are you acquainted with these waters?"

"Not intimately, although I retain some memory of the charts. I saw merchants' service on the old Atlas line."

"A fine line that," he acknowledged heartily. "I made my first voyage, as cabin boy, on the Mohawk. You are Mr. Hollis, I presume, sir. I overheard Mr. Carrington tell Captain Turner you were to be one of the party aboard. Well, good night, sir; I must make certain the watch is awake."

He touched his cap courteously, and disappeared beneath the shadow of the bridge, leaving me again alone, undecided whether to return below, or endeavor to walk off my sleeplessness. I scarcely know what idle curiosity led me to stroll along the narrow deck space, around the cabin to the lounging place at the stern. I stopped suddenly in surprise, staring across at the opposite rail, questioning the evidence of my own eyes. There, clearly outlined in the star glimmer, was plainly revealed the figure of a woman. Some instinct of fear, or, perchance, a slight sound of approach, must have apprised her of my near presence, for she turned instantly toward me, bending slightly forward, her face visible in the shadow; and then, before I could either move or speak, she fled along the port rail, vanishing immediately behind the protection of the cabin. I felt sure that her parted lips had uttered a quick exclamation, and her startled effort at escape was sufficient to urge me to pursue. Who could she be? Why was she here on board the Esmeralda? Above all, why should she be so eager to escape observation?

I ran forward across the deck, and quickly explored the passage between the cabin and rail. It was clearly visible in the bright starlight, but the swiftly fleeing figure had totally vanished.



He Lit a Cigar and Leaned Comfortably Back in His Chair.

I reached the steps of the companion, and gazed down through the glass doors. The light below revealed nothing, the cabin remained quiet and deserted. Not a shadow rewarded my search, either on the open deck, or below. Yet surely this was no dream, no hallucination, no mere vision of the night. The woman had actually been there; I had seen her plainly enough; had even heard the echo of her voice. There was then a woman on board—a woman who sought to hide from observation; who ventured on deck only when she thought it entirely deserted, and who fled in fright from discovery. I even felt a vague impression of her personality—she was young, slender of form, dressed in some shimmering gray stuff, a light, fluffy scarf concealing her hair.

There was nothing more to do then, although I prowled about for some time peering into dark corners, and turning the matter over and over in my mind. It must have been nearly daybreak before I fell asleep again in my own stateroom, nor did I awaken until the steward announced the last breakfast call, by a vigorous rapping on my door.

Carrington was seated alone at the table when I entered the cabin, lingering over his coffee, and he remained to keep me company, seemingly in a genial mood in spite of the delay.

He lit a cigar, and leaned comfortably back in his chair, looking amiably across at me through the blue haze of smoke.

"Rather nice bunch of fellows for a cruise, don't you think?"

"Quite so, although I only knew two previously."

"Yes—Fosdick and McCann. The

others are either bankers or brokers; fellows I meet every day or so in my business, you know. You have never done much in stocks?"

I shook my head. "My business education was in an entirely different school," I said quietly, ignoring his lead. "My father never speculated."

"I know his feelings on that subject," and Carrington chuckled, as though at a pleasant memory. "I never advocate speculation myself, but have never shown any qualms of conscience against betting on a sure thing. Perhaps we can discuss this later—before our voyage ends."

"This, then, is more of a business than a pleasure trip, sir?"

He laughed, watching the smoke rings rise lazily in the air.

"Well, hardly that, my boy. My hospitality is not to be so strictly limited. However, no doubt, we shall discuss some matters of business importance before our return. By the way, you have some idle money, I hear?"

"Not a large sum at present, although it is true I control some capital."

Carrington pushed back his chair and arose to his feet.

"That is of no immediate importance," he said carelessly. "But in my judgment, we are not far away from a great opportunity in finance, when it will pay well to be on the inside. It may interest you to know that a copper pool is being organized."

"I suspected as much; you have some news?"

"Exceedingly important news. Listen, Hollis, this is strictly confidential and worth your thinking it over. Only two men on board know the truth. There will be war in Europe—the biggest war ever known in history—within a month. Do you realize what that will mean, for instance, to copper?"

"I can imagine, sir. But if we are on the verge of such a sudden rise in market value, why do you leave New York for a long voyage?"

Carrington smiled, stroking his gray mustache.

"A natural question, perhaps coming from one not acquainted with my methods," he answered good-humoredly. "Because I prefer to be thought out of it. Everybody on the street is aware that I am at sea. I thus escape being interviewed, impounded for information. I am unsuspected of being where I can manipulate the market. The Esmeralda is equipped with a powerful wireless outfit, and we have on board the most expert operator to be procured in New York. I shall be in direct communication with my office every hour of the day and night. Tomorrow, once safely beyond Point Judith, I shall explain my plan; meanwhile, Hollis, think it over."

He turned toward the stairs, but I stopped him, more deeply interested in something else than in his rather vague

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financial scheme. The girl on board; was it possible she could have any connection with this affair?

"By the way," I spoke with an assumption of carelessness, "Mrs. Carrington, I understand, is at present in Europe?"

"Yes, in Switzerland; I have cabled her that she had better return as far as London at once."

"You seem very confident as to the truth of your advice."

"I am; I know the men who have reported to me."

"I see; and consequently there are no women on board?"

"Women?" He made a swift, expressive gesture. "Certainly not. I wrote you to that effect, I believe; at least I so instructed my secretary. This voyage is primarily a business affair. Why should you ask that question, Hollis? You have met all my guests."

I hesitated, yet determined to put him fully to the test. If he knew, either his face or manner would betray him, irrespective of his words.

"I imagined I saw a woman on the deck last night, when I ventured out to learn why the engine had stopped. No doubt it was an illusion."

"It surely must have been," his voice evidencing surprise, "for I give you my word there is not a woman on this yacht. What, to your mind, did the creature look like?"

"Nothing at all definite, a mere outline in the gleam of the stars. It may have been an odd combination of shadow, but, at the time, I felt convinced the vision was actually flesh and blood."

Carrington laughed heartily. "Dismiss it, my boy," he said, his hand gripping the brass rail. "We may indeed have ghost women on board, but no flesh and blood ones. Better join us on deck, and let the sun and wind clear your brain—perhaps the champagne caused the mischief?"

"Hardly," I answered, adopting his mood, "as I did not touch any. However, I will join you presently."

I watched him disappear through the companion, stirring my coffee nonchalantly enough. Yet I was not satisfied; Carrington did not know, possessed no suspicion; nevertheless I remained convinced there was a woman on board the Esmeralda.

(To Be Continued.)

subscribed to The Lancaster News.

**MOB KILLS NEGRO WHO SLEW POLICE OFFICER**

Six Others Wounded in Gun Battle With Desperado at Danville, Va.

Danville, Va., Oct. 15.—Police-man W. H. McGray, and Walter Clark, a negro, are dead, and six others wounded as the result of a gun battle here Friday, in which Clark barricaded himself in his house and held a crowd of nearly 3,000 at bay for two hours. The negro was killed by a volley as he tried to escape after the house had been fired.

McGray was killed when he attempted to arrest the negro, who had wounded his wife, Nannie Clark, then shot and probably fatally wounded Deputy City Sergt. Boisseau, who sought to recover the policeman's body.

A crowd soon collected, armed with all manner of weapons, and the Danville home guard, unarmed, was handicapped in its efforts to restore order. An attempt was made to dynamite the house. The negro kept up an incessant fusillade and three policemen, A. J. Perkinson, J. C. Lewis and Sergt. Martin and J. L. Wells, a contractor, were slightly wounded.

When the dynamite failed the house was set afire and Clark broke from the front door. More than fifty bullets pierced his body and the infuriated crowd dragged the corpse through the streets for a block before the officers got possession of it.

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