

The Run

ART DAVIES

The stillness that completely engulfed the sea on this warm August night was only broken by the constant wash of the bow wave and the steady pounding of the steam engine as it drove the ship to its destination. Stillness; silence, but what if this were broken by the lookout's deep-throated cry of "Yankee Cruiser off port bow?" All hands were constantly looking off to port and straining to hear the lookout's cry. But no cry came. No shout roused this ship into a beehive of activity. No shout wakened the few slumbering veterans of previous runs. No shout yet came to disturb this almost overpowering silence.

In the hold were all the supplies of war needed by the doomed South in her last fatal attempt to carry the war to the North. Austrian rifles, English cannon, French powder, and a myriad of shells and shot were stored in the small hold of this light and fast vessel. Of course, the luxury items were not overlooked for those who could afford them. Ribbon at near twenty dollars a yard, opium to relieve suffering of all types at five hundred dollars a pound, and various types of clothing; varying from two thousand dollars for a silk dress to five hundred dollars for a man's suit, and mens' shirts sold for seventy-five dollars each! However, before these items could be marketed they had to be carried through the strangling Union blockade.

The captain slumped over in his chair from fatigue, dozed intermittently during the hour before the moon would finally settle beneath the swells submerging the world in darkness. "The moon," he thought, "the most revealing and constant enemy which faces these men on the sea, but oh how that changes when they are on shore. Oh, that moonlit night in the garden with Kath, how that still burns in my memory. But then that rebuff from her father, 'who do you, a penniless ship owner, think you are, that you can make advances with my daughter? If I ever see you near my daughter again, I'll have you

shot like a common animal.' After this run though it will be different. I'll be the one with money, so he will possess only an empty title and useless lands, but if he still won't accept me, I'll have to call him out."

"Cap'n moon's down."

"Alright boson; limber up the guns and place the screen on the stack. Tell the chief I'll need all the speed he can get out of that old teakettle of his."

The pounding of the engine increased its tempo and the ship began increasing speed as it ran toward its destination, Charlestown. It wasn't long before the forest of masts was sighted by the lookout. The mighty hulk of the blockade fleet swinging peacefully at anchor. It had been three weeks since a ship was foolish enough to encounter this fleet. Perhaps that is why the lookouts were dozing and the cannon were under their protective tarpaulins.

The ship glided smoothly through the calm sea toward the protection of the stout-walled fort guarding the channel into the harbor. She was in the midst of the fleet before the cry was raised, and safely through it before the entire fleet realized what had happened. A sigh of relief and a deep cheer was raised through the ship as it came nearer and nearer to safety. Safety lay in that ugly, cold, but friendly fort.

"Well, helmsman your share of the profits of this voyage should keep you well stocked when we reach Jamaica again."

"Yessir, the money we rake in from these runs will take care of the crew and all concerned for many years. The devil take patriotism, I'll take cold hard cash."

Only three hundred yards till the protection of the fort.

Only two hundred yards that separated these men from the protection of the fort, but a rending crash and a crunching of wood on sand quickly sobered them. Co-ordinated with this disaster came the lookout's cry, "Iron-clad off starboard bow!" And the stillness was broken.