



MULGRUM AND THE ENGINEER.

The BLUE AND THE GRAY SERIES



BY OLIVER OPTIC

ON THE BLOCKADE

Adams, William Taylor

The Blue and the Gray Series

ON THE BLOCKADE

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

AUTHOR OF "THE ARMY AND NAVY SERIES" "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD" "THE
GREAT WESTERN SERIES" "THE WOODVILLE STORIES" "THE STARRY
FLAG SERIES" "THE BOAT-CLUB STORIES" "THE ONWARD
AND UPWARD SERIES" "THE YACHT-CLUB SERIES"
"THE LAKE SHORE SERIES" "THE RIVERDALE
STORIES" "THE BOAT-BUILDER SERIES"
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ON THE BLOCKADE.

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TO MY SON-IN-LAW,
SOL SMITH RUSSELL,
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
THOUGH RESIDING IN MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA,
WHO IS ALWAYS
"ON THE BLOCKADE" AGAINST MELANCHOLY, "THE BLUES,"
AND ALL SIMILAR MALADIES,

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

P R E F A C E

“ON THE BLOCKADE” is the third of “The Blue and the Gray Series.” Like the first and second volumes, its incidents are dated back to the War of the Rebellion, and located in the midst of its most stirring scenes on the Southern coast, where the naval operations of the United States contributed their full share to the final result.

The writer begs to remind his readers again that he has not felt called upon to invest his story with the dignity of history, or in all cases to mingle fiction with actual historic occurrences. He believes that all the scenes of the story are not only possible, but probable, and that just such events as he has narrated really and frequently occurred in the days of the Rebellion.

The historian is forbidden to make his work more palatable or more interesting by the intermixture of fiction with fact, while the story-writer, though required to be reasonably consistent with the spirit

and the truth of history, may wander from veritable details, and use his imagination in the creation of incidents upon which the grand result is reached. It would not be allowable to make the Rebellion a success, if the writer so desired, even on the pages of romance; and it would not be fair or just to ignore the bravery, the self-sacrifice, and the heroic endurance of the Southern people in a cause they believed to be holy and patriotic, as almost universally admitted at the present time, any more than it would be to lose sight of the magnificent spirit, the heroism, the courage, and the persistence, of the Northern people in accomplishing what they believed then, and still believe, was a holy and patriotic duty in the preservation of the Union.

Incidents not inconsistent with the final result, or with the spirit of the people on either side in the great conflict are of comparatively little consequence. That General Lee or General Grant turned this or that corner in reaching Appomattox may be important, but the grand historical tableau is the Christian hero, noble in the midst of defeat, disaster, and ruin, formally rendering his sword to the impassible but magnanimous con-

queror as the crowning event of a long and bloody war. The details are historically important, though overshadowed by the mighty result of the great conflict.

Many of the personages of the preceding volumes have been introduced in the present one, and the central figure remains the same. The writer is willing to admit that his hero is an ideal character, though his lofty tone and patriotic spirit were fully paralleled by veritable individuals during the war; and he is not prepared to apologize for the abundant success which attended the career of Christy Passford. Those who really struggled as earnestly and faithfully deserved his good fortune, though they did not always obtain it.

DORCHESTER, MASS., April 24, 1890.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THE UNITED STATES STEAMER BRONX	15
CHAPTER II.	
A DINNER FOR THE CONFEDERACY	26
CHAPTER III.	
THE INTRUDER AT THE CABIN DOOR	37
CHAPTER IV.	
A DEAF AND DUMB MYSTERY	48
CHAPTER V.	
A CONFIDENTIAL STEWARD	59
CHAPTER VI.	
A MISSION UP THE FOREMAST	70
CHAPTER VII.	
AN INTERVIEW ON THE BRIDGE	81
CHAPTER VIII.	
IMPORTANT INFORMATION, IF TRUE	92

	PAGE
CHAPTER IX.	
A VOLUNTEER CAPTAIN'S CLERK	103
CHAPTER X.	
THE UNEXPECTED ORDERS	114
CHAPTER XI.	
ANOTHER READING OF THE SEALED ORDERS	125
CHAPTER XII.	
A SAIL ON THE STARBOARD BOW	136
CHAPTER XIII.	
THE STEAMER IN THE FOG	147
CHAPTER XIV.	
THE CONFEDERATE STEAMER SCOTIAN	158
CHAPTER XV.	
THE SCOTIAN BECOMES THE OCKLOCKONEE	169
CHAPTER XVI.	
CAPTAIN PASSFORD'S FINAL ORDERS	180
CHAPTER XVII.	
A COUPLE OF ASTONISHED CONSPIRATORS	191
CHAPTER XVIII.	
A TRIANGULAR ACTION WITH GREAT GUNS	202

CONTENTS

13

CHAPTER XIX.

PAGE

ON THE DECK OF THE ARRAN 213

CHAPTER XX.

THE NEW COMMANDER OF THE BRONX. 224

CHAPTER XXI.

AN EXPEDITION IN THE GULF 235

CHAPTER XXII.

A NIGHT EXPEDITION IN THE BOATS 246

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VISIT TO A SHORE BATTERY 257

CHAPTER XXIV.

CAPTAIN LONLEY OF THE STEAMER HAVANA 268

CHAPTER XXV.

THE NEW ENGINEER OF THE PRIZE STEAMER 279

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BATTLE WITH THE SOLDIERS 290

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE INNOCENT CAPTAIN OF THE GARRISON 301

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BEARER OF DESPATCHES. 312

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXIX.	
THE NEW COMMANDER OF THE VIXEN	323
CHAPTER XXX.	
THE ACTION WITH A PRIVATEER STEAMER	334
CHAPTER XXXI.	
A SHORT VISIT TO BONNYDALE	345

ON THE BLOCKADE

CHAPTER I

THE UNITED STATES STEAMER BRONX

“SHE is a fine little steamer, father, without the possibility of a doubt,” said Lieutenant Passford, who was seated at the table with his father in the captain’s cabin on board of the Bronx. “I don’t feel quite at home here, and I don’t quite like the idea of being taken out of the *Bellevite*.”

“You are not going to sea for the fun of it, my son,” replied Captain Passford. “You are not setting out on a yachting excursion, but on the most serious business in the world.”

“I know and feel all that, father, but I have spent so many pleasant days, hours, weeks, and months on board of the *Bellevite*, that I am very sorry to leave her,” added Christy Passford, who had put on his new uniform, which was that of

master in the United States Navy; and he was as becoming to the uniform as the uniform was to him.

“You cannot well help having some regrets at leaving the *Bellevite*; but you must remember that your life on board of her was mostly in the capacity of a pleasure-seeker, though you made a good use of your time and of your opportunities for improvement; and that is the reason why you have made such remarkable progress in your present profession.”

“I shall miss my friends on board of the *Bellevite*. I have sailed with all her officers, and Paul Vapoor and I have been cronies for years,” continued Christy, with a shade of gloom on his bright face.

“You will probably see them occasionally, and if your life is spared you may again find yourself an officer of the *Bellevite*. But I think you have no occasion to indulge in any regrets,” said Captain Passford, imparting a cheerful expression to his dignified countenance. “Allow me to call your attention to the fact that you are the commander of this fine little steamer. Here you are in your own cabin, and you are still nothing but a boy, hardly eighteen years old.”

“If I have not earned my rank, it is not my fault that I have it,” answered Christy, hardly knowing whether to be glad or sorry for his rapid advancement. “I have never asked for anything; I did not ask or expect to be promoted. I was satisfied with my rank as a midshipman.”

“I did not ask for your promotion, though I could probably have procured for you the rank of master when you entered the navy. I do not like to ask favors for a member of my own family. I have wished you to feel that you were in the service of your country because it needs you, and not for glory or profit.”

“And I have tried to feel so, father.”

“I think you have felt so, my son; and I am prouder of the fact that you are a disinterested patriot than of the rank you have nobly and bravely won,” said Captain Passford, as he took some letters from his pocket, from which he selected one bearing an English postage stamp. “I have a letter from one of my agents in England, which, I think, contains valuable information. I have called the attention of the government to these employes of mine, and they will soon pass from my service to that of the naval department.

The information sent me has sometimes been very important.”

“I know that myself, for the information that came from that source enabled the Bellevite to capture the Killbright,” added Christy.

“The contents of the letter in my hand have been sent to the Secretary of the Navy; but it will do no harm for you to possess the information given to me,” continued Captain Passford, as he opened the letter. “But I see a man at work at the foot of the companion way, and I don’t care to post the whole ship’s company on this subject.”

“That is Pink Mulgrum,” said Christy with a smile on his face. “He is deaf and dumb, and he cannot make any use of what you say.”

“Don’t be sure of anything, Christy, except your religion and your patriotism, in these times,” added Captain Passford, as he rose and closed the door of the cabin.

“I don’t think there is much danger from a deaf mute, father,” said the young commander of the Bronx laughing.

“Perhaps not; but when you have war intelligence to communicate, it is best to believe that every person has ears, and that every door has a

keyhole. I learn from this letter that the Scotian sailed from Glasgow, and the Arran from Leith. The agent is of the opinion that both these steamers are fitted out by the same owners, who have formed a company, apparently to furnish the South with gunboats for its navy, as well as with needed supplies. In his letter my correspondent gives me the reason for this belief on his part."

"Does your agent give you any description of the vessels, father?" asked Christy, his eyes sparkling with the interest he felt in the information.

"Not a very full description, my son, for no strangers were allowed on board of either of them, for very obvious reasons; but they are both of less than five hundred tons burthen, are of precisely the same model and build, evidently constructed in the same yard. Both had been pleasure yachts, though owned by different gentlemen. Both sailed on the same day, the Scotian from Greenock and the Arran from Leith, March 3."

Christy opened his pocket diary, and put his finger on the date mentioned, counting up the days that had elapsed from that time to the present. Captain Passford could not help smiling at

the interest his son manifested in the intelligence he had brought to him. The acting commander of the Bronx went over his calculation again.

“It is fourteen days since these vessels sailed,” said he, looking at his father. “I doubt if your information will be of any value to me, for I suppose the steamers were selected on account of their great speed, as is the case with all blockade runners.”

“Undoubtedly they were chosen for their speed, for a slow vessel does not amount to much in this sort of service,” replied Captain Passford. “I received my letter day before yesterday, when the two vessels had been out twelve days.”

“If they are fast steamers, they ought to be approaching the Southern coast by this time,” suggested Christy.

“This is a windy month, and a vessel bound to the westward would encounter strong westerly gales, so that she could hardly make a quick passage. Then these steamers will almost certainly put in at Nassau or the Bermudas, if not for coal and supplies, at least to obtain the latest intelligence from the blockaded coast, and to pick up a pilot for the port to which they are bound. The

agent thinks it is possible that the Scotian and Arran will meet some vessel to the southward of the Isle of Wight that will put an armament on board of them. He had written to another of my agents at Southampton to look up this matter. It is a quick mail from the latter city to New York, and I may get another letter on this subject before you sail, Christy."

"My orders may come off to me to-day," added the acting commander. "I am all ready to sail, and I am only waiting for them."

"If these two steamers sail in company, as they are likely to do if they are about equal in speed, and if they take on board an armament, it will hardly be prudent for you to meddle with them," said Captain Passford with a smile, though he had as much confidence in the prudence as in the bravery of his son.

"What shall I do, father, run away from them?" asked Christy, opening his eyes very wide.

"Certainly, my son. There is as much patriotism in running away from a superior force as there is in fighting an equal, for if the government should lose your vessel and lose you and your ship's company, it would be a disaster of more or less consequence to your country."

“I hardly think I shall fall in with the Scotian and the Arran, so I will not consider the question of running away from them,” said Christy laughing.

“You have not received your orders yet, but they will probably require you to report at once to the flag-officer in the Gulf, and perhaps they will not permit you to look up blockade runners on the high seas,” suggested Captain Passford. “These vessels may be fully armed and manned, in charge of Confederate naval officers; and doubtless they will be as glad to pick up the Bronx as you would be to pick up the Scotian or the Arran. You don’t know yet whether they will come as simple blockade runners, or as naval vessels flying the Confederate flag. Whatever your orders, Christy, don’t allow yourself to be carried away by any Quixotic enthusiasm.”

“I don’t think I have any more than half as much audacity as Captain Breaker said I had. As I look upon it, my first duty is to deliver my ship over to the flag-officer in the Gulf; and I suppose I shall be instructed to pick up a Confederate cruiser or a blockade runner, if one should cross my course.”

“Obey your orders, Christy, whatever they may be. Now, I should like to look over the Bronx before I go on shore,” said Captain Passford. “I think you said she was of about two hundred tons.”

“That was what they said down south ; but she is about three hundred tons,” replied Christy, as he proceeded to show his father the cabin in which the conversation had taken place.

The captain's cabin was in the stern of the vessel, according to the orthodox rule in naval vessels. Of course it was small, though it seemed large to Christy who had spent so much of his leisure time in the cabin of the Florence, his sail-boat on the Hudson. It was substantially fitted up, with little superfluous ornamentation ; but it was a complete parlor, as a landsman would regard it. From it, on the port side opened the captain's state room, which was quite ample for a vessel no larger than the Bronx. Between it and the pantry on the starboard side, was a gangway leading from the foot of the companion way, by which the captain's cabin and the ward room were accessible from the quarter deck.

Crossing the gangway at the foot of the steps,

Christy led the way into the ward room, where the principal officers were accommodated. It contained four berths, with portières in front of them, which could be drawn out so as to inclose each one in a temporary state room. The forward berth on the starboard side was occupied by the first lieutenant, and the after one by the second lieutenant, according to the custom in the navy. On the port side, the forward berth belonged to the chief engineer, and the after one to the surgeon. Forward of this was the steerage, in which the boatswain, gunner, carpenter, the assistant engineers, and the steward were berthed. Each of these apartments was provided with a table upon which the meals were served to the officers occupying it. The etiquette of a man-of-war is even more exacting than that of a drawing room on shore.

Captain Passford was then conducted to the deck where he found the officers and seamen engaged in their various duties. Besides his son, the former owner of the *Belleviste* was acquainted with only two persons on board of the *Bronx*, Sampson, the engineer, and Flint, the acting first lieutenant, both of whom had served on board of the steam yacht. Christy's father gave them a

hearty greeting, and both were as glad to see him as he was to greet them. Captain Passford then looked over the rest of the ship's company with a deeper interest than he cared to manifest, for they were to some extent bound up with the immediate future of his son. It was not such a ship's company as that which manned the *Bellevite*, though composed of much good material. The captain shook hands with his son, and went on board of his boat. Two hours later he came on board again.