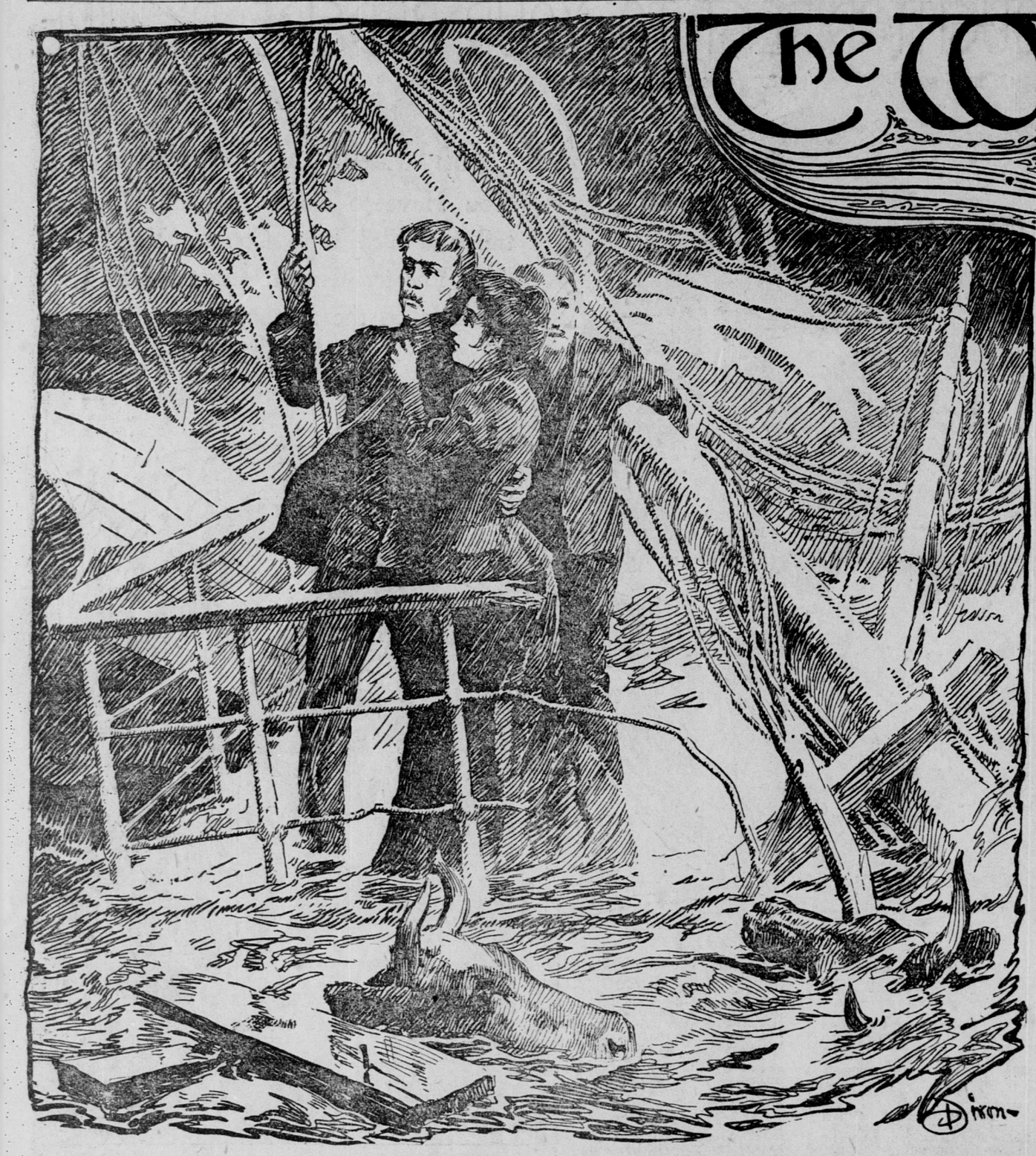
The Wreck of the Cattle Boat

by Cutcliffe Hyne



THE THREE CLUNG TOGETHER AMID THE WRECKAGE.

THERE was considerable trouble and risk in bringing the lifeboat up alongside, but it must be granted that she was very unhandy.

The gale that had blown them out into the Atlantic had moderated, certainly, though there was still a considerable breeze blowing; but the sea was running as high as ever, and all Captain Kettle's skill was required to prevent the boat from being incontinently swamped. McTodd and the two Portuguese bailed incessantly, but the boat was always half water-logged, in fact, from constitutional defects she had made very wet weather of it all through the blow.

It was the part of the steamer to have borne down and given the lifeboat a lee in which she could have been more readily handled, and three times the larger vessel made an attempt to do this, but without avail. Three times she worked round in a wallowing circle, got to windward, and distributed a smell of farmyard over the rugged furrows of ocean, and then lost her place again before she could drift down and give the smaller craft shelter. Three times did the crew of the liftboat, with maritime point and fluency, curse the incompetence of the rust-streaked steamer and all her complement.

"By James!" said Kettle, savagely, after the third attempt, "are they all farmers on that ship? I've had a nigger steward that knew more about handling a vessel."

Meanwhile the clumsy tramp steamer had gone round in a jagged circle of a mile's diameter and was climbing back to position again over the hills and dales of ocean. She rolled and she pitched and she wallowed among the seas, and to the lay mind she would have seemed helplessness personified. But to the expert eye she showed defects in her handling with every sheer she took among the angry waste of waters.

"Old man and the mates must be staying down below out of the wet," said Kettle, contemptuously, as he gazed.

But the cattle steamer, if not skillfully handled, at any rate this time had more luck. She worked her way to windward again, and then fell off into the trough, squattering down almost out of sight one minute, and, in fact, showing little of herself except a couple of stumpy, untidy masts, and a brine-washed smokestack above the sea scape, and being heaved up clear almost the next second, a picture of rust streaks and yellow, spouting scuppers.

Both craft drifted to leeward before the wind, but the steamer offered more surface and moved the quicker, which was the object of the maneuver. It seemed to those in the lifeboat that they were not going to be missed this time, and so they lowered away their sodden canvas, shipped the tholepins and got out their oars. The two Portuguese firemen did not assist at first, preferring to sit in a semi-dazed condition on the wet floor gratings, but McTodd and Kettle thumped them about the head, after the time-honored custom, till they turned to, and so presently the lifeboat, under three straining oars, was holding up toward her would-be deliverer.

A man on the cattle-boat's upper bridge was exhibiting himself as a very model of nervous incapacity, and two, at any rate, of the castaways in the lifeboat were watching him with grim scorn.

"Keeping them on the dance in the engine-room, isn't he?" said McTodd. "He's rung that telegraph bell fifteen different ways this last minute."

"That man isn't fit to skipper anything that hasn't got a tow rope made fast ahead," said Kettle, contemptuously. "He hasn't the nerve of a pound of putty."

"I'm thinking we shall lose the boat. They'll never get her aboard in one piece."

"If we get among their cowpens with our bare lives we shall be lucky. They're going to heave us a line. Stand by to catch it, quick."

The line was thrown and caught. Other lines were thrown by the hands who stood against the rail above, and the four men in the swamping boat each seized an end. Half climbing, half hoisted from above, they made their way up the rusted plating and the greedy waves from underneath sucked and clamored at their heels.

The cattle boat's mate, who had been assisting their arrival, sorted them into castes with ready perception the moment they reached deck. "Now you two dagoes," he said to the two Portuguese, "get away forrard—port side—and bid some of our firemen to give you a bunk. I'll tell the steward to bring you along a tot of rum directly." He clapped a friendly hand on McTodd's shoulder. "Bo's'n," he said, "take this gentleman down to the messroom and pass the word to one of the engineers to come and give him a welcome." And then he turned as to an equal and shook Kettle by the hand. "Very glad to welcome you aboard, old fellow—beg pardon, 'captain,' I should have said; didn't see the lace on your sleeve before. Come below with me, captain, and I'll fix you up with some dry things outside, and some wet things in, before we have any further chatter."

"Mr. Mate," said Kettle, "you're very polite, but hadn't I better go up on the bridge and say 'howdy' to the skipper first?"

The mate of the cattle boat grinned and tucked his arm inside Captain Kettle's and dragged him off with kindly force toward the companionway. "Take a synch from me, captain, and don't. The old man's in such a mortal fear for the ship that he's fair crying with it. If he'd had his way, I don't fancy he'd have seen your boat at all. He said it was suicide to try and pick you up with such a sea running. But the second mate and I put in some ugly talk, and so he just had to do it. Here's the companion. Step inside and I'll shut the door."

"Pretty sort of captain to let his mates boss him!"

"Quite agree with you, captain; quite agree with you all the way. But that's what's done on this ship, and there's no getting over it. It's not to my liking either; I'm an old Conway boy, and was brought up to respect discipline. However, I daresay you'll see for yourself how things run before we dump you back on dry mud again. Now here we are at my room, and there's a change of clothes in that drawer beneath the bed, and underwear below the settee here. You and I are much of a build, and the kit's quite at your service till your own's dry again."

"Well," contiqued the mate, as he watched Kettle, "you may thank you're best little star that you're only here as a passenger. The grub's beastly, the ship stinks, the cook's a fool, and everything's as uncomfortable as can be. But there's one fine amusement ahead of you, and that's try and cheer up the other passenger."

"Stowaway?"

"No; bona fide passenger, if you can imagine any one being mug enough to book a room on a foul, cattle-loaded tramp like this. But I guess it was because she was hard up. She was a governess, or something of that sort, in Buesnos Ayres, lost her berth, and wanted to get back again cheap. I guess we could afford to cut rates and make a profit there."

"Poor lady."

"I've not seen much of her myself. The second mate and I are most of the crew of this ship, as the old man objects to our driving the regular deckhands, and when we're not at work we're asleep. I can't stop to introduce you. You must chum on. Her name's Carnegie."

"Miss Carnegie?" Kettle repeated. "That sounds familiar. Does she write poetry?"

The mate yawned. "Don't know. Never asked her. But perhaps she does."

The mate went off to his room then, turned in all standing, and was promptly asleep. Kettle, with memories of the past refreshed, took paper and a scratchy pen and fell to concocting verse.

He wondered, and at the same time he half dreaded whether this was the same Miss Carnegie whom he had known before. In days past she had given him a commission to liberate her lover from the French penal settlement of Cayenne. With infinite danger and difficulty he had wrenched the man free from his warders, and then, finding him a worthless fellow, had by force married him to an old Jamaican negress, and sent the girl their marriage lines as a token of her release. He had had no word or sign from her since, and was in some dread now lest she might bitterly resent the liberty he had taken in meddling so far in her affairs.

The squalid meal entitled tea came on, and he had to move his papers. A grimy steward spread a dirty cloth, wetted it liberally with water, and shipped fiddles to try and induce the tableware to keep in place despite the rolling. The steward mentioned that none of the officers would be down, that the two passengers would meal together.

Captain Kettle watched the door with a haggard face. He was beginning to realize that an emotion was stirred within him that should have had no place in his system. He told himself sternly that he was a married man with a family; that he had a deep affection for both his wife and children; that, in cold fact, he had seen Miss Carnegie in the flesh but once before. But there was no getting over the memory that she made poetry, a craft that he adored, and he could not forget that she had already lived in his mind for more months than he dared count.

His conscience took him by the ear, and sighed out the word love. On the instant all his pride of manhood was up in arms, and he rejected the imputation with scorn; and then after some thought formulated his liking for the girl in the term interest.

Then in the distance he heard her approaching. He wiped the moisture from his face with the mate's pocket handkerchief. Above the din of the seas and the noises from the cattle pens outside, he could make out the rustle of draperies and the uncertain footsteps of some one painfully making a way along hand over hand against the bulkheads. A bunch of fingers appeared round the jamb of a door, slender, white fingers, one of them decked with a queer old ring which he had seen just once before, and had pictured a thousand times since. And then the girl herself stepped out into the cabin, swaying to the roll of the ship.

She nodded to him with instant recognition. "It was you they picked up out of the boat? Oh, I am so glad you are safe."

Kettle strode out toward her on his steady sea legs and stood before her, still not daring to take her hand. "You have forgiven me?" he murmured. "What I did was a liberty, I know; but if I had not liked you so well, I should not have dared to do it."

She cast down her eyes and flushed. "You are the kindest man I ever met," she said. "The very kindest." She took his hand in both hers, and gripped it with nervous force.

"You said you liked poetry," the girl whispered shyly, when the first opportunity came. "I wrote the most heartfelt verses that ever came from me over that noble thing you tried to do for a poor stranger like me."

Captain Kettle blushed like a maid. "For one of the magazines?" he asked.

She shook her head sadly. "It was not published when I left England, and it had been sent back to me from four magazine offices. That was nothing new. They never would take any of my stuff."

It appeared that Miss Carnegie's father had died since she and Kettle had last met, and the girl had found herself left almost destitute. She had been lured out to Buenos Ayres by an advertisement, but without finding employment; and, sick at heart, had bought, with the last of her scanty store of money, a cheap passage home in this cattle boat. She would land in England entirely destitute; and although she did not say this, spoke cheerfully of the future; in fact, Kettle was torn with pity for her state. But what, he asked himself with fierce scorn, could he do? He was penniless himself; he had a wife and family depending on him; and who was he to take this young, unmarried girl under his charge?

"Do your three mates run this ship, captain?" asked Kettle, at his first and only interview with the cattle boat's captain.

"They are handy fellows," the captain answered.

"If you should ask me, I should call them poor drivers. What for do they put in all the work themselves when there are that mob of deckhands and cattle-hands standing around doing the gentlemen as though they were in the gallery of a theater?"

"There was some misunderstanding when the crew were shipped. They say they never signed on to handle dead cattle."

"I've seen those kind of misunderstandings before, captain, and I've started in to smooth them away."

"Well?" said the captain of the cattle boat.

"Oh, with me," said Kettle, truculently, "they straightened out so soon as ever I began to hit. If your mates knew their business they'd soon have that crew in hand again."

"I don't allow my mates to knock the men about. To give them their due they wanted to; they were brought up in a school which would probably suit you, captain—all three of them; but I don't permit that sort of thing. I am a Christian man and I will not order my fellow men to be struck. If the fellows refuse their duty, it lies between them and their consciences."

"As if an old sailor had a conscience!" murmured Kettle to himself. "Well, captain, I'm no small piece of a Christian myself, but I was taught that whatever my hand findeth to do to do it with all my might, and I guess bashing a lazy crew comes under that head."

"I don't want either your advice or your theology."

"If I wasn't a passenger here," said Kettle, "I'd like to tell you what I thought of your seamanship, and your notion of making a master's ticket respected. But I'll hold my tongue on that. As it is I think I ought just to say I don't consider this ship's safe, run the way she is."

The captain of the cattle boat flushed darkly. He jerked his head toward the ladder. "Get down off this bridge," he said.

"What!"

"You hear me! Get down off my bridge. If you've learnt anything about your profession, you must know this is private up here, and no place for blooming passengers."

Kettle glared and hesitated. He was not used to receiving orders of this description, and the innovation did not please him. But for once in his life he submitted. Miss Carnegie was sitting under the lee of the deckhouse aft, watching him, and somehow or other he did not choose to have a scene before her. It was all part of this strange new feeling which had come over him.

He gripped his other impulses tight and went and sat beside her.

Perhaps of all the human freight that the cattle boat carried, Mr. McTodd was the only one person entirely happy. He had no watch to keep, no work to do; the messroom was warm, stuffy and entirely to his taste; liquor was plenty, and the official engineers of the ship were Scotch and argumentative. He never came on deck for a whiff of fresh air; never knew a moment's tedium; he lived in a pleasant atmosphere of broad dialect, strong tobacco and toasting oil, and thoroughly enjoyed himself; though when the moment of trial came, and his thews and sinews and energies were wanted for the saving of human life, he quickly showed that this Capua had in no way sapped his efficiency.

The steamer had carried foul weather with her all the way across the Atlantic from the River Platte, as though it were a curse inflicted for the cruelty of her stevedores. There is no doubt that vigilance was dangerously slackened.

A fog, too, which came down to cover the sea, stopped out all view of the sun, and compelled them for three days to depend on dead reckoning; and (after the event) it was said a strong current set the steamer unduly to the westward.

Anyway, be the cause what it may, Kettle was pitched violently out of his bunk in the deep of one night, just after two bells, and from the symptoms which loudly advertised themselves, it required no expert knowledge to tell that the vessel was beating her bottom out on rocks to the accompaniment of a murderously heavy sea. The engines stopped, steam began to blow off noisily from the escapes, and what with that and the cries of men and the clashing of seas and the beating of iron and the beast cries from the cattle decks, the din was almost enough to split the ear. And then the steam siren burst out into one vast bellow of pain, which drowned all the other noises as though they had been children's whispers.

Kettle slid on coat and trousers over his pajamas, and went and thumped at a door at the other side of the alleyway.

"Miss Carnegie?"

"Yes."

"Dress quickly."

"I am dressing, captain."

"Get finished with it, and then wait, I'll come for you when it's time."

It is all very well to be cool on these occasions, but sometimes the race is to the prompt. Captain Kettle made his way up on deck against a green avalanche of water, which was cascading down the companionway. No shore was in sight, the ship had backed off after she had struck and was now rolling heavily in a deep trough. She was low in the water and every second wave swept her.

No one seemed to be in command. A dim light showed Kettle one lifeboat wrecked in the davits, and a disorderly mob of men trying to lower the other. But some one let go the stern fall so that the boat shot down perpendicularly, and the next wave smashed the lower half of it into splinters. The frenzied crowd left it to try the port quarter boat and Kettle raced them across the streaming decks and got just to the davits. He plucked a greenheart belaying pin from the rail and laid about him viciously.

"Back, you scum," he shouted, "get back or I'll smash in every face among you. Good Lord, isn't there a mate or a man left on this stinking farmyard? Am I to keep off all this two-legged cattle by myself?"

They fought on, the black water swirling waist deep among them with every roll, the siren bellowing for help overhead, and the ship sinking under their feet; and gradually, with the frenzy of despair, the men drove Kettle back against the rail while others of them cast off the falls of the quarterboat's tackles preparatory to letting her drop. But then out of the darkness up came McTodd and the steamer's mate, both shrewd hitters and men not afraid to use their skill, and once more the tables were turned.

The other quarterboat had been lowered and swamped; this boat was the only one remaining.

"Now, Mac," said Kettle, "help the mate take charge, and murder every one that interferes. Get the boat in the water and fend off. I'll be off below and fetch up Miss Carnegie. We must put some hurry in it. The old box hasn't much longer to swim. Take the lady ashore and see she comes to no harm."

"Oh, ay," said McTodd, "and we'll keep a seat for yersel', skipper."

"You needn't bother," said Kettle. "I take no man's place in this sort of a tea party." He splashed off across the streaming decks, and found the cattle boat's captain sheltering under the lee of the companion wringing his hands. "Out, you blitherer," he shouted, "and save your mangy life. Your ship's gone now; you can't play hash with her any more." After which pleasant speech he worked his way below, half swimming, half wading, and once more knocked at Miss Carnegie's door. Even in this moment of extremity he did not dream of going in unasked.

She came out to him in the half-swamped alleyway fully dressed. "Is there any hope?" she asked.

"We'll get ashore, don't you fear."

He clapped an arm around her waist and drew her strongly on through the dark and the swirling water toward the foot of the companion. "Excuse me, miss," he said, "this is not familiarity. But I have got the firmer sealegs, and we must hurry."

They pressed up the stair, battling with great green cascades of water, and gained the dreadful turmoil on deck. A few weak stars gleamed out above the wind, and showed the black wave-tops dimly. Already some of the cattle had been swept overboard, and were swimming about like horned beasts of a nightmare. The din of surf came to them among other noises, but no shore was visible. The steamer had backed off the reef on which she had struck, and was foundering in deep water. It was indeep a time for hurry. It was plain that she had very few more minutes to swim.

Each sea now made a clean breach over her and a passage about the decks was a thing of infinite danger. But Kettle was resourceful and strong and he had a grip round Miss Carnegie and a hold on something solid when the waters drenched on him, and he contrived never to be wrested entirely from his hold.

But when he had worked his way aft, a disappointment was there ready for him. The quarterboat was gone. McTodd stood against one of the davits, cool and philosophical as ever.

"You infernal Scotchman, you've let them take away the boat from you." Kettle snarled. "I should have thought you could have kept your end up with a mangy crowd like that."

"Use your eyes," said the engineer. "The boat's in the wash below there, at the end of the tackles with her side stove in. She drowned the three men that were lowered in her because they'd no sense enough to fend off."

"That comes of setting a lot of farmers to work a steamboat."

"Aweel," said McTodd, "steamers have been lost before, and I have it in mind, captain, that you've helped."

"By James, if you don't carry a civil tongue, you drunken Geordie, I'll knock some teeth down to cover it."

"Oh, I owed you that," said McTodd; "but now we're quits. I bided here, Captain Kettle, because I thought maybe you'd like to swim the leddy off to the shore, and at that I can bear a useful hand."

"Mac," said Kettle, "I take back what I said about you're being Scotch. You're a good soul—" He turned to the girl, still shouting to make his voice carry above the clash of the seas and the bellow of the siren and the noises of the dying ship. "It's our only chance, miss, swimming. The lifebuoys from the bridge are all gone. I looked. The hands will have taken them. There'll be a lot of timber floating about when she goes down, and we'll be best clear of that. Will you trust to us?"

"I trust you in everything," she said.

Deeper and deeper the steamer sank in her wallow. The lower decks were swamped by this, and the miserable cattle were either drowned in their stalls or washed out of her. There was no need for the three to jump. They just let go their hold, and the next incoming wave swept them clear of the steamer's spar deck and spurned them one hundred yards from her side.

They found themselves among a herd of of floating cattle, some drowned, some swimming frenziedly; and with the inspiration of the moment laid hold of a couple of beasts which were tangled together by a halter, and so supported themselves without further exertion. It was no use swimming for the present. They could not tell which way the shore lay. And it behooved them to reserve all their energies for the morning, so well as the numbing cold and the water would let them.

Of a sudden the bellow of the steamer's siren ceased, and a pang went through them as though they had lost a friend. Then came a dull, muffled explosion. And then a huge, ragged shape loomed up through the night like some vast monument, and sank swiftly straight downward out of sight beneath the black, tumbled sea.

"Poor old girl," said McTodd, spitting out the sea water, "they'd a fine keg of whisky down in her messroom."

"Poor devil of a skipper," said Kettle, "it's to be hoped he's drowned out of harm's way, or it'll take lying to keep him any rags of his ticket."

The talk died out of them after that, and the miseries of the situation closed in. The water was cold, but the air was piercing, and so they kept their bodies submerged, each holding on to the bovine raft, and each man sparing a few fingers to keep a grip on the girl. One of the beasts they clung to quickly drowned; the other, strange to say, kept its nostrils above water, swimming strongly, and in the end came alive to the shore, the only four-footed occupant of the steamer to be saved.

At the end of each minute it seemed to them that they were too bruised and numb to hang on another sixty seconds; and yet the next minute found them still alive and dreading its successor. The sea moaned around them, mourning the dead; the fleet of drowned cattle surged helplessly to this way and to that, bruising them with rude collisions; and the chill bit them to the bone, mercifully numbing their pain and anxiety. Long before the dawn the girl had sunk into a stupor, and was only held from sinking by the nervous fingers of the men; and then the men themselves were merely automata, completing their task with a legacy of will.

When from somewhere out of the morning mists a fisherboat sailed up, manned by ragged, kindly Irish, all three were equally lost to consciousness and all three were hauled over the gunwale in one continuous, dripping string. The grip of the men's fingers had endured too long to be loosened for a sudden call such as that.

They were taken ashore and tended with all the care poor homes could give, and the men, used to hardships, recovered with a dose of warmth and sleep.

Miss Carnegie took longer to recover, and in fact for a week lay very near to death. Kettle stayed on in the village, making almost hourly inquiries for her. He ought to have gone away to seek fresh employment; he ought to have gone back to his wife and children, and he upbraided himself bitterly for his neglect of these duties. But still he could not tear himself away. For the future—well, he dreaded to think what might happen in the future.

But at last the girl was able to sit up and see him, and he visited her, showing all the deference an ambassador might offer to a queen. I may go so far as to say that he went into the cottage quite infatuated; he came out of it disillusioned.

She listened to his tale of the wreck with interest and surprise. She was almost startled to hear that others, including the captain and two of the mates, were saved from the disaster besides themselves, but at the same time unfeignedly pleased. And she was pleased also to hear that Kettle was subpenaed to give evidence before the forthcoming inquiry.

"I am glad of that," sh said, "because I know you will speak with a free mind. You have told me so many times how incompetent the captain was, and now you will be able to tell it to the proper authorities."

Kettle looked at her blankly. "But that was different," he said. "I can't say to them what I said to you."

"Why not? Look what misery and suffering and loss of life the man has caused. He isn't fit to command a ship."

"But, miss," said Kettle, "it's his living. He's been brought up to seafaring, and he isn't fit for anything else. You wouldn't have me send out the man to starve? Besides I'm a shipmaster myself, and you wouldn't have me try to take away another master's ticket? The cleverest captain afloat might meet with misfortune, and he's always got to think of that when he's put up to give evidence against his fellows."

"Well, what are you going to do, then?"

"Oh, we've got together a tale, and when the old man is put up on his trial the mates and I will stick to it through thick and thin. You can bet that we are not going to swear away his ticket."

"His ticket?"

"Yes; his master's certificate, his means of livelihood."

"I think it's wrong," she said, excitedly, "criminally wrong. And besides, you said you didn't like the man."

"I don't. I dislike him cordially. But that's nothing to do with the case. I've my own honor to think of, Miss. How'd I feel if I went about knowing I'd done my best to ruin a brother captain for good and always?"

"You are wrong," she repeated, vehemently. "The man is incompetent by your own saying, and, therefore, he should suffer."

Kettle's heart chilled.

"Miss Carnegie," he said. "I am disappointed in you. I thought from your poetry that you had feelings; I thought you had charity, but I find that you are cold."

"And you," she retorted, "you that I had set up for myself as an ideal of most of the manly virtues, do you think I feel no disappointment when I hear that you are deliberately proposing to be a liar?"

"I am no liar," he said sullenly. "I have most faults, but not that. This is different; you do not understand. It is not lying to defend one's fellow shipmaster before an inquiry board."

The girl turned to the pillow in her chair and hid her face. "Oh, go," she said, "go! I wish I had never met you. I thought you were so good and so brave and so honest, and when it comes to the pinch you are just like the rest. Go! Go! I wish I tnought I could ever forget you!"

"You say you don't understand," said Kettle. "I think you deliberately won't understand, miss. You remember that I said I was disappointed in you, and I stick to that now. You make me remember that I have got a wife and family I am fond of. You make me ashamed I have not gone to them before."

He went to the door and opened it. "But I do not think I shall ever forget," he said, "how much I cared for you once. Good-by, miss."

"Good-by," she sobbed from her pillow. "I wish I could think you are right, but perhaps it is best as it is."

In the village street outside was McTodd, clothed in rasping serge and inclined to be sententious. "They've whisky here," he said, with a jerk of the thumb. "Irish whisky that's got a smoky taste that's rather alluring when once you've got over the first dislike. I'm out o' siller mysel' or I'd stand you a glass, but if ye be in funds I could guide ye to the place."

Kettle was half tempted, but with a wrench he said "No," adding that if he once started he might not know when to stop.

"Quite right," said the engineer, "you're quite (hic) right, skipper. A man with an inclination to level himself with the beasts that perish should always be abstemious."

He sat against a wayside fence and prepared for sleep. "Like me," he added, solemnly, and shut his eyes.

"No," said Kettle to himself, "I won't forget it that way. I guess I can manage without. She pretty well cured me herself, and a sight of the missis will do the rest."

HOW CANNIBALS SMOKE OUT A WITCH.

A FIRM belief in witchcraft is one of the characteristics that, despite all civilizing influences, is still common to all South African tribes. The Zulus are probably the most intelligent race of blacks to be found to-day on the globe. Five hundred thousand of them dwell just north of the colony of Natal, which the English, and of late years, the Americans, have developed, until it is known as the garden spot of Africa. The Zulus come to Durban, the capital, learn the customs, laws and religion of the whites, and then—return to their native heath and put to death some alleged witch. They will brook no interference in this practice. When a prominent chief is taken ill it is attributed to the evil influence of the "Amaggwira" and his permission is always asked to perform the "umhlaho" (smelling out for witchcraft). We were tramping (writes an eye-witness) in the southeastern part of Zululand some months ago, and put up one night at the house of the only white man in the wide radius of country. He kept a little store of general supplies, such as agricultural tools, sugar, salt and bread. About dusk the natives began dropping in, the men wearing a cloak made of leopard skin and carrying an assegai and a shield, the women clothed in little more than a breechcloth.

We learned that there was to be a "smelling out" next day to discover who was responsible for the cattle dying at a village about five miles to the north, and made an agreement with a young chief to guide us there.

We reached the village about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and found the performance already in progress. In the middle of the circle were a dozen men togged out with the leaves of palm trees and the foliage of a cereal called mealies, like our corn.

Six of them had buffalo hide drums suspended from the shoulder; the others carried bundles of assegais. At a signal from one there was a simultaneous "bang" and clatter of the javelins, whereupon the circle began to move around slowly, the women crooning a weird dirge and clapping their hands the while. This is called "Ukwombela," or getting the first line on the witch. Suddenly there was a movement in one part of the circle, and through the line sprang the priest, his face streaked with white paint and wearing a pair of horns. He began to go through the most extraordinary contortions, striking himself with a knobkerry and spinning round on one foot. The women became more violent all the time, screaming to the "Imishologo" (spirits of their ancestors) to reveal the witch. When the priest had wrought himself up to the point where he seemed about to collapse he abruptly stopped and retired to his assistants. "He is naming the witch," explained our guide, his eyes strained, while he fairly gasped for breath. The silence was intense and the moment thrillingly tragic.

The priest walked into the middle of the circle again to the beating of the drums, and looking all about the circle twice, finally fixed his gaze in the opposite direction from us. Every eye followed it. We could not hear what he said, but that part of the circle fell back, leaving one poor wretch standing alone.

After this the whole camp pounced on the witch and tore off his charms, bracelets, his cuross or shield, and took his weapons. At the same time a chief came over to us and said that "white man has no right to stay here longer," and suggested to us to leave immediately.

Don't forget that worry kills as surely as consumption. The only difference is that you can break yourself of the worry habit.

Fleet Surgeon—There doesn't seem much wrong with you, my man. What's the matter?
A. B.—Well, sir, it's like this, sir. I eats well, an' I drinks well, an' I sleeps well; but when I sees a job of work—there I'm all of a tremble!