

EDWARD BROWN, STOKER.

CONTINUED.

'Listen to me, doctor,' I say. 'A score of times I might have given up and been drowned, but I made a fight for it and was saved. Now I mean to make a fight for it right here, for the sake of the wife and bairns. I don't mean to die, doctor, without a struggle. I believe this here, that life is given to us all as a treasure to keep. We might throw it away by our folly at any time; but there's hundreds of times we might preserve it, and we never know when we can save it till we try. Give's a drink of that water.'

He held the glass to my lips and I took a big draught, and went on, he seemed all the time to be stopping to humor me in my madness.

'That's better, doctor,' I say. 'Now look here, sir, speaking as one that has sailed the seas, it's a terrible stormy time with me. There's a lee shore close at hand, the fires are drowned out, and, unless we can get up a bit of sail, there's no chance for me. Now, then, doctor, can you get up a bit of sail?'

'I will go and send you something that will quiet you,' he said, rising.

'Thanky, doctor,' I says, smiling to myself. 'And now, look here. I'm not going to give up till the last, and when that last comes, and the ship's going down, why, I shall have a try if I can't swim to safety. If that fails, and I can really feel that it is to be, why, I hope I shall go down into the great deep calmly, like a hopeful man, praying that Somebody above will forgive me all I have done amiss, and stretch out His fatherly hand to my little ones.'

He went away and I dropped to sleep, worn out with my exertion.

When I awoke, Polly was standing by the bedside watching me, with a bottle and a glass on the table.

As soon as she saw my eyes open, she shook up the stuff and poured it into a wine glass.

'Is that what the doctor sent?' I says. 'Yes, dear; you were to take it, directly.'

'Then I shan't take it,' I says. 'He's give me up, and the stuff's only to keep me quiet. Polly, you go and make me some beef-tea, and make it strong.'

She looked horrified, poor girl, and was about to beg me to take hold of the rotten life-belt he'd sent me, when I held out my shaking hand for it, took the glass, and let it tit over—there was only about a couple of teaspoonfuls in it—and the stuff fell on the carpet.

I saw the tears come in her eyes, but she said nothing—only put down the glass, and ran out to make beef-tea.

The doctor didn't come till late next day, and I was lying very still and drowsy as if asleep, but it was awake enough to hear him whisper to Polly, "Sinking fast;" and I heard her give such a heart-broken sob that, as the next great wave came on the sea where I was floating, I struck out with all my might, and rose over it, and floated gently down the other side.

And it was a grim, hard fight; a dozen times I could have given it up, tumbled my arms, and said good-by to the dear old watching face safe on shore; but a look at that always cheered me, and I fought on again and again, till at last the sea seemed to go down, and in utter weariness, I turned on my back to float restfully with the tide bearing shoreward, till I touched the sands, crept up them, and fell down worn out, to sleep in the sun—safe!

That's a curious way of putting it, you may say, but it seems natural to me to mix it up with the things of seafaring life, and the manner in which I have seen so many fight hard for their lives. It was just like striving in the midst of a storm to me, and when at last I fell into a deep sleep, I felt surprised-like to find myself in my own bed, with Polly watching by me; and when I stretched out my hand and took her, she let loose that which she had kept hidden from me before, and falling on her knees by my bedside, she sobbed for joy.

'As much beef-tea and brandy as you can get him to take,' the doctor says that afternoon; and it wasn't long before I got from slops to solids, and then was sent, as I told you, into the country to get strong, while the doctor got no end of praise for the cure he made.

I never said a word though, even to Polly, for he did his best; and I don't think any medicine would have cured me then.

I was saying a little while back that I pulled my wife regularly out of the hands of death, and that of course was when we were both quite young, though for the matter of that, I don't feel much different and can't well see the change. That was in one of the Cape steamers that I first took the stoking. They were little, ramshackle sort of boats in those days, and how it was that more weren't lost, it puzzles me. It was more due to the weather than the make or finding of the ships, I can tell you, that they used to find their way safe to port, and yet the passengers, poor things, knowing no better, used to take passage, by, and make a voyage too, from which they never got back.

To be Continued.

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AT THREE O'CLOCK,

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FENTON T. NEWBERRY,

Manager

Feb. 9, 1878—pat law till meeting

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