

POETRY.

THE WASTE OF WAR

Give me the gold that war has cost, Before this peace expanding day, The wasted skill, the labor lost, The mental treasure thrown away...

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

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was being lowered from the davits, I made a jump, caught the bulwarks with my hand, and climbed back on board, just as the boat kissed the water, was unhooked, and floated away.

Then as I crept hand over hand to the girl's side, whipped out my knife and was cutting her loose, while her arms came along to me, I felt a horrible feeling of despair come over me, for the boat was leaving us, and I knew that a coward I was at heart, as I had to fight with myself as to not to leave the girl to her fate and keep on board to swim for my life. I got the better of it though—went down on my knees so as not to lose the boat, and got the poor, clinging creature loose.

'Now, my lass,' I says, 'quick!' and I raised her up, 'hold on by the side while I fasten a rope round you.'

And then I stood up to hail the boat—the boat was warn't there, for in those brief moments she must have steamed, and we were alone on the sinking steamer, which now lay in the trough of the waves.

As soon as I got over the horror of the feeling a sort of stony despair came over me, but when I saw that little, pale, appealing face before my eyes, looking to me for help, that brought the animal back, and in saying encouraging things to her I did myself good.

My first idea was to make something that would float, but I gave that up directly, for I could feel that I was hopeless, and getting the poor girl more into shelter, I took a chow of tobacco in a sort of stolid way, and sat down with a cork life-buoy on my arm—some which I had got loose from where it had been hanging forgotten behind the wheel.

But I never used it, for the storm went down fast, and the steamer flung still, water-logged, for three days when we were picked up by a passing vessel, half-starved, but hoping. And during that time my companion had told me that she was the attendant of one of the lady passengers on board, and at last when we parted, she kissed my hand, and called her name who had saved her life—'poor grimy me, you know.'

We weren't long though before we met again, for somehow we'd sailed that we'd write, and a twelve months after Mary was back in England and my wife. That's why I said I took her out of the hands of death, though in a selfish sort of way, being, you know, from perfect. But what I say, speaking as Edward Brown, stoker, is this: 'Make a good fight of it, no matter how black things may look, and leave the rest to Him.'

I never said a word though, even to Polly. I knew he had done his best, but I didn'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 of course that was when we were both quite young, though for the matter of it I don't feel much different and can't well see the change. That was in one of the Cape steamers when I first took to stoking. They were little ram-shackle sort of boats in those days, and how it was more worn than I could puzzle me. It was more due to the weather than the make or finding of the ship 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, ay, and a voyage too from which they never got back.

Well I was working on board a steamer as they used to call the Equator, and heavy laden with about twenty passengers aboard, we started down channel with all well till we reached down the coast of Africa, where there came one of the heaviest storms I was ever in. Even for a well found steamer such as they can build to-day, it would have been a hard fight, but with our poor shabby wooden tub it was a hopeless case from the first.

Our skipper made a brave fight for it though, and tried hard to make for one of the ports, but bless you what can a man do when, after ten days' knocking about, the coals run out and the fires that have been kept going with wood and oil, and every thing that could be trusted into the furnace is drowned; when the paddle-wheels are only in the way, every bit of sail set is blown clean out of the bell-ropes, and at last the ship begins to drift fast for the lee shore.

There was our case, and every minute the sea seemed to get higher, and the wind more fierce, while I heard from more than one man how fast the water was gaining below.

My mate and I didn't want any telling though. We'd been driven out of the stoke-holds like a pair of drowned rats, and came on deck to find the bulwarks ripped away, and the sea every now and then leaping on board and washing the lumber to and fro.

The skipper was behaving very well, and he kept us all at the pumps, turn and turn in spells, but we might as well have tried to pump the sea dry, and when with the water gaining fast, we told him what we thought no need it was no use, and so then we gave it up.

We'd been at it crew and passengers, about forty of us altogether, including the women—five of them they were; and they were all on deck, lashed in a sheltered place, near the poop. And very pitiful it was to see them fighting hard at first and clinging to the side, but only to grow weaker, half-drowned as they were; and I saw two sink down at last, and hang drooping like from the side of their lashing, dead, for not a soul could do them a turn.

I was holding on by the shrouds when the mate got to the skipper's side, and I saw in his blank face what he was telling him. Of course we couldn't hear what he was saying in such a storm, but we didn't want for his lips said plainly enough:—

'She's sinking!'

Next moment there was a rush made for the boats, and two of the passengers cut loose a couple of the women; place was made for them before the first boat was too full, and she was lowered down, cast off, and a big wave carried her clear of the steamer. I saw her for a moment on the top of the ridge, and then she plunged down the other side out of our sight—and that of everybody else; for how long she lived, who can say? She was never picked up or heard of again.

Giving a bit of cheer our chaps turned to the next, and were getting in when there came a wave like a mountain, ripped her from the davits, and when I shook the water from my eyes, there she was, hanging on the side, stove in, and the men who had tried to launch it gone—skipper and mate as well.

There were only seven of us now, and I could see beside the three women lashed to the side, and only one of them alive; and for a bit no one moved, we had all been stunned like with horror; but there came a lull, and feeling that the steamer was sinking, I shouted out to the boys to come on, and we ran to the last boat, climbed in, and were casting off when I happened to catch sight of the women lashed under the bulwarks there.

'Hold hard!' I roars, for I saw one of them waive her hand.

'Come on you fool! she's going down,' shouts my mate.

I pray I may never be put to it again like that, with all a man's selfish desire for life fighting against him. For a moment I shut my eyes and began to lower; but I was obliged to open them again, and I saw a wild, scared face, with long wet hair clinging round it, and a pair of little white hands were stretched towards me as if for help.

'Hold hard!' I shouts.

'No, no!' roared two or three.

'There isn't a moment!' and as the boat

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