

Getting Through in a Horse Boat

The nervous stamping of fourteen hundred tired and hungry horses came to me in my storeroom at the bottom of No. 3 hatchway. I was squatting on a pile of empty sacks, working by the swaying light of a villainous ship's lantern at my inventory of salt, meal, hatters, shovels, forks, blankets, and the innumerable other accessories of a horse transport in his Majesty's service. The air was vile and choking. "Hey, below there! A pall of linseed,

three hay-nets, and a sling. Get a move on!" And had Nickerson received the stores and my rejoinder with his customary grin. "Red" had played cowboy parts in a Los Angeles cinema company, and had met Grace Pickford and Charlie Chaplin (so he said). At any rate, he and I were friends because we had both learned to love the cattle country. We had spent many an off-duty hour smoking together and telling tales of the old days of the range and of famous cattle thieves. That morning at seven bells we had been assigned to the same cutter at boat-muster, and had been exchanging submarine jokes ever since.

"Sorry to hurry yer, mate; I'd forgot you was tryin' on yer life-belt," and he doctored a handful of rock-salt and was off forward.

We were well within the war zone, doing more than fifteen knots, east-bound, Boston to Liverpool. One of the line's biggest boats had been torpedoed just before we sailed, and Captain B. was determined that they should not get his ship. It was in the summer of 1915, before the big Sayville wireless station had been closed, and when ostensibly innocent news could carry information of the most valuable kind to the enemy. Only two piers away from us as we loaded in Boston the Kronprinzessin Cecilie had been docked, and was marking well every dray-load of shrapnel and every remount that passed. We carried a hundred thousand worth of war material. Captain B. would never have to if a shot came across his bows, and we all knew it.

I had finished my inventory before the horsemen were through feeding in our hatchway. The wind, which had been southwest and astern, changed to easterly. The big ship began to roll so heavily that at each swing five thousand hoofs would rattle as the horses braced to meet it. Turning out my pitching lantern light, I stepped into the open hatchway before closing my storeroom to see whether there were any more orders. A beam wave slapped against the starboard side just then, and came rushing down the hatch. I jumped in time to avoid broken bones and a ducking. The horses were thoroughly wet and frightened. One big grey, an especial friend of mine, for whom I used to steal sugar, slipped and got badly cast.

"I say, feller, some spray! What?" said the gang-boss of No. 3, as he staggered by to attend to the grey. The horses were knee-deep in the wash, being below the lowest scuppers; and No. 3 gang spent a profane hour bailing out between decks.

Meanwhile I made my way aft to the galley cautiously, for we were rolling badly now. As I passed the pantry I stepped in to say good-evening to Jack, and to take a look at the weather out of the lee portholes. The light was still good, but the weather thickening. "The thicker the better," said Jack. "The — shar-rks can't see us then." "The Old Man 'll have coffee and toast on the bridge," said Victor, the Captain's "tiger," swaying in. "What do you blighters know about real work? I've been up and down the bridge till I'm done out. I say, the wireless chaps have been running up every other minute with code for the Old Man. Something doing. They say there's two U boats waiting for us this side of Tusker. But there'll be no need of lifeboats. The light was still good, but the weather thickening. And Victor was off with his pot of coffee, proud to be so necessary to the one upon whom every life on board depended.

That night "Red" and I went up on deck at six bells for a pipe and a look at the weather. A blanket of fog lay over us, and settled down even among the horse-stalls. It was dark on deck. Every porthole and doorway was muf-

fled. The ship was pounding along at top speed. There was a moon somewhere, for now and then the fog shimmered. We stood forward on the starboard side looking into it. Unexpect- edly it began to lift a bit, and the two look-outs at the bow raised their night-glasses. We could see several hundred feet ahead and as far aft.

The wireless operator scurried forward along the hurricane deck with a code message for the Old Man, who stopped to read it and then went to the starboard side. He levelled his glasses right ahead, and then ahead. It was lifting all about us now. A far- away fog-whistle sounded, whence we could not tell. A bell rang sharply down in the engine-room and we slowed to half-speed—too late if the stranger had been dead-on. Again the look-out came, this time clearly from the starboard. Another bell-handle snapped from the bridge, and we resumed speed, the old ship trembling with the full-engine drive, and sending a phosphorescent wake far behind. A dozen cutters and steamers came on deck, sensitive to the change in speed. A subtle excitement was in the air.

As we looked back and ahead, straining our eyes to make out the passing ship, we changed our course abruptly to port, and left a well-defined, glittering white right angle of wake to starboard. We were zig-zagging! There was no panic, only intense interest and suppressed excitement. Again the distant toot, this time clearly to starboard and receding. The fog was lifting fast now, uncovering the moon, which was right above, with a brown ring of mist. Now we were clear of the fog, driving ahead at full speed. Again we swerved, this time to starboard.

"Two trawlers, sir, a point off the starboard bow." The look-out called with the regulation monotonous drawl. Had he said "The British Fleet" the words could only have been sweeter to us. The tense silence was broken by a murmur of relief. The Old Man had "got by" again.

We went below and slept till morning, life-belt regulations and submarines forgotten. As we steamed up to the bar of Liverpool the pilot brought news that they were towing a captured U boat into Queenstown. We had been followed by three. Slowly we made our way up the Mersey, the Captain still on his bridge, hollow-eyed from his vigil but happy. I looked back toward the Irish coast. A score of hulls were veering and manoeuvring there—his Majesty's trawlers, the very picture of a peaceful fishing fleet.

Blake Barton.

EXCURSION FROM
ST. JOHN TO BOSTON.
To the "Sunday Tabernacle Hunting-
ton Avenue."

Committee wishes to make the final announcement to the public of the completed arrangements and also desires to thank the agents of the Eastern S. S. Co. in so generously meeting the wishes of the committee. We invite any persons or delegates from any church or society to meet the committee at the Y. M. C. A. at eight o'clock Monday evening, the 8th inst., and hand in the names of anyone wishing to go. The steamer North Star will leave the wharf at nine a.m. Thursday, 11th inst., and return Monday, 15th inst., and leave 18th and return Monday 22nd, excursion lasting thirteen days. Tickets can be procured at the office of the committee, 203 Charlotte street, Monday, 8th inst., from nine a.m. till nine p.m. Money will be refunded if ticket is not used before January 18. Your luggage will be cared for by the proper officers. Persons purchasing tickets early can have the choice of staterooms. Refreshments can be secured on board boat to suit the pockets of the individuals interested. The committee assures a good time on the trip and feels confident that the conduct of the individual excursionist will be such as to meet the approval and continued good service of the Eastern S. S. Co. We trust a large number will avail themselves of this privilege of hearing Mr. Sunday as the chairman of the committee has heard and enjoyed him and will be glad to assist in any way to make the trip a pleasant one. A large number have booked and are desirous that the number be increased to 500 for the first boat.

Let us sing as the sailors loose the ropes and we swing out into the street "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow," "God Save the King," "Sail On" and "Brighten the Corner Where You Are," hymns from books used in the tabernacle and accustom ourselves with the hymns most used there while on our way. We are sending word to Mr. Sunday, the song leader, to keep a portion of the tabernacle according to

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