

The Deader

A Maritime Echo of The Great War

A Steel Waif of the Sea, the "Deader" Brought from Eternity a Key to Unlock a Heart which Fate had Bolted Forever Against Love

By CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY



THIS is the story of three men, two women and a "deader." It is always the odd man—when it isn't the odd woman—who makes the story. Without him and the "deader"—and of course, the great newspaper—there would be nothing to write except another account of a great disaster.

"Deader" has a grim and mortuary sound which utterly belies the thing it is. John Carbrey, the head of the great Pictorial News Association, had this particular "deader" in his hands. Nor did he have a handful at that, for the "deader" was approximately the size of a small thermos bottle, and save for the rounding of the cap of that useful article, a decided resemblance could be detected between the two.

He looked long and earnestly at the little cylinder of metal, tarnished, stained, battered, just as it had come to him from the vast deep. It had been brought to the office of the United States Consul at Bilbao, Spain, a month before by the fisherman who had picked it up. Etched deeply into its side was this legend:

Finder please return unopened to
The New York News,
New York, U.S.A.
And receive liberal reward.

The American representative at that Bay of Biscay port had been in the newspaper business before he essayed diplomacy—excellent preparation, by the way—and he recognized the "deader" as soon as he saw it. By the first steamer he forwarded it to his friend Carbrey, who had charge of the illustrations of the News in connection with the superintendence of the pictorial news organization. It had come to Carbrey like a voice from the dead. Many such "deadens" had been jettisoned from sinking ships in all the seven seas, but this was the first one which had ever come back home.

It contained a message, undoubtedly, from some hero on his staff. As he opened the containing box and took it out, having previously read the Consul's letter which apprised him of its existence, he had a queer feeling as if the "deader" were alive. It was cold to his touch; yet in spite of the chill it seemed to radiate life. So unusual and so important was the incident that he had gone into the dark room himself to open it, and to develop the film that it contained. Before it was dry he passed the roll before his eyes. No prints had yet been made of it, but as he sat there with the empty cylinder in his hand, he could see again all the pictures, and one in particular.

What was burned upon the retina of his soul was the picture of a man and a woman. They happened to be in the foreground of the most important of all the pictures of the disaster. In his excitement young Aylward, poising on the rail, working his camera frantically, had perhaps overlooked the near figures in his vision of the further view, but there they were.

Aylward was the third man, Carbrey was the second, or was he the first? At any rate, whatever the ultimate order, the man in the foreground of the picture completed the trio. Carbrey should have hated him, but somehow he could not, although Brotherton—that was the name of the other man—had taken from Carbrey what he valued most in life.

HOW vividly the whole situation came back to him! He well remembered that eventful day on which the huge leviathan backed away from her pier, and, prodded and pulled and pushed by offensive tugs, finally pointed her nose down the river. He could see her again as, amid the cheers of thousands, she took her departure on that voyage which was to be her last, and the last for the great majority of those who stood on her decks smiling or weeping, staring with eyes shining or tear-dimmed at the swiftly receding shore.

And the woman he loved stood by his side on the pier that day. Her eyes were misted, her face pale, when she finally turned to him.

"Mr. Carbrey," she said, "My car is at the end of the pier, if you are going up town."

"I shall be very glad to avail myself of your offer," said Carbrey. "Are you going home?"

"Directly."

"Then with your permission I'll go with you. I have something very important to say to you."

"I shall be delighted," returned Elaine Maywood. She got into the car and motioned Carbrey to follow, and as the car crept slowly away amid the crowd of other automobiles, it occurred to him that he might just as well lose no time.

"We're just as private here, Miss Maywood," he began after a moment of thought, "so I might as well say what I have to say now as later."

He was a very direct young American who believed in going straight to the point. He had come to New York a few years before with no capital but his heart and his head, his brains and his courage. He had gone so straight to

CYRUS Townsend Brady's stories in the Saturday Evening Post and in other leading American journals have become too familiar to the reading public to demand comment. "The Deader" is one of his best. It is an unusual tale, in which the wreck, supposedly of the Lusitania, leads the way to interesting developments in the lives of the characters presented.

—THE EDITORS.

the point that now he filled this unusual position, despite his youth, and he was in line for further preferment.

"Mr. Carbrey," burst out the girl, impulsively, "just a moment. What do you think of those warnings?"

"Perhaps I can best answer that in this way, Miss Maywood. I had five of my men booked for passage on the steamer. When the warnings came from the Embassy, I withdrew them all. The gain from having them aboard didn't seem worth the risk. I don't really think anything will happen to the ship, but something might, and I decided not to take any chances."

"And did any one object?"

"Young Aylward begged me to let him go. Said he didn't believe there was the least danger, but if there were, it might be well to have a camera man on the spot, that his passage had been booked, he hated to back out, that no one had ever frightened him out of any job by vague threats and he wanted to go."

"But I am engaged to Capt. Brotherton," concluded the girl softly.



"What did you say?"

"I told him that I wouldn't order him on the duty, but that if he volunteered I shouldn't enter any objections."

"And so he is aboard her?" she asked.

"Yes, with his camera, a supply of films, some 'deadens' and whatever other personal things he wants."

"What are 'deadens'?"

"Small metal cylinders with a hermetically sealed air chamber and with a removable and water-tight cap."

"And what are they for?"

"When a man has snapped a roll of film, he takes it out of his camera, wraps and seals it, sticks it in the 'deader' closes it, and in case he is about to drown, he trusts it to the waves in the hope that somebody will pick it up and send it back to me."

"I hope Mr. Aylward won't have to use one."

"I hope not, too," said Carbrey. "I don't think he will. I think it's all a bluff. I don't believe they'd dare do anything to a passenger ship."

"That's what Captain Brotherton said."

"Oh, Captain Brotherton."

"Yes. As he has fully recovered from his wound, he cabled to the British War Office and they told him, to come back on the first steamer and they would send him back to the trenches again. Isn't it horrible?"

"Awful. But I don't want to talk about Captain Brotherton, or Aylward, or the ship, but about you."

"About me?"

"Yes, I think every woman knows when a man's in love with her. We don't seem to be able to keep it from her and—"

"Oh, please don't."

"I must. You know it, of course. I certainly cannot approach your father financially, but I have already amassed a reasonable competence and I have acquired a certain confidence in my ability to get myself anything I want—"

The girl flashed a look at him which he caught, of course.

"Except you, Miss Maywood. I'm as diffident there, I might almost say as hopeless, as I would be if I were a boy who followed you from afar, but I really have a fine

position. It affords me magnificent opportunities, but I do not care to dilate on those things. I love you as I never thought to love any human being. If you could care for me just a little, perhaps I could win you."

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Carbrey. Ever since you helped me so much in the railroad accident, when you were reporting for the News several years ago, I have liked you. I have followed your progress with a certain sort of pride—"

"You have every right to take pride in it, because since that day I have had you to stimulate my ambition."

"But I am engaged to Captain Brotherton," concluded the girl softly.

THERE was a long silence between them. She put out her hand at last and rested it on his arm with a little impulsive tenderness of gesture as if to soften the rejection. One of the first things a newspaper man has to learn is self-control. Carbrey had been educated in the hard school of experience, and he had learned it. Savagely checking a passionate desire to clutch the little hand that lay so lightly on his sleeve and a greater desire to sweep the woman to his breast, Carbrey spoke at last. He spoke clearly, but there was a break in his voice which the woman recognized and at which, for all her engagement, she thrilled.

"Of course, I might have known it," said the young American. "A soldier, a V.C., with all the glamor of heroic exploit and all the appeal of wounds—what chance had a newspaper man?"

"Newspaper men are soldiers of peace," said the woman. "You must not talk of yourself that way. Look at Mr. Aylward."

"Yes," said Carbrey, "I suppose so. One question."

He turned and fixed a clear penetrating gaze upon the girl, and she bravely sustained his look, albeit her color flamed and her heart throbbed.

"I'm very unconventional. I want you to tell me just one thing, and then I shall trouble you no more."

"What is that?"

"Do you love Captain Brotherton?"

The red deepened in her cheeks and then the color slowly ebbed and left her pale. It was a question Carbrey had no right to ask, which no affection he might have entertained for her warranted him in putting to her. Following her first impulse, she might indignantly have refused to answer, but there was something compelling in the look of the man. She was stirred to the very depths of her being by the suppressed passion that was in his voice, that, somehow, had got into her heart, the evidence of a great love. Somehow or other, the truth was wrested from her unwilling lips.

"I like him very much," she faltered, "He is a soldier and a gentleman, a hero, and he is very devoted to me. It pleases my father and mother and everybody—I—you have no right to question me in this way."

"And if I had spoken sooner," went on the man, relentlessly, "I might have—"

"Stop," cried the girl, "I can't hear any more. It's—it's disloyal. He has gone away to fight for his country, with my promise to him, with trust in me, that—"

"I understand," said Carbrey grimly. "I shall not interfere. Forgive my blundering. I haven't known many women—none like you. If anything ever happens, you'll remember I'm still yours. You understand?"

"Yes, of course, but nothing—"

"Allow me," he said.

He called to the chauffeur to stop the car at the nearest crossing. He shook Miss Maywood's hand, bowed to her and turned away. As the car moved on, the girl burst into a passion of weeping. Into Carbrey's riotous mind flashed a diabolic wish that the ship might be blown up, but because he was a clean-souled gentleman, he put that out of his brain the minute it came in. He was ashamed to the core even for the transitory and natural impulse. In the revulsion from his own feeling, he prayed voicelessly that the God of the great deep might watch over the great ship.

THAT momentary impulse came back to him poignantly when the first news of her torpedoing filtered through the air. The newspapers, his own leading, were soon filled with the accounts of the survivors. They had a brave tale to tell of young Pete Aylward's devotion to duty, how he had stripped himself of his own life belt, how he had worked his camera to the very last minute, and how he had gone down with the rest. His body was washed ashore some days later. Attached to it was his empty camera and there was one roll of film and one "deader" missing from the complement in the case strapped to his belt.

A year had passed, and it was that "deader" which Carbrey now held in his hand. The man in the foreground of the most striking

(Continued on page 18)