

A
Magazine
for the

The Canadian Thresherman and Farmer

Farm
and
Home

The Mascot of the "Mayfly"

A STORY OF THE "SUPERSTITION" OF THE SAILOR-
MAN—RESCUED FROM THE GRIM SILENCE OF THE
BRITISH FLEET IN ITS CEASELESS PATROL OF THE
HIGH SEAS—AS TOLD BY THE CHIEF STOKER

UP till then our luck had been rotten; we hadn't bagged a Bosche; we lost a propeller, and all but sunk a mine sweeper in a fog.

Old Crankshaft did it all, for he it was who lost our mascot—Johnny Rickett's cat, the cutest little beggar in black you ever saw.

Johnny had it from the day we mobilized. His little sister giv' it him the day he left home to report and when we sailed it became the ship's cat until it went ashore with Crank one day and he lost it in some stinkin' fish hole in the Orkneys.

Crank, you see, was our chief engineer. His real name was Macfarlane, but no man ever heard his real name in our little crowd. He was as square jaw'd and square souled a Scot as I ever sailed with, but he wasn't what you'd call communicative.

But him and me got on fine till he went and lost that cat and then we all gave him the go by; and when we ran into such a streak of ill luck the other boys would as soon have had Jonah or old Tirpitz for a ship-mate.

The "Mayfly"? She was the dandiest little tin tub in the British fleet. Of course a T.B.D. is never built for tea parties, and our little craft hadn't as much spare room left in her innards as would house a tame rabbit, and that made it all the worse for us when our bit of luck came just before sunrise one Sunday morning.

We were well out in the Atlantic, I should say about 400 miles off the Irish coast. Half a gale had been blowing for a couple of days with a nasty cross sea that kept our decks as completely awash as if the little T.B.D. had been a whale-back.

Our business was that of sub chasing, but, as I have told you, we had drawn a blank up till that Sunday morning.

I'd just come up from my dug-out to have a pipe and a whiff of air, and the only man "up" besides the watch and myself was Crankshaft. He was taking what shelter the forward smoke-stack gave him, pulling away at

his briar solitary and black as a jack-daw on a coffin. I was wondering how I could



"Throw him up!" I shouted the chief engineer.

dodge him when the lookout yelled:

"Boat on the port bow, sir!"

Crank and I jumped like kittiwakes at

the crack of a shot-gun. We could just make out the object at odd times on the crest of a sea, about a couple of knots away. Crank fetched his binoculars, and after taking a long pull, handed them without a word to me.

We were heading lickety-clip straight for the boat which was plainly a ship's life-boat loaded with people, many of them women.

Every deck hand was at his post and those of us from below who were off duty stood by to lend a hand.

Our navigating officer knew his job, and we could soon see that the men in charge of the boat had their wits about them, too.

It was a ticklish job in the heavy seaway, but we got the boat under our lee and the lieutenant-commander gave orders to cave in the end of a keg of oil. That settled things a bit, we got a line aboard and all hands would have volunteered for any job that would get the folks safely on the "Mayfly's" deck.

The first to land was a little curly haired cherub of a boy barely four years old, but as wise and old fashioned as an experienced parson.

He was the only kid in the party, and the woman in charge of him seemed to have taken leave of her senses when it came to passing him up.

"Throw him up," shouted old Crank, and ten pairs of hands were held out to catch him. He fell fair and square into Crank's arms. The women came next, and in five minutes more the entire boatload was safely on board the T.B.D.

They were from the "Glenfarg"—torpedoed just before sunset on the previous day and had been drifting in that open boat all night.

Crank gave up his bunk to the little cherub and his mammy. We boys did what we could for the rest, and from that hour our luck changed.

"We've got a real mascot, now," said Crank as he wrapped a hot blanket round the boy.

Gosh! it was great to see how that big, lantern-jawed Scotchman handled the little
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