

WORKING A PASSAGE ON A CATTLE STEAMER.

An unwary youth once wandered to New York with the hallucination that a fortune was lying at his beck and call. When he found that the rudiments of farming and a two years' course at college formed a mixture unsuitable for money-getting, he plunged his hands into the depths of his pockets, speculated on the life-prolonging power of \$3, and strolled inadvertently through Greenwich St. This thoroughfare is a combination of bustle and beer, and before a dilapidated office he saw a sign inviting the passers-by to participate in a trip to Europe. The unvarnished truth lay in its announcement of "Wanted, men to work their passage to England on cattle boats."

What is it that appealed to the stranded mortal when he beheld that sign? Perhaps it was the distance, the mental mirage, of adventure, assuring him from present want, which colored the thing so highly. Be that as it may, he went in, and after a distressing interview with a one-eyed innkeeper, who had just extorted \$5 from a ragged German, he received a small ticket entitling him to the requisite passage, together with a pressing invitation to spend the night with mine host, whose beds rented at fifteen cents.

The pleasurable anticipations which usually occupy the mind of the saloon passenger in participation of a steamship trip were denied him; as he strolled away he felt that its uncertainty was the only recommendation the plan afforded.

He was to be at the office at six the following morning. At five he started from Forty-second Street, and found on his arrival that the novices had started two hours before; with a palpitating heart he ran as fast as he could to the wharf, a full two miles away; good, the steamer lay there; "America" stood out in gilt letters on her bow, and smoke poured from her funnel. He went into the dock-house. "What do you want?" He presented his ticket.

"Got all the men we want."
"But I must get to England. Do you understand? I must."

"Oh, come along, then." Up a narrow plank, through a crowd of all nationalities, among bellowing steers and swearing cattlemen, down to a dark hole.

"Do you see that place below?"

"Yes."

"Get down there and stay till the boat starts."

"I thank you."

"You won't before you get back."

There was a small box in the far corner and a small voice speaking in a whisper asked him: "Say, boss, ain't she goin'?"

"No, not yet."

Do you see think they'll nab me?"

"Not if you keep still." Silence; finally he, too, sat down, a figure of trepidation in the darkness, and began to think. The moments came and went slowly, the harsh noises overhead diminished, his mind turned instinctively to pleasant thoughts, but suddenly he was roughly awakened by a cursing cattle-boss, as fat as Fairstaff and as hideous as Caliban.

Before he was fully aroused, his collars and cuffs were torn off, and with many uncomplimentary terms he was assisted up the stairs, seeing by the light of the dirty lantern the frightened face of a small Bowery nondescript in the corner.

When he reached the deck he saw the Statue of Liberty looming up before him, and realized that retreat was impossible. Then the clocks in the city struck two; he had slept seven hours.

The foremen were assembled forward, and the crowd of fifty or sixty neophytes stood huddled together awaiting such disposal as these men saw fit to make of them. In the bow of the boat, caged in tiers of wooden stalls, a thousand sheep were bleating for water. The chill November winds increased by the motion of the ship struck him with a feeling of utter loneliness.

He was not given much time for reflection. Detailed to carry hay and water to the animals ahead, he found himself crowding through the narrow passages between the cages, cursed for his slowness and confronted

with a seemingly endless task. He knew he would be sick, but when he felt the nausea overcoming him, he dared not confess it. He worked in a kind of daze, and finally, when dusk came on, beheld the struggle among the men over a pail of tea, felt himself sickened at the sight of the huge biscuit doled out to each man, and staggered below, flung himself on a heap of hay, wiped a few tears from his eyes, and fell asleep.

The long gray outline of the shore became a barely perceptible line of haze, the last glow of red faded from the sky, and the gulls followed the ship, like great spirits silent and watchful.

Finally, he awoke; a feeling of absolute despair filled his soul, and, with a resolve born of unbearable solitude, he pulled himself together, crawled on deck, and stood looking over the rail at the phosphorescent tumbling of the waters. How vividly the scenes of his past life came to him then, and as he crept shivering below, he realized that it was well that there was some bright spots to relieve the unpitiful prospect before him. The night passed in vain endeavors to sleep, but the cold gusts rushing down numerous ventilators, the swaying of the vessel, and the shifting movements of uneasy cattle, all combined to keep him awake, while the hours dragged on between spells of sickness and philosophic reflections that such an experience could not last forever. The night watchman, who poked about among fallen steers, held his lantern over the limp figure lying in the hay, and, with a shake of the head, left a ship's biscuit by the side and shuffled away. The young man saw him do this through half-open eyes, and they filled with tears, but he did not speak.

The void of black nothingness visible through the hatchway began to assume the gray tints of a November morning. Eight bells sounded, and everybody was astir; he dragged himself to his feet, his head reeling. He tottered on deck to watch the greedy struggle over biscuit and coffee; he shivered with cold, slumped down near the galley, and had little care what befell him.

The cattle-boss has no sympathy

with physical weakness; he sees in sea-sickness only a pretence for shirking, and the pale young fellow, huddled in a heap, appears to him in the light of an actor. He remembers the farcical drunkards whom he has beheld in Bowery vaudeville, and laughs at while he curses the object of his aversion.

The poor fellow did not wait for the inevitable blow; he stood up and clung to the iron rail close by. The ship was rolling heavily; it was almost impossible to stand without support, but the cattle had to be fed and watered, and in the general allotment he found himself assigned to duty below deck among the steers, near which he had slept. The bales of hay had to be torn apart, the water carried, pail by pail, from a huge tank. The cattle, in their anxiety to drink, thrust their noses violently into the buckets and spilled half the contents; as a result, the narrow alleys were flooded, and the feet of the carriers continually wet.

The four men who comprised his division finished their work by eight o'clock, and the whole contingent then scrambled above for a meagre breakfast. He had not yet passed 24 hours on the water, but yesterday morning seemed lost in the far past.

The morning was occupied in sweeping the decks and getting corn out of the hold, preparatory to the next feeding hour. Livestock is fed twice a day on board ship—early in the morning and late in the afternoon; they stand in four rows, parallel to the length of the ship, making a cramped passage between each two lines.

Dusk settled down early, the sea became rougher, the vessel pitched more and more, and a cold north wind rose and whistled dismally through the rigging. The motley company slept in a low, dingy room, arranged with bunks, far in the bow; it was heated by steam, but owing to its overcrowded condition, the air was so foul that the young man resumed his bed on the hay, wrapped his overcoat about him and forgot his misery in the sleep that comes from physical exhaustion. The next morning he felt better, drank his coffee and ate a piece of pie-crust, bestowed by the steward, who informed him that it

was a relic of the Captain's last dinner.

The storm increased, and the violent tossing of the ship had so weakened some of the cattle that they settled down miserably in the straw, and finally died. Their bodies were hoisted up and dropped overboard, where they floated on the water, prey for fish and bird.

Early on the third morning, a forlorn, ragged little mortal slunk on deck and asked for something to eat. The young man recognized the voice of the Bowery nondescript, now subdued by hunger and sea-sickness. The other men beheld him with apathetic eyes, while one foreman knocked him down and another looked on and laughed. He was put to work peeling potatoes for the Captain's table.

One day was like another—the same monotonous round of hardship, the interminable waters, the gray skies, the following gulls. Anything was better than sea-sickness; to be well and half-famished allowed him to breathe the salt air with some feeling of exhilaration; he became more hopeful and when at the close of the ninth day he saw the white cliffs of the Isle of Wight, he stood looking at them as eagerly as if he swore approaching the pier in New York, and some dear friend were waiting for him.

Early in the morning they were in the Thames; he saw the thatched cottages on its banks, felt the absolute quiet of the scene, and from some inexplicable reason, whose cause he could not fathom, knew that there were tears in his eyes. He tried to remember when he had viewed so lovely a sight; it was the first day of December, cold and bracing; a light mist hung over the landscape, and the smoke rising from the houses vanished in sleepy curls into its mist. The inspector boarded the ship, and they moved up the river, passed innumerable craft, and finally, seeing a dense fog-bank stalking down upon them, swung in to Deptford, ten miles from London.

The neophytes, dressed in the best apparel which their tin trunks afforded, appeared on deck; it was Sunday afternoon; the young man beheld the strange spectacle of the cattle-bosses

pleading with them to remain another day on board. Fortunately for him he was not hampered by luggage; he sold his coat to the ship's cook for two dollars, waited patiently till dark, swung himself down on one of the hawsers that held the boat to the wharf, felt his feet touch land, and walked away rapidly through the dense fog towards the great city of London.—New York Post.

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