

Men Who Go Down To Sea in Cattle Ships

Some weeks ago a poor, half-starved lad presented himself at the American embassy in London and told a story of extreme cruelty and inhuman treatment which he claimed to have experienced on board a cattle ship sailing between New York and London. This story resulted in the issuing of a warning by the embassy to American parents to keep their boys away from cattle ships. That there was some truth in the boy's allegations nobody who has had any experience on a cattle ship can doubt.

Four steamship lines out of New York, two out of Boston and one out of Philadelphia send an average of 1,000 head of cattle to European ports each week. The

whatever remains. If he doesn't it's because he doesn't know his business.

A word about the foreman. From the moment the "stiff" steps aboard the ship the foreman is the arbiter of his destiny, as much his master as if he were a slave. Indeed, I believe that the cattle foreman as a class are the direct descendants of the Simon Legrees of slavery times. There may be cattle foremen who have instincts of humanity and decency, but I have never had the good fortune to sail under one. All the consideration I ever got from that class was value received for bribe money promptly and liberally paid down. The nature of the business seems to kill out all kindly qualities. The cattle foreman gets a small salary, which he usually contrives to double

toned to cattle entry into one of these pens seems a desperate venture and indeed it is dangerous enough. I have seen a new cattleman crushed into insensibility by the first rush of the cattle when he entered the pen and I once helped to drag out a man who was so badly trampled that he was crippled for life. Often the terror of the "stiffs" at the prospect of entering the pens is almost ludicrous. I remember a gigantic young Englishman who cast himself upon the deck and fairly howled with fear when ordered to go in among the beasts.

"Ow do hi know they won't bite me?" he wailed.

Once inside among the steers he used his club and his great strength so valiantly that they were soon subdued and before the end of the voyage a position as assistant foreman was offered to him. In the first handling of the cattle the best way, if they are turbulent, is to vault on the back of one of them and resort to clubbing and tail-twisting. It sounds brutal, but it is the only way. Above all, the cattleman must keep his seat. Heaven help him if he falls among those sharp hoofs. After the ship starts the work becomes easier. Watering and feeding and cleaning the pens are the regular duties of the "stiff." Cattle are much better sailors than human beings. For a day or so, until they get their sea-legs and learn to accommodate themselves to the action of the vessel, they are liable to sickness, but usually on the second day out appetite returns and they grow steadily fat throughout the trip. The entire morning is given up to feeding and watering.

Night Watchman's Job the Easiest.

On my trips as a "stiff" I have always, when I had the money, bribed the foreman to make me night watchman, a position which exempts one from the other duties. The night watchman makes hourly trips during the night to see that the animals are all right. Ordinarily there isn't much to do, but occasionally the Imp of the Perverse takes possession of the pens, and then it's bad times for the watchman. In sleeping the steers lie down in a most intricate tangle, and occasionally contrive to get the fastening ropes inextricably interwoven. Then one of them, becoming suddenly smitten with a desire to get up and see how the ship is heading, chokes all the other cattle whose ropes cross his, as well as himself. This process causes a wild racket, which summons the watchman. He must go in and solve the insoluble problem of the ropes. If he is killed, as he is quite likely to be, it doesn't much matter, but if any of the live stock choke to death there is a terrible to-do.

Part of the "stiff's" duty is to keep the scuppers clear of straw and refuse. During a storm the seas shipped wash through the pens, sweeping everything before them. The refuse stops the scuppers, and as a result the decks fill until cattle and cattle-men are waist deep in the water. This, of course, menaces the safety of the vessel also. Again the poor "stiff" must work his way behind the frightened brutes to a small four by six hole, the range of which is invariably covered by four or five pairs of hoofs that have been made effectively by long practice and a lack of refinement in the nature of the hoofs' owners. When the scupper is reached he must clear it up, all the time dodging the flying hoofs. Dodging the hoofs is the exception; it is most generally the case that he is carried out and laid in his bunk for repairs. If a record of injuries of a stormy trip across the ocean on a cattle ship were to be had it would compare favorably with the report of a city emergency hospital. I have heard of cases where men were actually trampled down and drowned in the scuppers.

Far away from land the cattle are very quiet, but as soon as they catch a whiff of a land breeze they become restless and extraordinary care is required to prevent a general stampede, in which pens are broken,

the loosened cattle charging those that are tied, and when the latter are freed the whole mass surges all over the decks. This endangers the safety of the ship itself and is one of the pet bugaboes of the experienced cattle-men. In cases of this kind the poor "stiff" is called upon for the hazardous work of restoring order.

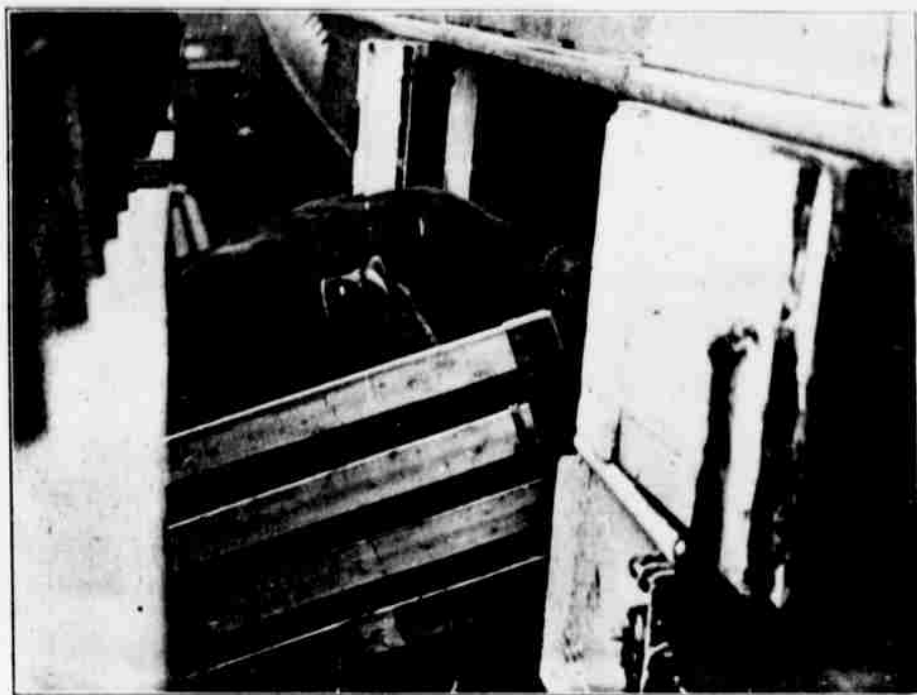
He must go among the wild brutes, under feet, over backs, dodging kicking hoofs and lung, dangerous horns, beating with his club and screaming at the top of his voice in an effort to force into submission, one at a time, the animals, whose only will is to break away from all restraint and to create as much havoc and damage as possible in doing it. As he forces a horn-protected head near the most convenient headboard, the dangling rope around the brute's horns is grabbed and a turn is taken around the nearest stationary object. The plunging and kicking animal is held here until he makes a move that will permit of his being fastened permanently. Then another one is

its kind in the barracks. Turning to the commandant, the general remarked:

"I have been wondering if that hole was still there. I made it when I was a cadet and lived in this room."

Kato Masterson, the poet and humorist, thus describes the beginning of her literary career:

"I was at school in Brooklyn when I first sent a poem to Judge, signing it Kittle K. It was accepted and published with an illustration, and my cup of joy was brimming. When I got a check for \$2 I effervesced. I then sent some verses to Puck, which was then edited by H. C. Munner. They were also signed Kittle K., but were written from a masculine point of view, and as I wrote a very gentlemanly hand Munner evidently came to the conclusion that I was a boy. He sent me some very funny letters, and I replied, keeping up the idea that I was a very fresh, slangy boy. He accepted the verses, 'She Stood on the



EMBARKING FOR THEIR FIRST OCEAN VOYAGE

cattle are confined in pens on two decks of these vessels. Approximately 150 head comprise each shipment. Men must be taken along to feed and look after the cattle on the voyage.

Formerly the cattle shippers supplied the extra men to take care of the cattle, paying them from \$8 to \$10 for the trip. These men are called "stiffs." Because of the intemperate habits of the only class of men who could be induced to ship this detail of the business became such a nuisance that the shippers decided to give it up. In late years there has grown up in its place an arrangement with an agent at the port of shipment, who agrees to furnish a quota of "stiffs" for each shipment. He is called a "stiff catcher." According to this agreement the agent receives \$2 for each man secured and for each man short of the number called for he pays the shippers a fine of \$25. Besides receiving \$2 a man the "stiff catcher" retains the privilege of swindling the unfortunates, whose circumstances make traveling in such a manner necessary, out of as much as he can.

First Catch Your "STIFF."

In order to secure his material the "stiff-catcher" inserts advertisements, chiefly in the western papers, reading: "Wanted—Men to work the passage to Europe on cattle steamers; no steamship work." Unhappy is the lot of the man who is lured by such an advertisement to cross the ocean in one of these ships. Not only will he be defrauded out of all the money he can be induced to give up, but the hardest and most dangerous kind of work will be his and if he shrinks from it, or because of inaptitude or unfamiliarity does it ill, abuse and brutality, both verbal and physical, will be his portion. His duties are to look after the cattle in every way and his foreman holds him responsible for any harm to them, whether the fault is his or not.

The larger portion of the men who answer the "stiff-catcher's" advertisement are the poorer class of Europeans who desire to return home in an economical way. Many of them cannot understand the English language. These are the ones upon whom the most abuse is heaped and to whom the most dangerous work is given. There is reason in this, for there is far less danger of complaints being made by these men, whose spirits have been crushed by early training and whose lack of knowledge of the language makes it almost impossible for the abuse to have any reactionary effect. Occasionally Young America selects this method of crossing the ocean. The latter is usually treated better than the first named class, for the reason mentioned.

When the applicant presents himself in answer to the advertisement the "stiff-catcher" paints the delights of voyaging in a cattle ship in roseate hues. According to him it is merely a sort of yachting excursion; no work to speak of, good food and plenty of it; fine sleeping accommodations, altogether a life of ease and plenty. Very confidentially he explains that the extra men are not really taken along to do any work at all, but merely to fulfill insurance terms which require a certain number of handlers for the cattle. Next the agent tries to find out how much money the prospective "stiff" has. If he succeeds he demands about 75 per cent of the amount. The cattle foreman aboard the ship gets

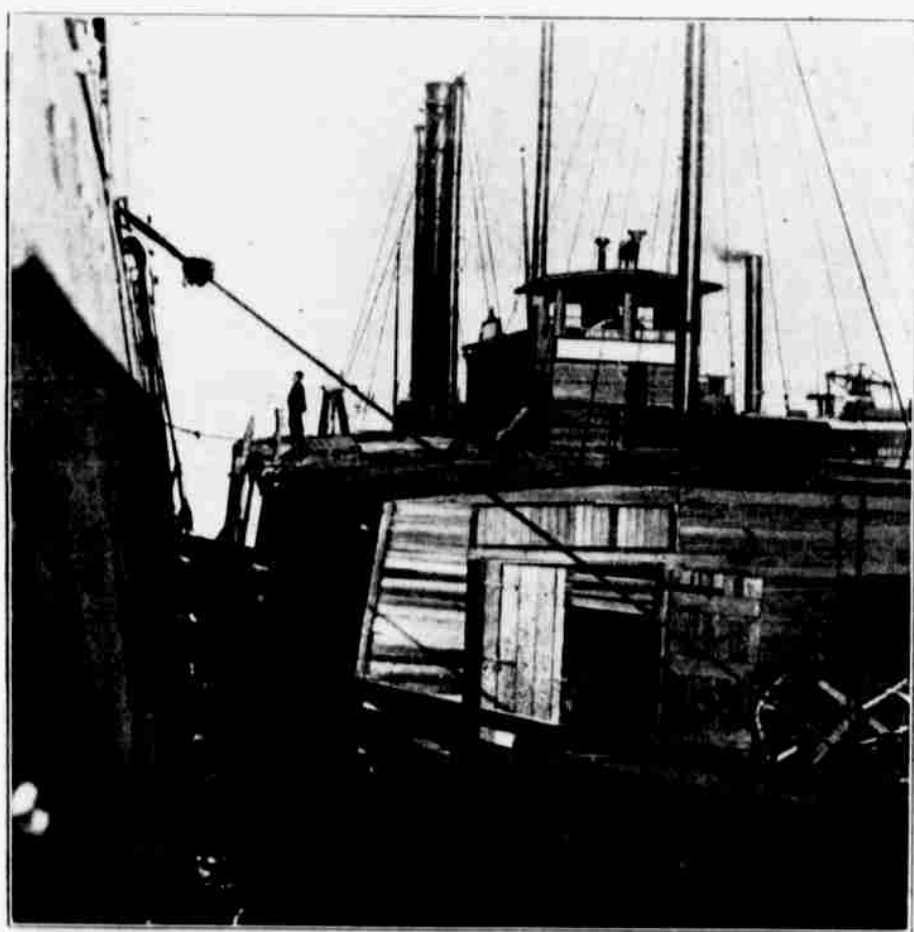
by "squeezing" the unfortunate "stiffs," if not, so much the worse for the stiffs.

Getting Acquainted with the Cattle.

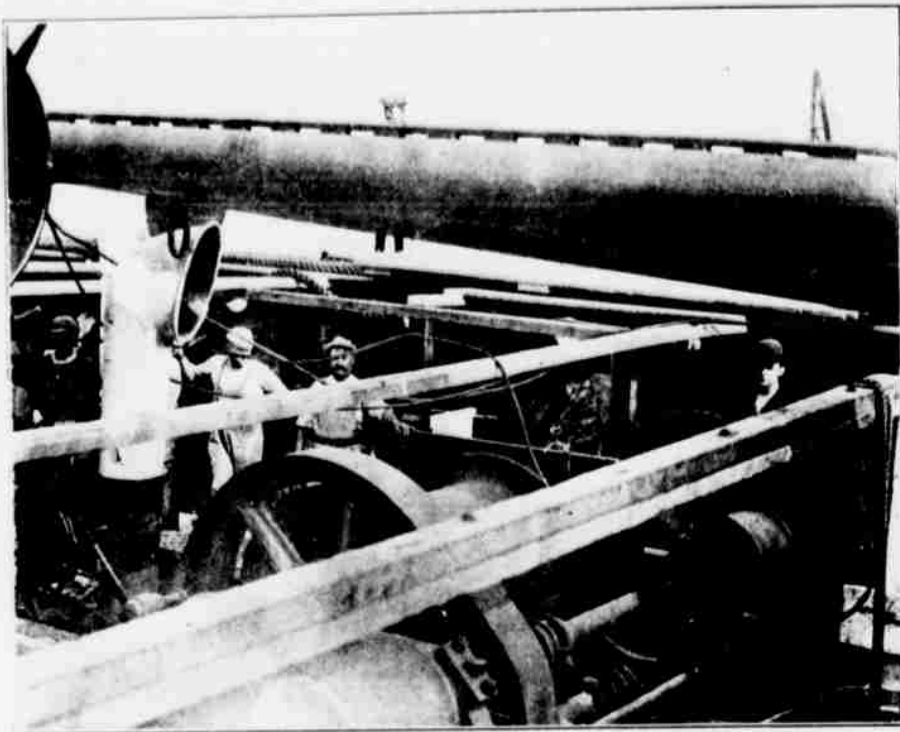
Up to the moment of his boarding the vessel the new cattleman is well treated, because the stiff-catcher fears he will escape. Commonly his introduction to his duties and his foreman comes in the form of a torrent of profanity and threats from that worthy, followed by a knockdown blow if he doesn't move smartly. This is the proper and approved method of impressing a "stiff." His work is all out for him, the most trying work of any that he has to do. Ranch-bred steers are not blessed with particularly amiable dispositions at best, and when they have just been loaded from lighters into the ship's pens with much prodding and jabbing and thumping they are more than likely to be somewhat out of temper. Observe, now, the half dozen "stiffs," most of whom have probably never been within horn's length of any cattle before, huddled in an alarmed group, gazing dismally at the tossing horns and laboring backs as the angry animals are driven by tens into the pens.

"Get in there, now, and get them steers quiet to be tied up," shouts the foreman, handing to each of the tyros a small club. "Gwan in! Wot's the matter with you?"

Fortunate are the "stiffs" if one of their number is experienced enough to take the lead and show them what to do. Such instruction as they may expect from the foreman will be mainly kicks and blows. Their duties are to jump into the pens and get the steers' heads up to the headboards, so that the foreman and his assistants can tie them. To one amicus-



CATTLE SHIP AT THE WHARF.



CATTLEMEN READY FOR DUTY.

caught and fastened in the same way until the stampede is stopped.

This is another fruitful source of casualties. More than one death, officially labeled "pneumonia" or "fever," is attributable to what the cattlemen call the "land-bo panic."

Through all these perils and hardships the cattle "stiff" supports life on the worst of food and sleeps in a cabin compared to which, in size, ventilation and cleanliness, a flower lodging house compartment would be palatial. On my first voyage I lived for half of the trip on bread baked on the sky from dough stolen from the cook. The "stiff" must work whether he is ill or well, or be beaten by the foreman. I have seen a man suffering from fever hauled out of his bunk in freezing weather and swathed with painful after painful of water by the foreman, while the second officer of the ship looked on and laughed. Finally the "stiff" is as likely as not to be put ashore penniless at some port other than that for which he shipped originally and left to shift for himself. The warning of the American embassy in London will find an echo in the heart of every man who has ever been a transatlantic cattle "stiff."

Short Stories Well Told

Treasurer Bliss of the republican national committee appears to be getting a trifle stingy as he grows older. "Closer than the skin on an egg," is what he is called by some other workers. A few days ago he received a \$10,000 check minus the revenue stamp and at once sent a letter asking for the necessary stamp; also a postage stamp to cover cost of the letter he sent. The man who sent the campaign contribution telegraphed to Mr. Bliss: "Stamps you ask for have been forwarded." The treasurer had to pay for this telegram and is unable to see just where he came out ahead on the transaction.

The Buffalo Commercial tells this anecdote about General Grosvenor: "Some of his hearers at Convention hall the other night noted with quiet enjoyment the readiness with which he pulled up and saved himself from one of those little embarrassing things one would rather have left unsaid. He began: 'I realize that it is now 9 o'clock and there is another di—another gentleman, a gentleman of distinction, who will speak to you later,' etc. Of course, the conventional phrase, 'another distinguished gentleman' was on his tongue's end, but before the first syllable was fairly formed he 'got together' and gave the other gentleman the monopoly of distinction, as all distinguished gentlemen are expected to do."

When he was commander of the armies of the United States General William Tecumseh Sherman was on a visit to the West Point military academy at graduating time one June. As was customary, he accompanied the commandant on his Sunday morning tour of inspection of the barracks and on entering a certain room he walked over to the mantel piece. Stooping down he pried up a brick from the middle of the hearth with his sword scabbard and revealed a hollow space about a foot square in which was nicely packed a considerable quantity of tobacco and other contraband articles. Meanwhile the cadets occupying the room stood by mutely watching and wondering what sort of a man the general was to have been able to discover the only "cellar" of

Stair," and they were published in a Christmas number with a picture. As this was only the second poem I had sold in my life you can imagine how wildly anxious I was to have it appear. I bothered Bunner with inquiries, for, of course, that was the only poem on earth to me just then. I recollect finally writing him, 'Do you think my poem will be published during my lifetime?'

He wrote me: "My dear boy, I cannot say if your poem will be published during your lifetime, as I do not know when you are going to die."

Bob Burdette, the humorist, lecturer and preacher, likes a good story, even though he belongs to the clergy nowadays. He is in love with the English method of handling the baggage of travelers. In that country, according to Mr. Burdette, you are forced to look after your trunk, with the result that you have it at the end. In America you are relieved of all responsibility, with the result that you may or may not have your trunk at the end of your journey. You are supposed to be satisfied because you have the check for it. Once, on a lecturing tour through the south, Mr. Burdette arrived in Jacksonville, Fla., and his trunk was lost. Holding up his brass check before his evening's audience he said:

"This, ladies and gentlemen, represents a dress suit, but I cannot cash it in." The jest pleased the audience, but when he had to use it on audiences for a week he grew tired of it and really wished the railroad company would find his trunk. Finally, Mr. Burdette went to Vicksburg, which he had not planned to visit, and there found his trunk.

A few days later, in Texas, he received a telegram from the railroad's superintendent. "Have just found your trunk in Jackson, Miss." To which Mr. Burdette replied promptly: "Thanks. Found it myself a week ago in Vicksburg."

Between Jacksonville and Vicksburg the lecturer had to have something to wear, so he bought himself a suit of clothes and each day went out and secured a shirt, and so forth. But he went to ready-made clothing stores and bought only \$1.50 shirts. The bill came to \$65 altogether and he presented it to the railroad company. It was only when it was paid promptly and without a murmur, says Mr. Burdette, that he realized what a fool he had been to miss the chance of getting a good outfit.

A Bachelor's Reflections

New York Press: Half of the quarrels between a man and his wife start when she is doing up her hair.

We could stand having our enemies hate us if our friends would only love us, but they don't.

After a girl gets married she tries to look at an old maid as if she was some kind of a curiosity.

No man could ever live for very long with the kind of woman that always means more than she says.

Half the girls you meet are either pretty or clever. The other half are ones who would make good wives.

No woman's feet feel really comfortable unless she has got them in a pair of shoes that are too small for them.