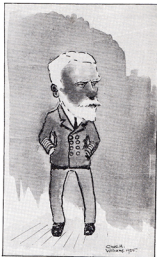


readers' letters



■ Our reader C. H. Williams recently came across some old pen-and-ink drawings he made many years ago, when he was third officer on *Armada Castle*. This one, done in 1925, shows Capt. Millard, then master of the vessel. This colourful little sketch was made on the back of a ship's menu card.

Vaal's feat recalls these old memories of sea rescues

Sir,
When reading the story in the No. 4 issue of *CLANSMAN* concerning the rescue of Bill Honeywill after he had fallen overboard from the *SA Vaal*, I was reminded of a similar rescue—this time of a dog, but in all other respects identical.

In August 1929 when I was serving as third officer in the *Glan Maciver* I had just relieved the chief officer (later Captain Elvish). Shortly afterward in the forenoon watch, he rushed back to the bridge and put the ship about on the reverse course, explaining to me that he had visited the after deck and noticed that a foxhound, one of a number being exercised by one of the apprentices, was missing from its chain lead. A search did not find the missing dog and it was concluded that it had gone over the side without the apprentice noticing.

The *Glan Maciver* was outward bound and in the Bay of Biscay at the time, commanded by Captain A. D. Turton. Extra lookouts were stationed on either side, and about half an hour after putting back the dog was sighted right ahead. Captain Turton brought the ship to a stop alongside the dog and a pilot ladder was put over the side. One of the crew went down and grabbed the dog and brought it safely aboard, where it was taken to the lower bridge and wrapped in blankets. Captain Turton was very scornful when the chief steward appeared with a glass of whisky, but from the bridge I noticed that the steward disappeared round the corner of the deckhouse and drank it himself! The dog recovered very quickly and was none the worse for its swim.

The rescue was reported in the press, and I still have the cutting, which read as follows:—

DOG OVERBOARD

"Liner puts about to rescue a missing foxhound.

"A remarkable story of how a liner's captain turned his vessel about in mid-ocean and steamed to search for a dog which had fallen overboard was told at Liverpool yesterday. A Clan liner had on board a number of valuable foxhounds which were being sent to Bombay. One of them slipped

its collar and presumably jumped overboard. "It was half an hour before the matter was reported to Captain A. D. Turton, but he put the liner about and steamed back until the dog was sighted. A boat was lowered (reader's comment—*not true*) and the dog was hauled aboard exhausted."

H. B. FOWLER, (ex-Clan Line),
33 Brickwall Close,
Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex.

—and on NY service

Sir,

The reference (*CLANSMAN* No. 4) to the marvellous rescue by Captain Alan Freer, *SA Vaal*, of one of his passengers who fell overboard whilst en route from Cape Town to Southampton prompts me to recall another outstanding feat of navigation in a similar emergency some 40 years ago—that performed by the late Captain J. C. Brown (later Commodore) then in the *Ripley Castle* (Government 'standard' ship, ex-*War Soldier*).

The lady was a tramp, a 7,500-tonner with a speed of, I should say, 12 knots at the very outside (probably more often 10). She was engaged in the now long-defunct U-C Africa/America cargo service. She took roughly a month from Cape Town to New York, sharing the privilege with such stately packets as *Rampton Castle*, *Branton Castle*, *Banbury Castle*, *Dromore Castle* and *Dundrum Castle*. These had succeeded earlier, smaller Castles on the same run—*York*, *Gordon*, *Aros*, *Corfe*, and *Cranford*, together with *Susquehanna* and *Sabine*, but the trade was declining, and the service ceased. These steamers were odd-job carriers too, proceeding anywhere to pick up cargoes.

I fancy it was on a northbound voyage from the Cape Coast to New York. Somewhere in the Atlantic one of the crew—I think a fireman (slice and shovel cra)—was discovered missing and it was reported that he had disappeared over the side earlier on.

Captain Brown decided to turn *Ripley Castle* round and steam back on his course; I don't remember the distance but it was some hours steaming. Eventually the unfortunate (or perhaps lucky) chap, who was still afloat and alive, was picked up. I believe, but am open to correction, that the mate at the time was the late Captain Walter Dryden (no relation to the present skipper).

The achievement was virtually unsung when the circumstances surrounding this remarkable rescue came to light some time later. That was no mail service. When—infrequently—these steamers came to England, they had perhaps a wash and brush up and engagement of crew signing two years articles, then away they went, out of sight. Out of mind? Not quite. But no radar, radio telephone or what-have-you for them.

A long-standing policy was for chief officers in the mail fleet to be appointed to these black-bulled craft on promotion to master—and we of those days knew their subsequent reactions!

The following is a sidelight. A company's faster ship approaching Southampton would hand in on arrival wireless messages received from a master of a homeward bound slower ship in the fleet, who took the opportunity to give advance details of stores or cash required—a familiar practice. Such messages also contained personal greetings from the sending master to the other. One such ended with: "Any news of a grey ship?" In other words this particular