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A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE

For fifteen hours an Officer and an Able Seaman clung perched astride the stempiece of a tanker which had been blown in two, reeling and swaying a hundred feet above the gale-lashed Atlantic.

The tanker had died hard. Hour after hour her guns' crews fought back the attacking submarine. Three torpedoes had sadly battered her till she was doubled up but still she held together - a triumph of the shipbuilders' art. It was the fourth torpedo which broke her in two.

When this happened, only two men were on the fore part - the Third Officer G. Todd of Edinburgh and Able Seaman T. Clayton. The third Officer actually had the teakwood rail shattered under his hands when the torpedo struck. As the fore part rose slowly into the air, the two men climbed further and further towards the bows. In the end this part of the vessel floated vertically and the Third Officer and the A.B. climbed over the rail and sat astride the stem, a hundred feet above the sea.

This happened soon after midnight, on a wild Atlantic night. And there the two men clung on their dizzy perch until three o'clock the following morning, when they were sighted by the escort vessel which had picked up the other survivors.

A volunteer crew rowed over and took a loose turn round the head of the forestay, for the mast by this time lay dipping in the water. Then the Third Officer and the A.B. swung hand over hand down the forestay, a distance of just over a hundred feet, and dropped safely into the boat. Third Officer Todd and A.B. Clayton had survived one of the strangest escapes in the history of the sea.
