

# WOMEN CRAZED WITH FRIGHT

Survivors of Bon Voyage Tell  
the Tale.

ALL MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED

MEMBERS OF CREW POWERLESS TO  
ASSIST.

Struggling in Water, Mrs. Cowan's  
Appeal Is Unheeded by a  
Chicagoan.

The steamer Bon Ami arrived last night with all of the members of the crew of the ill-fated Bon Voyage, with the exception of Captain J. P. Foley. The destruction of the steamer has temporarily interrupted the triangular route of the White Line Transportation company, and the Bon Ami was taken off her run between Port Arthur and Houghton to bring back the crew of the burned vessel. Captain Foley remained behind to give testimony before the steamboat inspectors. Captain Singer, of the steamship company, arrived home yesterday by rail from Houghton. The story of the disaster, as told by the crew, sheds some new light on it, and corrects some mis-statements.

Harry Hawkes, mate of the Bon Voyage, and second in command, told the story substantially as follows: "The correspondents have said that Captain Foley was in bed, and that I was in command at the time of the fire. For the sake of accuracy, it should be said that I was in bed, and Captain Foley in command. Captain Foley called me along about 7:30 o'clock, when the fire occurred on the boat last Thursday evening. I think that everything possible to do under the circumstances was done. The women and children who were drowned might have been saved if the women had obeyed the instructions which were given them. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Sharp, the grandmother, and Mrs. D. Altman were simply insane with fright. Had they acted anywhere near rational, we could have gotten them forward and put life preservers on them and saved them.

"When I came on deck the fire was around the smokestack, and two of the yawl boats were blazing. It seemed as if the fire leaped from one end of the cabin to the other with magical speed. They had one stream on the fire when I first appeared, and another soon afterward. There were three streams, altogether, directed at the flames. We strove to launch the boats that were not caught, but the fire in the cabin underneath was bursting out through the skylight on all sides, and the heat was so intense that we had to abandon it. The men engaged in launching the boats would have been overcome in the act. H. B. Cowan, the watchman, and myself made a number of efforts to get the Altman party to go forward where the balance of the passengers were, but they were panic-stricken, and ran up and down as if crazy. We supposed after the first time or two that we instructed them that they would go right forward and be taken care of, but they did not. They disappeared, however, and we later went in search of them again. But the fire was running over the boat so fast that we had little time. It transpires that they had gone down in the dining room and kitchen. There, Charles Dixon, the colored waiter, and James Kinney and George Tyedt endeavored to urge the Altmans forward, but it was then too late when they got on deck again. So the men undertook to have the women hang on to the fenders on the side of the boat.

"Mrs. D. Altman was the first to drown, instead of Mrs. Sharp, the grandmother, as was at first reported. She slid down the fender, and disappeared almost at once. It is supposed that she swooned. The grandmother, who went over the side on the fender, is supposed to have been dead when she struck the water. It is believed that she died from fright. This theory is held by the life savers. The mouth was tightly closed. The crew did good work, as far as it lay in their power. William Regan, a seaman, for example, was swimming to the shore with one of the small children of the Altman family, when somebody tried to pull them both down in their excitement and eagerness. It is possible that somebody jumped from the boat on to the man and girl. At any rate, there was a shock, and he lost the little one, and could not find her again."

The crew of the Bon Voyage are unanimous in their story that the women who were lost were in very large measure responsible for it themselves, as well as for the loss of their children. They were simply unmanageable. "There was no time for coaxing,

or even carrying people against their will," said Mate Hawkes. "But if everybody had done as they were urged, there would have been no fatalities to record."

Mrs. Lizzie Cowan, maid on the Bon Voyage, was the only woman member of the crew. She is said to have been very cool and collected all through the fiery ordeal. "I was aft, talking with Mrs. D. Altman," said Mrs. Cowan last evening, "when the fire broke out. One of the passengers gave the alarm. Mrs. Altman immediately lost her nerve, and declared that the boat was lost. She ran forward, and called for her children. I ran forward myself, and later, when Mr. Hawkes and my husband looked for the Altmans, we found that they had gone aft again. The men went back and cried for them to come forward, but they were so excited they paid no heed. Later, when they did not come, Mr. Hawkes and my husband again went after them, but the smoke was so dense that nobody could see in the after cabin. The crew could hear screams, and supposed the women were in the cabin still. The men made an unsuccessful attempt to find them in the smoke, but later we learned that the women were down in the kitchen and dining room."

Mrs. Cowan had a thrilling experience herself. She had a life preserver on, and was floating in the water beside a Chicago traveling man. The latter wore a life preserver, and had a plank. The life preserver was not very securely adjusted on the woman, and she asked the traveling man if she could place one hand on his plank. "No, no," he exclaimed, excitedly. "You will sink me. Just float over there by that barrel, and catch hold of that." So Mrs. Cowan, who felt that she could not make the short distance without assistance, turned from the commercial traveler and looked for assistance elsewhere. It was afforded by the wheelman, Fred Hawkinson.

The steamer Bon Ami will remain in port until, probably, this evening. Captain Singer, of the White Line Transportation company, announces that the steamer Bradshaw will continue her semi-weekly service between Duluth-Superior and the copper country, leaving Duluth Monday and Thursday, in place of the Bon Voyage. The captain says that he shall procure another boat to take the place of the Bon Voyage as soon as possible. He is satisfied that his men on the Bon Voyage behaved as men should under the trying circumstances. "They did well," said he, "and if the people who perished had obeyed the instructions of the crew, they would be alive today. It is a very regrettable thing."