

CHRISTIAN HEROES: THEN & NOW

AMY CARMICHAEL

Rescuer of
Precious Gems

JANET & GEOFF BENGGE

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Swinging in the Rain

Waves smashed across the bow of the SS *Yokohama Maru*, sending sheets of water racing back across the deck. None of the passengers aboard noticed. They were too sick to care. Most were gathered in the ship's saloon, too scared to stay below deck as the ship shuddered and rolled violently from side to side. The smell of vomit was everywhere.

Amy Carmichael, a young Irish woman, sat in the corner sicker than she'd ever been before in her life. It felt to her as though she had been aboard ship forever, but it had been only four days. The voyage from Shanghai en route to Japan had been so calm. Halfway across the Yellow Sea, though, the ship had run into a typhoon, and as a result, she was

now being mercilessly battered by storm-ravaged seas. All Amy wanted to do was get her feet back on solid ground, and soon.

Just when she thought she could not stand to be thrown around by the sea any longer, the captain, wrapped in an oilskin parka, stumbled into the saloon. He spoke first in Japanese, reeling short, sharp sentences off his tongue. Then he turned to Amy and in broken English announced the good news. The *Yokohama Maru* was directly offshore from Shimonoseki, their destination port. Amy breathed a sigh of relief. Then the captain told her the bad news. Because of the wind and huge waves, there was no way the ship could dock at Shimonoseki. They would simply have to stay offshore and ride out the typhoon.

As the captain left the saloon, Amy vomited into the bucket beside her. She wondered how long they'd have to wait for the storm to die down. She felt so wretchedly ill. Still, she was tired of sitting and feeling sick, so she decided a walk might help settle her churning stomach. She knew it wouldn't, though. It hadn't any of the other times she'd tried it. Still, she had to get away from the gagging air of the saloon. She wrapped her woolen shawl around her shoulders and clambered to her feet. Stumbling out onto the deck, she took a deep breath. She gripped the ship's railing tightly as seawater washed around her ankles and spray lashed against her cheeks. She looked longingly in the direction of Shimonoseki and hoped it wouldn't be long before

the wind and sea calmed enough for the ship to berth.

As she gazed towards Shimonoseki, Amy saw a most unusual sight, at least for the middle of a typhoon. A steam tugboat emerged through the blinding rain and billowing seas. It came within twenty feet of the starboard side of the SS *Yokohama Maru*, bobbing up and down in time to the waves. One of the sailors yelled to the captain, and soon a crowd of passengers and crew had spilled out on deck for a closer look.

The captain of the *Yokohama Maru* and the captain of the tugboat yelled and gestured at each other. Amy couldn't understand a word of what they said, but she hoped it had something to do with towing the SS *Yokohama Maru* into dock. But apparently, towing wasn't what they had been talking about. Instead, the captain announced that the passengers were going to be transferred to the tugboat and taken into Shimonoseki. The starboard arm of the ship's derrick was lowered, and a rope net was attached to the winch line on the derrick arm. As the first passenger was placed in the rope net and hoisted into the air, Amy looked on in horror. She wanted to get her feet on solid ground in Shimonoseki as soon as possible, but this was definitely not what she had in mind. The derrick arm swung over the side of the *Yokohama Maru* toward the tugboat. The man in the rope net looked terrified as he dangled over the frothing ocean before being dumped onto the deck of the pitching, rolling

tugboat. A crewman on the tug helped the passenger out of the rope net, which was then hoisted back aboard the *Yokohama Maru* for the next passenger.

One by one, the passengers were lowered aboard the tugboat until finally it was Amy's turn. Reluctantly, she stepped into the net. Before she had a chance to change her mind, the crewman operating the winch pulled a lever, and the rope net gathered around Amy. Suddenly, she was dangling above the deck. With a jerk, the end of the derrick arm moved over the side of the ship. Amy swung like a pendulum in the rain. She looked down at the angry waves snarling up at her. Frothy spray soaked through her clothes. Then she was over the aft deck of the tug, and as she swung from side to side, the winch slowly lowered her. One of the tug's crewmen grabbed the net and steadied it as Amy was dumped bottom first onto the deck. The crewman helped her out of the net, and she huddled with the other passengers.

Finally, when all the passengers had been lowered aboard the tug, their luggage was also loaded into the net and transferred to the tugboat. After some more yelling between the captain of the tugboat and the captain of the *Yokohama Maru*, and a loud hoot of the tug's steam horn, the two boats parted.

If the trip on the *Yokohama Maru* had been treacherous, the ride on the tugboat was downright dangerous. Amy prayed frantically throughout the journey. The small tug didn't cut through the stormy

seas like the larger ship had. Instead, it rode up and over the mountainous waves. At the crest of each wave, the tug tipped forward or rolled sideways so much that Amy thought it would capsize for sure. Finally, the outline of the Japanese coast came into view, and a cheer went up from the passengers.

Amy's feet were soon back on solid ground. As the rain dripped from her felt hat and formed rivulets that ran down her cotton dress, she breathed a deep breath and slowly exhaled. For the first time in several days, she didn't feel like vomiting. She had made it to Japan. She had traveled halfway around the world, and now she was finally here. What an adventure it had been! There had been so many risks along the way. But then, risks and adventure were nothing new to Amy Carmichael. She'd always been willing to take risks to get what she wanted.

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Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)



Amy Carmichael stood on the deck of the steamer, waving good-bye once again to her old friend Robert Wilson. How could she have known she would never see him or the British Isles again? Amy was certain God had called her to India. Indeed! India would be her home for the rest of her life.

Amy's life was marked by a simple, determined obedience to God, regardless of circumstance or consequences. Her story and legacy are stunning reminders of the impact of one person who will fear God and nothing else.

Driven by love and compassion, and sustained by faith and determination, Amy Carmichael defied the cruel barriers of India's caste system. The story of this young woman from Northern Ireland is a brilliant, sparkling example of God's love generously poured out to "the least of these among us."

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