

through the sea at over seventeen knots, in spite of the deadweight kernel of inelastic coal; had imprisoned, retarded, and compressed the heated mass of atmosphere astern. High overhead, the steady procession of soft, fleecy clouds to the South-west denoted the North-east trades, deflected from the surface of the ocean into higher and unusual altitudes, acting as another compressor on the heated air-mass; which, though pinioned, was steadily advancing; driven onward by its centripetal force, and the search for cooling latitudes.

The foregoing, is told from after-knowledge; at the time, what cared I for storm-centers? The dare-devil coolness of Matson was as balm to my feeling of exultation; the timorous looks of the second mate and his repeated journeys to the barometer acted as an irritant; the fact, that, under her increased canvas, the *Marmion* took the longer overhauling, added zest to the fever of the race. The Christmas duff was salted with spray in the cooking, but the sodden dough, with the veriest tincture of rum in the watery sauce, was sweetened by the sight of the *Marmion's* stern; rising, at one moment, clean out of the water; the next, descending into the trough of the sea to the level of the foam, capping the huge rollers, fore-runners of the advancing storm.

Our decks were a seething mass of waters, rushing from side to side or end to end, with every roll or pitch from the crossing-seas. The rigging and lower sails were drenched by the knife-like spray, which shot across with a hissing, spattering sound when our weather rail rose high and foiled the green rollers in their attempt to add to the burden on our decks. In spite of this, every man on board risked life or limb to snatch an occasional look at our rival; now so near that a thin, oilskin-clan figure, clinging to the poop rail, was easily recognized as the lady of the *Marmion*.

Matson appeared to be the only disinterested man on board. He stood up to windward, holding on to the jigger rigging; apparently, paying no heed to the *Marmion*; until Pete Jansen, the big

Swede, relieved the wheel and I took my trick at the lee wheel; then, he struggled aft, and I heard him say:

"Never mind your course—put her alongside that ship!"

The Swede, turned his staring, blonde blue eyes on the skipper for a moment; then he put the wheel up a spoke or two; that was all the impression made on him by as mad a command as I have ever heard at sea—to blanket the *Marmion* in a gale of wind with heavy cross seas running, appeared to be the act of a maniac; yet Matson was as cool as if we had been sailing smoothly, in easy weather; he did not even bother to look over the side, to see what lee room we had!

In five minutes, our cutwater was flush with the *Marmion's* stern—a few moments longer, and the narrow swathe of water, between the two ships, ceased to boil and foam; it seemed cowed at the daring of the deed—even the wind on the *Marmion's* sails was stilled, as, mast by mast, the canvas quivered in useless folds.

We swept alongside her poop, so dangerously near, that our yards had the semblance of interlocking; adding anxiety to the expressions of rage and disgust, plainly visible on the weather-dinted face of Captain Styles.

There was just one little break in our triumph; when, by some freak of the wind, the *Marmion* seemed to gather way and go ahead again. It was then, I saw that sweet, fragile woman, Winifred Styles, stroke and pat the *Marmion's* rail; as if the ship were a living thing, responsive to her longing desire to defeat the foe—it reminded me of a lady. I had once seen fondling the favoured horse in a great race—but, the ship she was so proud of and loved so well was hopelessly outclassed in that weather, she dropped astern like a Rotherhithe barge racing a mail-boat; before I could well realise it, her fore-topmast staysail was refilling in a bee-line with our spanker boom.

During the blanketing, I had taken quick glances at Matson, to see what impression the wiping out of yesterday's insult had made; but he was impassive,