

This thought had barely sped, when I saw the red ensign flutter from the Marmion's poop, pause midway between boom and gaff, then roll out to the full extent—telling of a death on board.

Next moment, another flag was unfurled, this, from the mizzen-mast, midway between truck and deck. It was the stars and stripes, and instantly, Matson exclaimed:

“My God!——it's the skipper's wife.”

I remembered: Styles had wooed and won his wife in 'Frisco. The gossip of the water-front came back to me—the love of the young girl for the middle-aged skipper, of her pride in his doings, and her leaving the home of refined luxury to wed her hero, and with him the ship; for the Marmion was ever to her a part of her husband's life. Then, I thought of the beautiful face with the bright eyes and delicate complexion, on which the blush-roses chased each other; and a lump came into my throat, as, boy-like, I tried to smile, to hide the tears; for, Winifred Styles had been good to all the sailor-boys, whenever the Marmion touched port.

Matson did not speak,——small need, when I saw the convulsive shaking of his broad shoulders and noted the drawn, haggard face; as he went to his room—the death of the lady of the Marmion had removed a sweet presence from his life. Years afterwards, I saw her picture in his locket,——the clasp was worn-out with much opening.

We stood 'on an' off' through the night. Next morning the skipper sent for me, to his room. On entering, I was astonished at the change; for all the flowers, on the plants he tended with such care, had been shorn off. But my eyes quickly travelled to the table, to a small cross, wrought out of maiden-hair fern, with a spray of orange blossom at the foot and a bunch of white geranium in the center, on which nestled a solitary red rose; round about the cross were lying all the other blooms.

“Wilson, I am sending a boat to the Marmion with a letter of sympathy to Captain Styles, and to tell him, the race is off—not much sport racing with

cripples, is there?—I want you to take these flowers and——well, you know what to do with them——” concluded Matson abruptly, as he bent over the table; ostensibly to pack the flowers, in reality, to hide his twitching face.

The day was fine, with just the remnants of yesterday's seas undulating the water—a short pull put us on board the Marmion. I gave Matson's letter to the mate and asked permission to place the flowers on the body—there was no need to ask if the captain's wife were dead; the sorrow stricken faces told me that Matson had read the death signal aright.

The mate left me for a few moments, taking the letter in to Captain Styles; then, he beckoned to me from the saloon door. I hesitated——: for though I had seen shipmates struck down to death—I had never yet looked on the face of a dead woman; and she, one who had been kind to me.

There was no need for fear—her body was lying peacefully on the settee in the captain's room, just as if she were asleep—the oilskin coat was unbuttoned and open, the sou'wester had been untied and thrown back; disclosing the beautiful, childlike face, looking more beautiful and more childlike still, in death. The tell-tale pallor and sudden spasm of acute suffering, which I knew must have been there, had passed with the death struggle—the rose tints had come back—the stilled eyelashes symbolized sleep. Under the oilskin coat, I saw the edge of the unsewn, canvas shroud; so, I placed Matson's cross on her breast and strewed his flowers by her side, and made way for others, who were coming to take a last look at their captain's wife—ever, a bright, brave-hearted shipmate!

Captain Styles shook my hand as I went out—it was the grip of a broken-down, sorrow-laden man. He told me: the dismasting of the Marmion had broken his wife's heart—his way of putting it—but, I remembered, the frequent waves of pallor on her face and the pain-quiver crossing the winsome lips.

At noon, they buried her in a sailor's grave—in fulfilment of her oft expressed wish—the Whitkirk standing by, with