



Marmy's Blood Money

► EVERY NOW AND THEN we run across a Power reader who has either sailed aboard ship or worked ashore with Marmaduke Surfaceblow. Result is always an unusual story, to say the least. Yesterday R B Smith of the New York Board of Transportation told us he sailed with Marmy years ago. We got busy and jotted down a few things that add up to the following story. You will notice, for a change, Marmaduke isn't telling this story on someone else. We really switched the cards on the old boy this time.

Back in 1914, the transatlantic liner SS *Californian* of the old Anchor Line signed on a fireman in Glasgow who

soon became known as a character aboard ship. He was a big burly American, named Marmaduke Surfaceblow. Seems that Surfaceblow held an American unlimited chief engineer's license. But he missed his American ship in Glasgow and signed on the British ship as a fireman to work his way back to the States.

The *Californian* had twelve Scotch marine boilers of three fires each. One low fire in the center and two high wing fires. She burned coal and, like many ships of that period, she paid a bonus to the firemen for keeping steam up near the popping-off pressure. This point was marked by a red line, known

aboard British ships as the "blood money" as possible.

A fireman's reputation depended on the amount of blood money he earned. That made competition keen and there was plenty of jealousy. Not only that but firemen would work all the time of the trade to make it tough for the relief to earn a bonus. A favored scheme was to leave dirty fires boiling with clinkers. That made it hard to keep up steam while cleaning fires. There were plenty of hard feelings and fights.

Marmaduke was easily the biggest fireman aboard. He was 6 feet 4 inches and must have weighed 240 pounds in those days. But it was all beer and muscle. And the way he handled a sledge bar heaved in that coal was a pleasure to watch. His fires were all in top shape. And Marmy would make his rounds from boiler to boiler, helping each of his watch mates who needed help to keep their fires in top shape.

After the first few sea watches, it was easy to see that Marmy's watch would hit the jackpot for keeping the steam near the blood. His relief, a rowdy but rel- chested, Glasgow Irishman named Matt Feely, had been kingpin in the fire room up until Marmy signed on. But Matt played dirty pool and gave his relief, a little London Englishman named Rod Wicks, a tough time.

Marmy took sides with Wicks and started leaving dirty fires for Matt Feely. But Matt was only good at dishing out and complained about Marmaduke to his watch engineer. Then one day Matt buttonholed the chief engineer up on deck.

Marmy got tired of Matt's complaints. One watch he made up his mind to really give Matt something to grip about. Just before he was relieved of two bells, he hoed away the red coal in the middle of a high fire. Then he heaved in the heavy ship anvil. Next he covered up the anvil with burned coal.

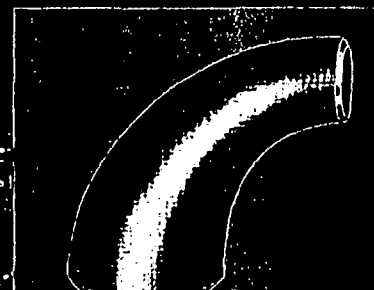
Matt came on watch and started checking his fires as usual. When he came to that huge "clinker" in the middle of that high fire, he let out a roar. After trying to break it up with his sledge bar, he called in the watch engineer. The engineer helped Matt wrestle with it, then sent the chief engineer to see what was going on.

The three of them finally worked the anvil out onto the floorplates. But the chief was poppin' mad and he sent a messenger to get Marmaduke. The messenger found Marmy in the fire room playing a red-hot game of poker and nursing a bottle of Sandpaper Gin.

When Marmy was told that the Chief (Continued on page 196)



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