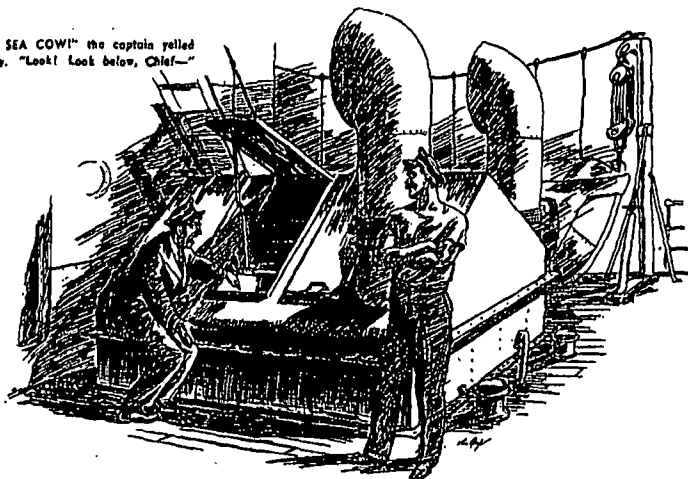


"HOLY SEA COW!" the captain yelled excitedly. "Look! Look below, Chief—"



Marmy's Anvil Chorus

► "ONLY WAY TO GET AROUND a trouble maker is to ignore him," some character was saying when I barged into the Bent Propeller Bar—that fountain of knowledge and emporium of liquid refreshments all rolled into one.

"BILGEWATER ON IGNORING TROUBLE MAKERS!" roared Marmaduke Surfaceblow, the foghorn voice coming to life at his end of the crowded bar. "I'll tell you how I put one foul-ball in his place by giving him plenty of rope."

That did it. Old Marmaduke was at bat again and everyone listened for the usual four-bagger story. The old boy let go his bottle of Sandpaper Gin, rested his back against the bar and blasted away.

"Back in 1942 the port engineer of the Munson Line came aboard the S S *Munrolean* in New York soon as we tied up from a South American trip.

"Chief," he began, "I'm transferring you to the S S *Munargo*."

"What's wrong with her Chief, George Mitchell?" I asked.

"George is getting jumpy as a porpoise," he answered. "Captain Westwood keeps sticking his nose into the engine room and sending reports to the line's president. And you know Westwood is the president's son-in-law. So the port captain's afraid to tell him to go soak his head. George Mitchell, on the other

hand, is one of those conscientious engineers who takes everything to heart, so I'll have to give him your ship."

"Well," I began, "I hate to leave this vessel now that I've got her shipshape. I'll take the *Munargo*, but if anyone gets a nervous breakdown, you can bet your sea boots it won't be me."

"I moved my gear across the dock to the *Munargo* next morning. And George Mitchell took over my berth on the *Munrolean*."

"Captain Westwood sized me up when I signed the articles that afternoon, but he didn't say anything—still, I could see he didn't like the cut of my jib."

"The *Munargo* was a Liberty ship with the usual triple-expansion engine. In New York the assistant engineers made the routine repairs and adjustments that they always make in port when the main engine is shut down. The third assistant had keyed up on the main engine's low-pressure crosshead brasses. But soon as we opened up the throttle on our way to Havana that Sunday, that crosshead started pounding."

"Captain Westwood was in his usual sarcastic mood at breakfast next morning. He greeted me, 'Good morning, Mr. Surfaceblow. Your noisy engine has kept me awake all night.'"

"Before I could say anything, he continued. 'To me it sounds like one of

your careless men left a wrench or something inside the engine. I suggest you open her up in Havana and remove it.'"

"Left a wrench inside," I almost echoed. Then I wondered if he was stringing me along. How could anyone who had gone to sea long enough to work up to captain believe that a large wrench could be left in the cylinder without wrecking it. And with only a half-inch clearance between the piston and cylinder, at most. But this was the first time a ship's captain had ever given me advice about my job. I could see why George Mitchell had turned a nervous wreck. And I could see that I'd have to teach this skipper a lesson.

"That's only one of my headaches right now," I answered, lifting my salties before I blew a gasket.

"What's the other?" he snapped, as if surprised that an engineer would confide in him.

"It's the ship's anvil," I said. "I'll need it in Havana but we can't find it anywhere." That information didn't impress him and he changed the subject. But at each meal he harped on the engine. The knock did get worse. And his theories about the cause of that knock also got worse. But I didn't say anything—just gave him plenty of rope by agreeing with almost everything he said. (Continued on page 218)



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