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**THE VALKYRIE**

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She was the "Valkyrie"—"War Maiden"—and she was old. In her prime she had won all the ocean-going races in which she had sailed. But she had not raced in many a year.

The Valkyrie was a racing sloop, simple in design and rig. Her rigging consisted of a large mainsail and her fore-sails could be alternated among three, jinny, working jib and a large balloon spinnaker. Her mast and spars were of solid pine and rather heavy for a boat of her size; she was forty-three feet on the waterline and had a long slim racing bow. The Valkyrie had a draft of ten feet.

I had not seen the Valkyrie in ten years and one day walking along the waterfront of Marblehead, I noticed this black weather-beaten boat. Something about the defiant way she rode at anchor made me think of that swift war maiden. I stopped a grizzled old shellback and asked him what her name was. He seemed to take offence at my question, but he told me something which made my heart throb within me. She was the Valkyrie. He then told me that he owned her and that his name was Tom Jarvis—Cap'n Tom Jarvis. It was this same Tom Jarvis who, in the twenties had skippered the Valkyrie to many of her most glorious victories.

Jarvis and I fell to reminiscing about old races and racing days in which we had both sailed. The one which we remembered best was the Sandy Hook to Bermuda race in '28. It was a race in which the sea and the wind seemed to be in a conspiracy to drive all things off the sea. Only two boats finished. The Valkyrie was far in the lead in spite of her great handicap of nine hours and thirty-eight minutes.

We continued talking about races and boats for two hours although it seemed only a few minutes, so engrossed were we. As I took my leave I happened to mention the Marblehead to Halifax race which was only five days away. As I spoke I could see a great yearning come into his eyes. I knew that once more he wished to lead the Valkyrie out to sea, to feel her tug at the tiller, to feel her lifting as she met the sea in her way and I knew he wanted the feeling of taking the first gun as she flashed across the finish line.



I met Jarvis again the next day, as if prearranged. He greeted me and mentioned the Marblehead race. He was going to enter Valkyrie. Immediately, I volunteered for crew and he took me. Of her old crew only Tim MacCarthy, John Campbell, and Bob MacDougal were to be had. We commenced that same day to get her ready. It was a work of love.

We worked from dawn to dusk on the old Valkyrie and had her in top condition, at least for her, by the day of the race.

The day of the race dawned bright and clear and led by Captain Tom we went aboard the Valkyrie at six o'clock. The race was to start at eight.

Tim hoisted and set the jinny while I got the hook out of the water and with Cap'n Tom at the tiller we "worked" our way out of the anchorage and set course for the starting line. Once clear of the anchorage Bob and John hoisted the mainsail.

We arrived at the starting line at 7:30. Cap'n Tom went ashore to the officials' hut while we manoeuvred around the bay. About fifteen minutes later we picked Tom up and with him in charge we loafed around the starting line waiting for the five minute gun.

Promptly at five to eight the gun roared out and Cap'n Tom, stop watch in hand, started the Valkyrie away from the line. He was going to sail for two and a half minutes, put about and come down on the line hoping to cross it as the starting gun went off.

This was a tense moment for upon the start could well depend the outcome of the race. There were seventy odd sail jockeying for position at the line.

As the time came to come about, Cap'n Jarvis gave the orders in his big deep voice. "Stand by to come about," and we prepared to shift from leeward to windward sheets and then, "haul aft fore; hard aft main", and "helm's a lee; let fly; set fore; set main," and we were on a new tack heading for the starting line. We passed the "Hornet", a big saucy looking craft, all modern, with hollow booms and a large mast capable of carrying an immense mainsail and two or three large balloon spinnakers. She could show an impressive amount of canvas if she wished. The Hornet



was figured to take the race hands down, but we said our silent prayers and hoped.

The line was very close now and you could feel the tenseness over the whole fleet. We crossed the line but I had not heard the gun, we would have to come about and recross it. Cap'n Tom said nothing and then the boom of the gun echoed across the sound. I looked toward the committee boat waiting for our number to be hoisted but it was not. It was then that I remembered. We were some two miles from the wharf where the gun was placed and Cap'n Tom crossed the line when we saw the smoke from the gun showing that it had been fired. This trick had given us an early lead which we held during the daylight hours of that first day. The Hornet was close upon our heels now a whole tack, now a half a tack. It was too close for comfort. We nursed the old Valkyrie along and she responded with little bursts of speed just when we were sure the Hornet would pass us. All the while we prayed it wouldn't come to blow for it might prove too much of a strain on our boat. The Hornet was new and strong and could take bad weather better than we.

As dusk closed in about us we could see the large black wind clouds piling up astern of us. It was going to blow. All night the gale howled about us and we lost sight and interest in the Hornet. Our only thought was to keep our Valkyrie afloat. We were forced to take off our headsail and finally to put a double reef in the mainsail, no mean task in a gale at night. All though the night the Valkyrie labored in the short steep seas.

Early in the morning the wind abated and the sea moderated. We shook out the reefs and reset our headsails. Shortly afterward a thick fog closed in about and the mournful wail of our fog horn seemed to echo our thoughts for we were sure the Hornet was well ahead of us.

About four in the morning we burst out of the fog bank into a clear starry night and there two miles in front of us was the Hornet. Cracking on all the sail that was prudent we tried to overhaul her. At first the gap seemed to close and then we could close her no longer. For the next three hours we shadowed her at about a mile distant. Time was running out, we were near the finish. Cable head was getting quite close now and once around it the finish was only a short distance away. Could we do

it? We shook our heads and prayed. But Cap'n Tom thought of a trick. Extending out from Cable Head for quite a distance was an area of shoal water. Was there enough for the Valkyrie? We hoped there was. Cap'n Tom altered course to cross the shoal, the Hornet kept to the deep water to take the long way around.

We gradually began to creep even with her and then ever so slow forged ahead and then faster. We had taken the lead but we were in a shoal area. We bumped slightly and then with a great crash that shook the old lady to her timbers we struck and slid off into deep water a mile ahead of the Hornet.

Water was rushing in now for we had broken her back. There was a great split in her keel. Quickly we manned the pumps as we thought to stem the flow. Surely we would sink but we had not counted on Valkyrie like the glorious fighting lady she was. She shook her head and forged on. The line was very close but so was the Hornet.

Valkyrie was very sluggish now but we crept closer and closer to the line. Hornet was only a few lengths astern and creeping closer, now she was even with us and then it happened. Bang went the finish gun. Had we won - - - -?

W. A. D. '55.

