



Going aboard.

After a time in the engine-room we couldn't help coming to the conclusion that the only thing that doesn't register is the heat. And how any person could stay long enough even to start the machinery is more than we could imagine.

On the bridge it was as black as thunder and blowing a gale. It was nearly midnight and the sea was moving and rolling into blackness, tossing in an angry restlessness: the round moon was falling drunkenly through clouds, pulling, shoving, tugging, and bumping its way so violently through the night that we would have felt no surprise to see it give up its stormy efforts and fall into the sea round us. On watch was the third officer, the helmsman, and the lookout who shares the trick at the wheel (it must be a relief for him to shelter from that tearing wind in the comparative quiet of the wheelhouse). At midnight they will be relieved, not to be called again (except in emergency) until the ship is outside the heads at Lyttelton.

We are running at 17 knots into a sou'wester, an easy speed; the "Rangatira" can steam at more than 22 knots (she has touched 24 knots on the run to Picton), but on the 174-mile trip from Wellington to Lyttelton no such effort is necessary. In 1924 the "Wahine" set an inter-Island express record run of 8 hours 21 minutes (averaging 20.9 knots) that was not broken until 1933 when the "Rangatira" covered the distance in 8 hours 16 minutes. As far as is known, the actual record for the

trip is still held by H.M.S. "Diomedé," which in 1933 took less than seven and a half hours.

But to-night we are attempting to break no records; the two propellers are turning at only 152 revolutions a minute. No light shows on the bridge except for the faint glow from the illuminated instrument dials. In one corner is the fire-detector panel which encloses the mouthpieces of a number of tubes leading from the engine-room, the holds, and other parts of the ship. A draught of air flowing continuously through each of the tubes draws smoke in any section of the ship into the alarm box. In the holds smoke from a cigarette is sufficient to sound the alarm; and one night a stable lad who was attending his race-horses in their stalls was most surprised and mystified when an officer from the bridge popped his head into the hold and said, "Please put out that cigarette." But the fire detector is only one of the "gadgets" to be found on the bridge. Not the least interesting of the others is the latest in depth-finding apparatus and a Marconi direction-finder. Tele-motor control from the bridge is used for the electro-hydraulic steering gear and for use in manœuvring is a bow rudder.

If it wasn't for the howl of the wind, the swish of the sea tops, there would be quiet on the bridge with an almost complete absence of vibration, which is one of the advantages of a turbo-electric-driven ship. On we cut through the night and over the miles. It was nearly 1 o'clock, a light was winking from the coast; somewhere there was Kaikoura with its fishing fleet, its collection of shops, buildings, and houses, its farms, and those high grand mountains behind, the snow, and the bush. But to us there was only midnight blackness, with the regular flash of a light about ten miles away over our starboard bow.

At least there was no fog to-night. Soon we would be passing the "Wahine." Few would know about the meeting of those two ships in the night: except on the boat deck, where an accordion had been playing earlier and people had been dancing and singing, where there were still couples quiet in the even deeper