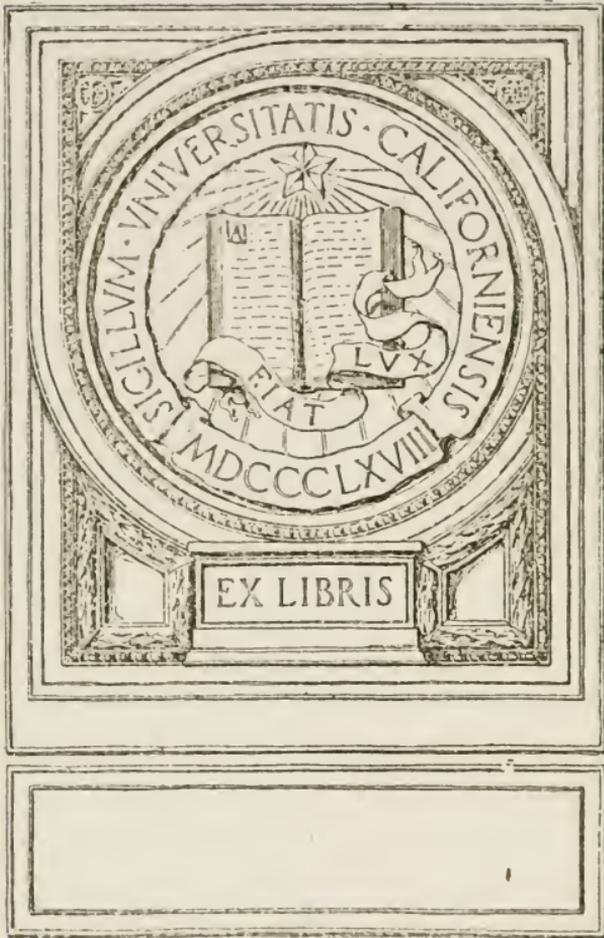


THE FLEET
FROM WITHIN

SYDNEY A. MOSELEY



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THE FLEET FROM WITHIN

M A H A N

ON NAVAL WARFARE

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[*Frontispiece.*

THE FLEET FROM WITHIN

BEING THE IMPRESSIONS
OF A R.N.V.R. OFFICER

BY

SYDNEY A. MOSELEY

AUTHOR OF "WITH KITCHENER IN CAIRO"
"THE TRUTH ABOUT THE DARDANELLES," ETC.



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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

I AM not concerned in this work with the strategical aspect of the greatest Navy in the world. That has already been dealt with by experts. Rather do I wish in these impressions to present to the public a phase of the Citizen Navy at war which has been hitherto overlooked. I refer to the human phase. It seems to have been forgotten that the Great War produced a new Navy as well as a new Army, and it is the atmosphere consequent upon the new order of things that I have striven to represent in these pages.

I have been prompted towards publishing this book by the interest shown by a number of my old shipmates and friends in the Grand Fleet—R.N., R.N.R., and R.N.V.R. ! It was through the good offices of the late Commander-in-Chief Coast of Scotland and my colleagues on his staff that I had the

unique privilege of going down in a super-submarine, of flying in a modern airship, patrolling in a bombing warplane, and of going out during battle practice in the greatest of modern battle-cruisers, H.M.S. *Renown*, known to a mystified public as a "Hush! hush!" ship.

One of the most potent causes of our triumph in the greatest of all wars was the immediate, unrelenting, and silent pressure of the Navy. Never has the popular and ancient boast "Britannia rules the Waves" been so completely illustrated.

Nothing is easier, more futile or more mischievous than merely destructive criticism. The iconoclast, however sincere, is worse than useless. The fireside critic or the bucolic amateur who imagined he could run the Navy by illustrations made with a pointer in the air should hardly have deserved the attention of any serious-minded thinker. But it was just this type of individual who was, during the earlier stages of the war, most energetic in his criticism of the Service. The Navy needs no defence at my

hands. Its record of deeds achieved silently speaks for itself. Despite the clamour for a theatrical display of its wares, and for a trumpet-sounding acclamation of its accomplishments, the Navy was content to go on working quietly, systematically, and effectively. I have always averred that, by reason of the Fleet alone, Britain did her share and more than her share in the Great War. Without our Navy the War would have been at an end after a month's duration at the outside. The gigantic expenditure on our mighty Fleet has been more than justified. We swept the seas and held them against all unfriendly comers from the beginning of the War. With a weak British Fleet Germany would have played havoc with her foes.

As for the impatient critics who stated that we had not been active enough, the result is a complete answer to their ignorant cavilling. They forgot that Nelson also maintained a lonely and trying vigilance, before the fleet for which he was waiting could be brought to battle. At that time there was no submarine problem to tackle. In the war

that has been so successfully terminated the Navy not only retained the mastery of the seas, but was doing daily battle with this hidden menace, besides convoying food, soldiers, and munitions, not only for Great Britain but for her Allies. Until the end the British Fleet was eagerly waiting for the German Fleet should it venture outside its thoroughly mined lair.

As we have seen, Germany's end justified the British means.

SYDNEY A. MOSELEY.

PRESS CLUB, LONDON,
1919.

I am indebted to my friend, Graeme Williams, F.R.Hist.S., F.R.G.S., F.G.S., for his labour of love in compiling the index to this book, and to Mr. J. A. Hammerton for the wholesome Editorial appreciation.

S. A. M.

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THE FLEET FROM WITHIN

CHAPTER I

JOINING THE NAVY

No more popular but mistaken notions exist than those of life in the Navy. Everybody outside the Service seems to build up a host of misconceptions which thrive—until the real thing is met.

I have in the chapter "Queer Fish" told of some of the strange naval ratings who went to sea, only to be swallowed up in a foreign world afloat!

Let me first tell the experiences of a party of young men who had "done their bit" elsewhere, and, after rejoining the civilian world for a while, groped a way into the Navy. There were six of us. One had come from

the other end of the world, a "young man" of forty-three, leaving his plantations, to give the Old Country a hand. The second and third were discharged from the Army after service abroad. The fourth was a C3 man, just come of Army age. The fifth, curiously enough, had joined the Officers' Training Corps with me in August 1914, had been wounded early in the War, was invalided out with "heart," and "wangled" into the Flying Corps, where, after a few flights, he was sent about his business. We both decided that a life on the ocean wave would "pull us up" again, and bring back the glow of health—and our good sight—which we carelessly flaunted before the Medical Officer at Mill Hill, years back, in applying for our commissions.

The usual sea voyage taken as a passenger, we argued, is all very well; but when it is not made compulsory one is apt to get fed up and live below, or break away at the nearest port. That spoils the health cure. Once in the Navy, you've simply got to remain afloat until the life becomes a habit,

mental cobwebs, thread by thread, are blown away, and cheeks begin to bloom again——

We reached the Admiralty, and eagerly told the man behind the counter in the temporary offices at Whitehall that we had come to join the Navy.

“What branch?” he asked, with a twinkle in his eyes.

I looked at my friend and he returned the gaze and said nothing.

“You with the glasses,” said the man to my friend, “what’s your category?”

“Category?—what’s that?”

The mysteries of the medical groups had not interested him in the trenches or in hospital. All he knew was that he possessed a final discharge from the Army. He showed this to the man.

“This isn’t a recruiting office,” he said, “but if I were you I’d try ‘Coastguard Reserves,’ 58 Victoria Street. Good morning.”

.

“Fifty-eight Victoria Street” has become

a landmark to a large number of ambitious young men. Here were the offices—hidden away in all modesty—of the Admiral Commanding Coastguards Reserves.

The secretary, Fleet Paymaster Lynes, was extremely helpful and courteous. But the formalities, the investigation, and credential records were of a very thorough and anxious order. We went in eager and anxious; we came out *painfully* anxious. I paid several visits to No. 58. . . .

“So far, so good,” said the businesslike secretary, one day. “Hope in a few days to give you permission to buy your uniform.”

I nearly collapsed. Mine had been indeed a long and trying vigil. They had been calling for men from the housetops, but when you applied, they told you, in effect, to go to the deuce. That heart-breaking business, however, is another and a longer story.

My friend and I were finally examined by the Fleet Surgeon at the Admiralty.

“Ship-work, harbour,” he marked our cards.

Again I looked at my friend, and he returned the gaze in silence.

“What is the rank of the secretary?” he asked me.

“Oh—er . . . what is the rank of the secretary?” I asked the orderly.

“Fleet Paymaster.”

“Whew! . . . Paymaster of the whole Fleet . . .”

That day we seemed to meet several “paymasters of the whole Fleet,” and somehow we were disappointed that the man we had met did not pay the entire Fleet. And we wondered why he *was* called a Fleet Paymaster if he didn't pay everybody in the Navy.

In a few days we were invited to purchase our uniforms.

“What rank?” asked the tailor.

“Assistant Paymaster,” we replied in unison.

“R.N., R.N.R., or R.N.V.R.?” he asked. What an absurd question!

While he argued the matter out, I took a surreptitious glance at my papers.

“Why,” I said, with fine dignity, “R.N.V.R., of course.”

.

We wondered how many pieces of gold braid we would have, and if any gold would be tacked on to our caps. We wondered whom we would have to salute, who would salute us, what was the seaman (we called him sailor then, and—horrors!—“Jack Tar”) with three stripes—was he a sergeant? Indeed we had to forget the Army, and begin our education in the Navy. It would seem incongruous, at first impression, that men so ignorant of the Service should be given commissions in it. On the other hand, all that was required of us was “superior education,” the highest credentials, brains—(“Oh, you must have brains,” we were told)—and an ability to keep one’s mouth closed. We were to be tested to the full, a few days hence; but that day, oblivious of what we had let ourselves in for, we marched down the Strand, differentiating

between a much-braided hotel commissionaire—dressed up as an admiral—a Marconi boy sucking toffee—he certainly was dressed as a junior naval officer—and a real live naval commander, who bustled by before we had time to make out these fine distinctions. It takes time—and even time, we found, failed to help us make out who was who.

We tried several book-shops in order to get a book that would help us in our first naval essay. None was obtainable, so I hope this record of our actual experiences will prove a help to those in a similar plight.

What puzzled us besides these distinctions in rank was what naval etiquette required of us. In those days I blushed at my ignorance. Since then I have found in my travels that this ignorance is quite general.

Changes, too, were taking place, and perhaps I had better mention here the important improvement in the ranks of officers which was announced in November 1918. The “executive curl” has now become general in all branches. Assistant Paymaster is now termed Paymaster Sub-lieutenant, a

surgeon is now Surgeon-Lieutenant, and so on. The white stripe parallel with the stripe or stripes of gold braid indicates a Paymaster or Accountant branch. The scarlet stripe parallel with the gold braid indicates a Medical branch, while the green stripe parallel with gold is that of the Engineer branch.

In the Army everything is merged. The regular, the territorial, the volunteer, the clerk, the accountant, the Ordnance or the Service Corps are all one. They wear the same shade of khaki, and their "pips" are similar. In the Navy, the regular officer is distinguished by his straight gold-braided stripes, the Royal Naval Reserve by entwined gold-braided stripes, and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve by single gold-braided stripes sewn on in a crinkly fashion. There are other branches, such as the Transport, whose excellent work has earned unstinted praise in naval circles, but who are nevertheless not naval men, and although they have the gold stripes—a trifle thinner—and executive curl, they are not really com-

missioned naval officers, and are not entitled to the salute. Then there is the Submarine Wireless Officer, whose sole distinction, understood by one naval officer in a hundred, is a square instead of a curl above his stripes. Then there are the Marconi boys—but then, if I were to enumerate all these separate bodies it would bewilder the new naval officer. Let it suffice him to know the three outstanding naval branches, the R.N., the R.N.R., and the R.N.V.R., and the rest will come with experience—if he is in the Service long enough.

Ranks are comparatively easy to read at a glance. One stripe ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch) indicates a Sub-Lieutenant, two a Full Lieutenant, two and a half (that is, two thick ones and a thin one of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in the middle) is a Lieutenant-Commander; three full stripes is a Commander; four indicates a Captain; one very wide stripe ($1\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick) is a Commodore. This stripe of the same thickness, surmounted by one of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, is that of a Rear-Admiral, the wide stripe and two narrower ones Vice-Admiral; the wide stripe and three nar-

rower ones signify an Admiral, and the thick one and four thin ones that of an Admiral of the Fleet.

I shall in due course explain the actual difference between the "pukka" officer, the Reserve officer, and the Volunteer Reserve officer; but at the risk of repeating myself, I shall say here that the R.N.R. is composed of men who have made the sea their career in the capacity of officers of the Merchant Fleet. The Volunteer Reserve comprises a mixed lot. Many are old Merchant Service officers who have preferred the R.N.V.R. to the R.N.R., others are technical experts, some are yachtsmen, while a good many are just highly efficient land-lubbers.

The next thorn in our early career cropped up when we were ordered "to repair" to H.M.S. *Pembroke*. We sat in a tea-shop in the Strand, three of us, and wondered what kind of a super-Dreadnought she was; how we were to board her; what we were to say; what we had to do, and generally how an officer of the Senior Service of His Majesty

the King should carry himself. H.M.S. *Pembroke* we understood was lying at Chatham, so it behoved us to hurry, lest the good ship, waiting our pleasure, might be kept back from an important engagement.

We were saved the first serious *faux pas* of our new calling by meeting a friend who knew the ropes—through having paid dearly for the experience. He laughed loudly when we asked, with an air of knowing things, where “she was lying.”

“You’ll find her lying in a massive set of brick buildings,” he said.

Lesson Number 1. “Ships” may really mean stations. So it was. No clambering up the gangway. No “ship ahoy” yet, no “submarine on the starboard, sir!” no dark and stormy nights. Not even physical drill. A school—a stone building ashore, just as in the days of yore—where you attended at stated hours, did home work, and went home to bed like good boys. Marry! but this was going to be something different from what I had expected.

.

To the new-comer nothing inspires so deep a consciousness of the greatness and conservatism of the Navy as a visit to a Royal Naval Barracks. A sense of grandeur, a spirit of intense dignity, is ever present.

It was an excellent idea to send us newly gazetted officers to take our training at Chatham. From the moment we entered the town till the moment we left it to take up duties elsewhere we were never allowed, by the bearing of officers and men alike, to forget our status as officers of the King's Navy. The streets were packed with seamen and soldiers, but not one failed to recognise our rank, comparatively humble as it was. I learnt there and then how easy it is for the men to make or mar an officer.

The great gilded gates of the barracks were flung open at our approach by an ever-vigilant sentry, who directed us to the officers' mess. Here was a seething crowd of officers in all sorts of attire—Regular and Reserve officers, midshipmen—we did not yet refer to them as "snotties"—be-flannelled young lieutenants about to snatch a few hours' re-

spite ashore, marine officers, and—an innovation at that time—merchant captains in mufti who had come to pick up a few hints on the methods of dealing with the German submarines.

In the grounds adjoining the drill-hall were assembled a ship's company from a Dreadnought just in port. Somehow, this array of men in white overalls and caps was more fascinating than watching a brigade of infantrymen at manœuvres.

Nothing disturbs the serenity of these wonderful fellows. As an example of their coolness and method, this naval barracks in war time well reflects life on our ships at sea. By a coincidence I was afforded an example of the British seaman's imperturbability in an unexpected crisis. I had come up from the Grand Fleet base to report at the barracks. I found I would have to stay the night. My cabin—rooms ashore, as well as afloat, are "cabins"—was on the top floor, and the Huns chose that evening to pay us a visit from the air. I heard the noise of gun-fire and bomb-dropping, but we had

grown accustomed to such music, and I did not trouble to stir. In a few minutes, however, a steward came in to inform me that "they were over the building and had dropped a bomb." Officers, he said, were ordered below.

That bomb, you remember, was one of the few Hun bull's-eyes. It fell on the top of the men's quarters and killed a large number of the fellows whom I had seen drilling a few hours previously. The Huns were still above the building when I went across to the drill-hall. In the semi-darkness the scenes were weird and soul-piercing. But what was so stirring to watch was the whole-hearted contempt the surviving sailors had for the presence of danger. I believe I was the first officer present, but there was no need to give orders to such men. They worked expeditiously and carefully, removing the *débris* of broken glass and timber, the dead and the dying bodies of their comrades.

I shall never forget this example of the *matelot's* thoroughness. Before the raid was

over all the victims had been removed for treatment or burial, and the drill-hall was once more—apart from the damage—cleaned up and made ship-shape.

Our orders were to join the Coding classes. At the barracks entrance, the side gate is used by ratings and the centre gate by officers. Within, officers are expected to use the paved path, and the men the wide asphalted path.

Here was an endless stream of officers of all ranks and branches. And here, too, one could quietly “take in” the situation and atmosphere. Here were our brother officers.

The Signalling School was on the other side of the barracks. A “brass hat,” that is, an officer with the rank of Commander and upwards, who wears gold oak leaves in his cap, on passing, stopped one of our officers and asked him where he would like to go. I rather fancied the reply of my colleague was a bit unmilitary, and I tried to give him the hint. He failed to take

it, and so the Commander called him aside and explained to him, in a kindly tone, what were his duties to an officer of superior rank. I was glad he troubled to do this. As it was, I have since found out that very few officers trouble to correct their subordinates, even in flagrant cases of this sort. Which is a pity.

In summing up briefly this first part of a new officer's career, let me advise novices :

Be natural, quiet, and remember your rank.

Take an early lesson in a busy street in distinguishing the ranks and ratings—Navy and Army.

Never fail to salute a superior officer, Lieutenant-Commanders and upwards.

Don't expect a "high old time" in the Navy. Life ashore or afloat is one of routine and hard work. Occasionally a soft job is found—but never for you ;—never for you.

CHAPTER II

CHATHAM BARRACKS IN WAR-TIME

THE first day at a Royal Naval Barracks is uplifting. The atmosphere is healthy, the routine simple but steady; everybody goes about his work with a quiet confidence, but with a business-like precision that keeps everybody else up to the mark. In the drill-hall the recruits are practising at their hammocks; some look anxious, but nearly all are happy and already settling down to their new life. In the great parading-ground a wonderful assembly of seamen is at drill, and the spectacle is so arresting that some of us new officers are nearly late at our instructional classes.

Already we have picked up a few points. At sunset, when the Admiral's flag is hauled down to the sound of the bugle, every officer

and man in the vicinity must halt and come to attention, facing the flag. If you are an officer, you must salute; if a rating, you stand to attention.

A sharp man picks up such points; there is no time to teach him these little ceremonies as well as his important duties. At the same time one looks very foolish if, through ignorance of these life-long customs, he is the exception in failing to observe them.

At dawn the flag is hauled up, and the same ceremony—with a different musical setting—is carried out.

Procedure in the officers' mess ashore is not so strictly formal as that when afloat, especially in war-time. The "pukka" seaman, however, is most jealous of these time-honoured customs, and is always quick to notice—although he never remarks on it—any transgression from them. It is therefore proper and courteous for a layman to become cognisant of such small points before making his *début*. It is all very well to say these things do not matter in war-time; but life

in the Navy, despite the warlike occupations, offers sufficient time for any ceremonies to be observed, and it is priggish and improper for a new-comer to ignore them.

The Chatham mess is ideally arranged. It is spacious, light, and airy, with a balcony from which a marine band plays two or three times a week. Of the four meals daily, dinner is the most formal. One is not expected to dress in war-time, but punctuality is imperative. Late-comers should apologise to the President, and if he should be new to the Service, he will probably be surprised to receive the reply "Please."

"Excuse me, sir, for being late; I was detained."

"Please," replies the President, which means, "Certainly, most certainly, and I am very pleased to grant it!"

The new officer, before being "put wise" to this purely naval colloquialism, will probably blush and stammer out the excuse again, prefixed with the word "please."

One new officer I know actually did this, and his embarrassment grew all the more

when the President, imagining he had not been heard, repeated, "Please."

"I—er—said 'please,' sir!" said the officer.

Indeed, nothing puzzles a new-comer so much as these customs in the senior service. There are laws—written and unwritten—which are inexorable. Woe betide the culprit who innocently breaks any of them. The etiquette of a military mess is not in the least the same as that around which a naval officers' mess is conducted. The first thing an Army officer who came aboard my ship one day asked me, was whether he was supposed to stay all through the dinner, as he had to get away early. I told him what he might do in that circumstance, and, incidentally, mentioned a few other customs, at which he was amazed. I told him, for instance, that it would be as well if he refrained from inquiring after my sister—or any other lady—at table, at any rate until after the King's health had been drunk; that, also before the King's health had been

drunk, it would never do to make a wager or leave the table without the express permission of the President.

My friend, the soldier, was much surprised to find that a dinner in a naval officers' mess, even in war-time, is a very formal affair. In the Army it is different, but so are many other things, to which we will come in due course. The President, a senior officer, sits at the head of the table, with a Vice-President opposite. Punctually to time he raps the table with his polished hammer and says, very informally, "For what we are about to receive, thank God" (it sounds like "Fwatwereboutreceivethangod"); whereupon the dozens of orderlies, who have been waiting for the signal, hand round the dishes—the President, of course, being served first, and the Vice-President next. These orderlies, in their waiting attire, look like civilians, but they are either marines or "square-rigged" men, *i.e.* men with peaked cap with a red anchor badge. These men, by the way, are usually writers (or clerks), sick-berth stewards, or waiters. In uniform they

resemble the R.N.A.S., but they are, in fact, of an altogether different training. The latter are alert, and always acknowledged an officer; the former were not so punctilious in this respect.

To go back to our *moutons*. These restless waiters, upon the word, go careering round with the dishes.

Officers were rationed, but there was, comparatively speaking, plenty, and three courses were the minimum (a second helping, however, was permitted from the same dish). Sugar, too, abounded—an important item for some of us. The King's health is drunk before dessert, and after the grace, "For what we've received, thank God." Then the table is cleared, all tumblers (even if full) being removed too. A young officer one evening, rather relishing his Burgundy, had a full glass left when the moment for clearing the table had arrived. I wondered whether he would permit the waiter to remove it with the rest, but he asked permission of the President to keep it, and, having obtained the august sanction, pushed the glass back un-

ostentatiously by the flowers, and recovered it afterwards!

Dessert glasses having been served, three—sometimes four—bottles of wine are placed in front of the President. Around each is a silver label, say, Madeira, port, sherry, marsala. The President starts the ball rolling, first by methodically removing the stopper of each bottle and laying them in order, side by side. Then he slides the bottles round with the sun, *i.e.* from right to left. Not everybody, of course, helps himself from these decanters, it being permissible by order of the King to drink the royal toast with water or an empty glass. In my first ship I noticed practically everybody drank the toast in wine; in my last ship, hardly anybody did. When the bottles, having gone the round, reach the President again, he helps himself, and having carefully replaced the stoppers, lifts his glass and looks towards his Vice.

“Mr. Vice—the King,” he gives, whereupon the Vice-President says, most solemnly, “Gentlemen—the King!” and the toast is

acclaimed "The King! God bless him!" *everybody remaining seated*. If the ship's band is in attendance, the signal for the toast is the moment for the rendering of the National Anthem, when, of course, the toast is drunk standing, as on guest nights.

There is usually a general exodus from the table after grace before the dessert is served. Those who remain fill up the seats nearer the President, so that the toast and after-dinner party is compact and jolly. Dessert and coffee are then served. Should an officer not desire to take dessert, he signifies this by crossing his knife and fork on his dessert plate or finger bowl.

I had a puzzling experience at dinner one night. I accidentally touched my glass with my fork. As the tumbler resounded, three voices spontaneously called out "Hun!" I asked what it meant, and found that when a tumbler rings, according to the belief of sailors, some misfortune is nigh.

"Every time somebody made the glass ring on the ship I used to command," an officer told me, "a seaman sure enough fell over-

board." That was why they called out "Hun!" In doing so they were transferring the bad luck to our enemies! Usually somebody calls out "Save a poor sailor!" and the ringing of the glass, plate, or bowl is at once stopped by placing a finger on it.

With so many novices in the Navy it was perhaps to be expected that some of the old and revered customs of the Service would not be strictly observed. . . . The "pukka" sailor regretted this and was inclined to look forward to the time when the old customs would come into their own again. Speaking as one of the novices, however, let me say that the majority of the new men I met easily fell into the "ways of the many," although some believed they could very well do without a few of the curious ceremonies—which apparently are kept up out of a love of mischief.

For instance, if a man happened so to forget himself as to take from a dish passed to him by a fellow officer instead of taking the dish first from the officer, he is said to be "doing a marine," and the penalty for this

—at any rate in the gun-room mess—is the dish is upset over his head. What if it happened to be hot potatoes!

Other penalties, however, are more reasonable.

If a man makes a bet or mentions a lady's name before the King's health is drunk, he has to pay for drinks all round. (Not a very pleasant affair for a junior officer when there are sixty in a mess!)

The penalty for leaving the table before the King's health is drunk without asking permission of the President is the same—drinks all round.

On the other hand, should the President himself leave the table before the wine is served without nominating another officer to fill the vacant chair, he is expected to pay for drinks for all the officers who remain.

During the period of war many of those officers who arrived late for dinner forgot, alas! to apologise to the President. This, as I have said, is a point which in normal times would be considered a grave breach of etiquette. In large messes such as that at

Portsmouth or Chatham a side table is laid for late-comers.

Of course everybody has heard of the toast that is given on Saturday nights at sea. After the King's health has been duly drunk the wine is once more passed round for the pleasing toast, "Sweethearts and Wives." The cynic has added the tag, "May they never meet," but the toast—a really happy one—actually is: "To our sweethearts and wives; may our sweethearts soon become our wives, and our wives remain our sweethearts."

CHAPTER III

ERRORS OF A NEW OFFICER

THE troubles of a new officer begin in earnest when he joins for the first time a big warship. The majority of these officers had never been on anything larger than a liner or a Thames steamer, and it occurred to some of them for the first time that a difference in the attitude and knowledge might be expected in an officer, as distinguished from a Cook's tourist. This nervousness of boarding one of His Majesty's war vessels amounted almost to a terror in some cases. And it was not confined to these new young naval officers. I met a colonel whose breast was bedecked with ribbons of many campaigns. He had got over the initial fright of boarding a port Depot ship, but now he had to wait a launch which would take him to the *Queen*

Elizabeth. I noticed he seemed rather self-conscious. He began to talk haltingly about the weather, asked me presently if I would like a drink—in my own ward-room!—and then suddenly blurted out :

“ What d’you have to do when you board her ? ”

I laughed at him—the best panacea for all nerves. That was exactly what we felt when, after we had slogged through the coding examination at Chatham, an order came through appointing my friend and me to H.M.S. *Crescent*. He, however, was not due for several days after. But I, instead of obtaining a hard-earned leave, had to rush off to the North in a break-neck hurry. One learns. By the time I received my next appointment, I had learnt that “ forthwith ” does not mean “ immediately,” but “ *almost* immediately.” I arrived up North to find I was not expected for a couple of days !

My entry into the bitterly cold but beautiful capital of Scotland, and then into the great and ever-changing wilderness of the royal naval dockyard at Rosyth, gave me

many a thrill, but I still wondered whether, in the absence of porters, it was *infra dig.* for a naval officer to lug a bag along. I left the luggage in the train (where it was duly conveyed back to Edinburgh, and labelled as "lost luggage") and walked to my ship.

The problems that beset such a new-comer are numerous. Upon arrival, should he ask if the captain is in, 'or send his card in, or should he pretend to feel at home and saunter into the ward-room, or wait to be announced? One of the points that puzzled me was the saluting ceremony on boarding one of His Majesty's ships. I suddenly remembered something about having to salute the quarter-deck.

The quarter-deck, I took care to discover, was the first deck one reaches, and one had to salute on boarding—not the gangway, but the ship itself. Also—and this I found was important—there was a special gangway for officers and another for men.

It was very early when I reached H.M.S. *Crescent*. I was fortunate enough to discover the officers' gangway before I reached the

men's. Had I used the latter gangway, it would have been at once a thorough "give away" to the seamen.

I mounted the gangway "as requisite," and, upon reaching the quarter-deck, I gravely saluted. There was nobody about, and it seemed strangely impressive. It added a dignity to the ship that this silent courtesy should be extended to her, and somehow the atmosphere suggested that the good lady was well aware of my salutation, and was watching my attitude and bearing.

The quarter-master soon put in an appearance. When it came to the pitch, it was all plain sailing.

"I'm ordered to report here," I found myself saying.

"The Commander hasn't turned out yet. Will you come into the ward-room, sir?"

Down below was a neat but stuffy room, with a small table laid for breakfast. The impression that life is one perpetual breeze aboard ship is soon dispelled after an hour or two in the average ward-room. As a fact, there is less fresh air than is obtainable

in an ordinary-sized room ashore. In this little ward-room, however, one is stowed away and lost! I made myself at home by reading the newspapers of the day before, but nobody came to inquire after me or my health, and for all the world I belonged to nobody. One has to grope one's way, and I suppose it is a valuable experience. To be resourceful is one of the prime qualifications in the Navy. The only exception to this is in dealing with your superior officers. I wondered whether there was such a body as a captain about, or whether it was up to me to be resourceful and see the commander. I can offer no advice to any new-comer in this respect, for other experiences may not be the same. The best thing is to ask to see the officer of the day, and stick to him until you find out definitely what you are to do. I *groped* my way to my duties and did not, in fact, see the commander officially until several days afterwards.

Caps must always be worn on deck. Most sailors always wear their caps in the cabins, in the ward-room, ashore, afloat. It is

supposed to be a heinous offence to be seen on deck capless, but a far worse crime is to sit anywhere on deck.

Another fairly safe piece of advice is :
 "Don't sing."

This advice, "Don't sing," and the story of the naval anomaly which I give elsewhere in this book, were written before I came across the following extract taken from an official hand-book, published by the Admiralty (the italics are mine) :

"There is scope and need in the Navy for many types of men and varieties of talent for the cultivated faculty of scientific thought, and for the personal force that assures leadership. But whatever the variety of talent, the naval officer is a man of action. Accordingly, that boy has the best chance who is resourceful, resolute, quick to decide, and ready to act on his decision. He must be no slacker, but keen in work and play. He should be alike in wind and limb, and in the big and little principles of conduct. His life

afloat with his brother officers and with the men will require him to be cheerful, unselfish, and considerate if he is to win repute as a good ship-mate, and these qualities are essential to a leader. He should give promise of being responsive and observant, closely in touch with his surroundings, but master of himself. *The boy of sensitive, poetic spirit, the ruminating young philosopher, the scholar whose heart is in his books, are types that have a real use in the world, but their proper place is not the Navy.*'

This is a beautifully candid admission and explains a great deal of the strangeness which some of the "queer fish" have never been able to get over. If the scholarly philosopher type of boy is of no use to the Navy, how much more useless must be the man of maturity with these faults. The boy can be broken in; the man never.

As a fact, the Admiralty's description of the type of boy required in the Navy is admirable and accurate. It has been the exigencies of war alone that called us others—

all sorts of "queer" persons with notions of their own, with damned philosophy and cumbersome scholarship. That type was of no use to the Navy, and certainly the Navy was of no use to him.

I imagine, however, that among this medley of outsiders a little refreshing reflection will be found to be of some official use, for, after all, the outsider generally sees things from a different angle from the insider—and in this manner may drop a valuable hint or two among a host of valueless ones.

CHAPTER IV

A NAVAL COURT MARTIAL

IN the small mess at the Commander-in-Chief's head-quarters, the intrusion of a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve officer was welcomed. Of course they had to allow—they expected—a certain strangeness to strict Service discipline and routine. But this freshness was just what they said was needed. They wanted the outside view of things. For instance: they are proud, in the Navy, of their judicial fairness. Had I ever attended a naval court martial? No—well then, would I care to go?—during war-time it would be especially interesting—and would I afterwards tell them what were my impressions?

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An officer of the Royal Navy called to

answer a charge before a court martial goes with his career in his hands. Should he fail to prove his innocence up to the hilt, a black mark is recorded against him—it may be merely a censure—which is as indelible as a mark in the Book of Judgment. It is vital that the procedure, powers, and regulations of a naval court martial should be of a broad and unprejudiced character. A Judge-Advocate friend of mine thought it would be interesting, therefore, for me as a layman to go in with fresh outlook, and watch the proceedings from the standpoint of a civilian-sailor.

Let me say at once that the rough-and-ready justice of a naval court martial is indeed a thing much to be desired. All the thousand-and-one bits of red-tape, which do much to impede the civilian law, are disposed of by these men of the world.

There is, of course, procedure, but there is one vital comparison with that of a lay court. While the former is bound hand and foot with precedent, enactment, and legal quibble, naval justice is guided more by common-sense.

I have since attended several courts martial, and in all of them there has been a complete atmosphere of tolerance and restraint. The doubt, as we pride ourselves in other courts, is always given in favour of the accused. Where, too, these naval courts martial are so much more just than the ordinary court of law is in the existence of a human element which our dry-as-dust law always seeks to eliminate.

In petty misdemeanours, which would send a civilian to prison, "according to law," an officer is reprimanded, or at the worst, in such cases, he is "dismissed his ship"—which means he can start afresh in new surroundings.

The composition of a court martial is at once a guarantee of competence and firm justice. The court of braid, as I prefer to call it, is pretty well up to all the tricks of the trade, and is not swayed by false sentiment or flashy rhetoric.

Take an example at one of the courts martial I attended on board H.M.S. *Sutlej*. An officer was being tried for one of those

petty human failings—an overdose of whisky-and-soda. The excuses in such cases are stereotyped. The intoxicant was really a “drug for some physical weakness,” the “hilarious state” was due to high spirits (in the metaphysical sense), or, best and most common of all, the accused had been able to get no liquor for weeks on stretch, and the first drink after this long period exercised quite an “extraordinary” and “surprising” effect on him.

The court which tried this case was composed of five captains, a flag commander, representing the admiral commanding the coast, a deputy-judge-advocate, an assistant provost-marshal, and two officers of the court. The array was imposing. Although the officers dispensed with cocked hats, their swords, hanging loosely in the scabbards, lent a martial tone to these formal war-time proceedings. The dock consisted of two upright poles with a scarlet cross-bar—which was really a piece of wood covered with cloth—while the elongated table, covered with green baize, was littered with naval regulations,

Bibles, swearing-in cards, pens, and much paper. An expert stenographer sat on the left of the Deputy-Judge-Advocate.

Prior to the opening of this case, the ship is besieged by a crowd of witnesses, officers, naval and military, petty officers and civilians, who have travelled from Peterhead to Rosyth to give evidence in an ordinary case of intoxication. You cannot help wondering why it is necessary to bring this array of witnesses, at the expense of the Crown, 350 miles, and you are informed that it is necessary to hold a court martial at a base where at least two "first-class ships" are anchored. This part of the procedure, while no doubt ensuring a proper dignity to naval justice, might possibly have been amended in time of war. You ask yourself too—as probably they ask themselves—whether six captains and prominent members of the Commander-in-Chief's staff should spend a whole day away from their regular duties, in order to try a petty case of insobriety, and you feel that a simple scheme could well be inaugurated in these times. The captains of

our battleships—the flagship too—could be better occupied in war time than in deciding how many whiskies-and-sodas a well-meaning junior officer had on a certain festive occasion.

“A good day wasted,” I heard one of the court remark, and I could not but agree.

Well, all that in parentheses.

At about ten o'clock in the morning—if the various members of the court have all assembled—the case is opened. “The court is open. Bring in the accused,” orders the President. The accused has been rehearsing his case with his adviser—“the accused’s best friend”—in a cabin set apart for him, and is now marched in by officers of the court with drawn swords. He takes his place behind the cross-bar of scarlet; the officer of the court, with sword still drawn, on his left, while his best friend, with a sheaf of papers, sits on his right.

The Deputy-Judge-Advocate then reads the orders of the Admiral commanding the East Coast, calling the court together. These

documents include the application of the accused's commanding officer to the Commander-in-Chief, setting out in skeleton the charge against the accused, and submitting that the case be tried by court martial.

The roll of the members of the court is then called. Some are away, their excuse, "owing to the exigencies of war," being read out to the court; those who are present duly answer. The court then takes the oath, standing. This recital, in unison, of these vows and protestations sounds like a jumble of strange words.

The accused is asked if he agrees to the composition of the court, and whether he is willing to admit the service of a shorthand-typist, who is duly sworn.

The prosecutor—the accused's commanding officer—opens the case, and the accused is at liberty to cross-examine him. Having availed himself of this opportunity, the Deputy-Judge-Advocate asks the President and other members of the court if they have any question to ask the accused. The prosecutor calls his witnesses and the

same procedure of examination and cross-examination by accused and the court, and re-examination by the prosecutor, is followed.

The duties of the Deputy-Judge-Advocate (generally a paymaster) are onerous. As "Clerk of the Court" he is supposed to have naval court-martial procedure at his fingertips. He guides the court and fathers the accused. Like any other member of the court, he is permitted to suggest or ask questions of witnesses.

The accused is permitted the services of a civilian lawyer, and in those cases I attended it always seemed advisable. These lawyers, generally well known in naval circles, have the "gift of the gab," and possess sufficient forensic ability to turn every little point to account. However, as I have said, there are no flies on the competent officers—all active-service men—who are trying the case, and the Deputy-Judge-Advocate—who upon this occasion was assistant secretary to the Admiral—balances matters pretty well. So much so, in fact, that I was able

to forecast the exact finding of a well-contested case.

“ I should clear the court, sir,” prompts the D.J.A.

“ All right then, clear the court ! ” orders the President, in a matter-of-fact tone.

The prosecutor, being of superior rank, is permitted to retire to a cabin near the court. The rest of us file out behind the accused and his “ best friend.”

We troop into the ward-room, where all the witnesses foregather. All these officers (including a civilian doctor and another civilian) have travelled down from Peterhead.

Presently a bell rings and in rushes the officer of the court. He soon returns. “ The court is open,” he announces.

This adjournment, I may add, was given to the prisoner in order to prepare his defence, a proceeding which surprised me, considering that the charge was made in detail about three weeks previously ; during that time he was under arrest, being permitted no alcoholic liquor.

At any rate, under such conditions, he should be able to make ready as complete a defence as he could ever expect to make. The additional time, therefore, allowed by the court is only another indication of the extreme desire to give the prisoner every chance.

One would think that a formal court of inquiry would be held at once on board his ship, and if the accused were dissatisfied with the verdict he could then ask for a court martial. The delay in holding such a competent court—ten days is the minimum—permits all sorts of abuses, a waste of time and expenditure.

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The defence of the prisoner in the case under review proved to be extremely ingenious; but it was obvious that he would fail to obtain acquittal. All was going well until a well-meaning witness for the defence gave the show away. It reminded one of a similar situation told in the clubs, of the evidence of a faithful servant. His master

seemed all right ; in fact, he had asked to be called early.

“ Did he say why ? ” was the chance question.

“ Yes, sir, he said he wanted to be called early because he was to be Queen of the May.”

In the actual case I am illustrating, the witness said the accused was quite normal ; in fact, upon seeing the Admiral in his car, he had greeted him.

“ What did he say to the Admiral ? ” was the casual question.

“ Good-bi-yee, sir ! ”

Once again the court is cleared for the verdict, and when it is open again it is possible to tell at once—should the accused be an officer—what the decision of the court is, for if the accused's sword is lying on the table, hilt towards the President, then the verdict is one of guilty. If, on the other hand, the hilt lies in the accused's direction, the verdict is in his favour, and he is able to take back his sword.

At this last scene the court is open to everybody, including witnesses, who troop in and stand at attention while the verdict is being pronounced. Should it be one of guilty, the accused's record is read to the court "in mitigation." The court is finally cleared to consider the sentence, and when it re-opens the sentence is read out by the Deputy-Judge-Advocate to a crowded court—everybody wearing their caps this time.

"Haul down the Jack; the court is dissolved," raps out the President, and the proceedings are at an end.

Our prisoner, as I feared, was found guilty and dismissed his ship. In a week's time he had begun afresh at another station!

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The procedure as applied to ratings is also of much interest.

Justice for Jack aboard a battleship is one of the most cherished procedures in the senior Service. The British sailor doesn't wear a halo, and sometimes he is hauled over the coals for breaches of Service rules, for which he has to answer. As in the case of

his officer, however, he goes before the court to meet these charges with an assured feeling that, however trivial, however serious the case, justice will be administered in a thoroughly fair British fashion.

In the old days courts of discipline were far more severe than they are to-day. A Judge-Advocate friend of mine was showing me some records of trials in the Navy dating back to the time of Nelson. Some of the cases were of an amusing order, but very nearly all of them were summarily dealt with. There were such freak cases as that of a man hauling a goat aboard and taking it up to the bridge!

Another case was that of a petty officer using harsh language to his men because they refused to sing! Another unusual case was that of a captain who was charged with provokingly giving a Fleet Paymaster a great number of unnecessary orders, so that they interfered with his usual duties. For that he was dismissed his ship—and, I believe, from H.M. service.

Cases of drunkenness then were also more

severely dealt with than they are now. They usually resulted in a man forfeiting his pay—"mulct of his pay" is the naval term—as well as either being sent to prison or dismissed the service. There were other instances where a hundred lashes were administered.

To-day it is all very different. In all the trials I witnessed aboard H.M.S. *Crescent*, there was always a noticeably lenient atmosphere, and one obtained the immediate impression that, despite the stern countenances of the members of the court, the slightest doubt would tell in the prisoner's favour.

Of course, not every charge is tried by court martial. Trivial offences are heard every day—or in some smaller ships, once or twice a week—by the Commander, or, if the case is more serious, the Captain.

On a large battle-cruiser "requests and defaulters" are "piped" every morning at eleven o'clock. The "request" men are those who wish to ask some concession—such as leave or a medal or stripe which is due to them—while the defaulters are the usual batch of petty offenders brought to book for

uncleanliness, laziness, surliness, and so on. These are dealt with summarily.

The ships with which I am more familiar deal with these latter cases twice a week. The Captain or Commander, and one or two officers of his staff, take up positions on a convenient spot outside the ship's offices or the Captain's cabin. The Captain and his clerk generally stand at a table strewn with the King's regulations, a list of the offenders, their certificates of service—*i.e.* a statement of character and ability which is given to the men each year. The accused—he is not termed a "prisoner"—is then called in by the Master-at-Arms, who states the charge. The Captain allows the offender every latitude, he himself questioning and cross-questioning him in order to elucidate the case.

As an indication of the complete fairness of courts martial, I may say that in every charge against a seaman or officer the commanding officer himself has to attend to prosecute. It is not left in the hands of a junior officer to make the charge.

Comparatively few men are sent to prison.

The majority of cases are dealt with by fines, stoppage of leave, or the loss of one or more good-conduct badges or stripes. Where a man "can't get on" in his ship, he is often allowed to exchange with another man in some other ship. Here he can turn over a new leaf. The really serious offender is of no use in the Navy, and he is generally dismissed from the Service.

On the large ships, however, there are cell-rooms; although, where possible, men are sent to detention barracks ashore—or a civil prison. All, or nearly all, naval barracks have detention barracks.

CHAPTER V

WITH A "HUSH! HUSH!" SHIP IN ACTION

I HAVE been out in the great mysterious "Hush! hush!" ship—H.M.S. *Renown*. She is one of the fastest, largest, and newest ships in the Fleet, and I shall always value the privilege of having been out in her during battle practice. The circumstances and conditions are just the same as when the ship is engaging the enemy, except that the enemy this time is a target.

I have been aboard many battle-cruisers, but never was so thrilled, or full of wonder. This ship is something new in Dreadnoughts; she is different from all others. Not only her speed, weapons, and dimensions, even her guns have a new note. At the Dardanelles I watched the 15-inch naval guns bombarding Achi Baba; but the smaller guns which

pounded at some object six or seven miles away made me jump for the first time. They spoke with such a bark, a snap, a kind of vicious ping that simply took possession of one's nerves. They cracked out shot after shot with hardly a break, and in the end one's deafened ears could only take in the sound as if it were an echo of a noise miles and miles away. The *Renown* carries six 15-inch guns, is thinly armoured, and is specially useful in a shallow sea. . . .

I made the same mistake in boarding this battle-cruiser as I did some years ago at Alexandria when I boarded Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne's flagship, the *Inflexible*. Then I had my best clothes on. I should have had a swimming costume and a mackintosh. The man who, in Egypt, showed me down to the *Inflexible's* engine-rooms had no more regard for my duck suit and straw hat than had the kindly subaltern who now showed me the "very bottom" of the ship in my brand-new uniform. Next time I shall know; though I much doubt whether I wish to go on pottering about oily, slippery

battleships, having to affect nonchalance in the presence of dangerous magazines and endless, narrow, slippery iron ladders.

There is no suspicion of dust, smoke, or coal about many battleships of to-day, only oil. But one hardly knows which is the worst: coal that chokes one, or oil that makes one perform all sorts of unexpected equilibristic feats for the benefit of the seamen.

On board H.M.S. *Renown* there is enough for a man to see who has a month or two of leisure. I had to rush about for a few hours to take in all I could that this armed world afloat offered.

The picket boat put me down alongside the enormous battle-cruiser at five minutes past seven in the morning. Firing began some hours later, and in the meantime I went my round of the ship in company with a gunnery lieutenant.

First we looked in the fore-turret—looked in?—squeezed in rather; for despite the huge size of this fortress, there is practically no wasted space. The officer in charge had all the mechanism put into motion for my

especial benefit. He pulled a lever which brought the cage from the shell-room into excited activity, and then another lever which deposited the cordite in position. He worked something else which pushed the shell into another compartment ready to be lifted up to the gun. These huge shells—each weighing about a ton—were lifted with the greatest ease and dispatch; but the noise was deafening.

Really the complicated mechanism of these guns is incomprehensible to the lay mind. The scientific adjustment was fully explained to me by chart, compasses, and magnet; but although I nodded my head with becoming sageness, I knew nothing beyond the certainty that the young lieutenants who hold such responsible posts are amazingly clever and reliable. The personnel, in fact, created in my mind even more admiration than did the guns. One understands, after a study of the inner workings of a battle-cruiser, what the British bull-dog type means. These men—some are very young—go about their work quietly and with an unconscious masterful-

ness that surpasses all one's experience of the world outside theirs. The midshipmen are serious, dutiful, intelligent lads whose knowledge of the intricacies of naval routine would do credit to much older men. The young man who guided me from this fore-turret down below to the transmitting station was typical. He knew I was a land-lubber, but he was respectful, unaffected, and helpful.

The scene below fairly took my breath away. The battle-cruiser was now under way—although one could hardly tell it, so slight was the ship's motion—and "Action Stations" had been sounded. Here in the bowels of the great vessel was a room crowded with officers, midshipmen, and boys. Each was concentrating on his particular job—whatever it might be. Nearly all of them had a gigantic-sized telephone headgear which completely covered their heads, while the receiver was for ever glued to their ears; something in the style of the telephone exchange, only ten times larger. Another midshipman was seated before a chart upon which an electric needle spluttered out dots

and dashes. He appeared to be making endless calculations. Delicate instruments galore. Large pipes, whistles and telephones by the score—and as for the shouting, it seemed a veritable cross-current of conflicting orders, and was perfectly bewildering to the new-comer. Yet one soon noticed that although all were shouting at once down different instruments, each remained cool and concentrated. Hardly a message had to be repeated by the same man, although these messages were “carried on” by as many operators who shouted them up different tubes to various parts of the ship.

“Director training” and “All turrets” one often heard above the din, and this was repeated by someone whom I could not see.

The transmitting station controlled only the 15-inch turrets. The next cabin was set apart as a duplicate T.S. which deals solely with guns of a lesser calibre. Both transmitting stations were conversing all the time with the staff aloft. Who they were I was soon to find out.

“Take this officer to the spotting top.”

Now I knew all about the spotting top, used to gaze at it from amidships and wonder how on earth seamen were able to climb that height on a narrow steel ladder.

And here was I asked to "go up" to the spotting top while the ship was under way. These young officers took everything for granted. They apparently overlooked the fact that squeezing through manholes and holding on to slippery ladders were hardly in the line of a land-lubber. But go to the top I must. It seemed an interminable journey and there were one or two desperate moments. Flights of ladders, steps, and landings innumerable. It seemed as high as a huge block of flats without a lift. Not only that, but one had to squeeze through manholes in the "ceiling" and crawl through, after clasping hold of anything that half promised not to move.

But the scene 150 feet high was well worth the uncertainties of the climb.

Here the Lieutenant-Commander was in charge. A big black movable rod, which swung across the whole length of the top,

was the range-finder. "Lamps"—flash-lamp operator—was in the corner, alternatively using this method of communication and the wireless method with the other super-Dreadnoughts who were in line ahead of us.

A petty officer with a skull-cap, and with eyes glued on another delicate instrument, was calling down a telephone; a boy watched intently a glass cabinet which was divided into six shutters, each of which lighted up one by one; another boy busily turned the handle of a machine till certain figures appeared—as they do on the cash register; more boys stood by at call pipes, others at telephones—all these officers and men in the "top" following the examples of their brethren in the "bottom" in shouting different things at the same time.

How can a ship possibly be run on those lines, I wondered. But I soon found that nobody was disconcerted and that what appeared to me to be pandemonium was well-organised routine.

In fact the Commander, with a pair of



Central News.

"MYSTERY SHIP," FLYING FROM PLATFORM BUILT ON A TURRET.

powerful glasses and three big speaking-tubes, found time to greet me, and invited me to "squat down" by his side. But the work went on uninterruptedly.

"Speed of en-em-y sev-en."

The voice of the petty officer, loud and distinct, was echoed by a voice below:

"Speed of enemy—seven."

"Two guns ready, sir."

This from the boy watching the squares light up—squares A and Y.

"Control! 7500," shouts the P.O.

"What's your position correction?" is the Lieutenant-Commander's cry at the same time. . . . "Right."

"Three guns ready, sir."

"Rate 150 opening."

Bells, hooters, and flashes; and then the range-finder, after half knocking your head off, asks you to "Mind your head, sir."

"Wind, green 25," is another cry one distinguishes. A slight pause, then:

"Shoot!" comes at length, but to my surprise no shots are fired, and I find that "shoot" is simply a warning by the Com-

mander on the spotting top that the range is correct and everything ready for firing. The command "Fire!" comes from the bridge below and the trigger is pressed—not by the gunners, but by the men in a lower turret—the sighting turret.

Bang—bang—bang!

"Three guns fired, sir," says the nonchalant boy at the screen.

"Up 100," is the response of the Commander.

"Speed of en-em-y nine."

"Speed of enemy—nine," comes from below again.

"7450."

"Two guns ready, sir."

"Inclination 90 to the left."

"Double salvo—shoot!"

Voice below, after a slight pause: "Fire."

Voices still lower, sonorous and drawn-out: "9570—2 left—stand by—Fire!" and then you stuff your ears.

I went below to the upper bridge to stand by the 4-inch guns firing at an extreme range.

I had failed to take the precaution of

stuffing my ears with a rubber silencer or cotton-wool. I imagined that since I was long used to heavy-gun firing, I could easily withstand the shock of the merely 4-inch. I was soon disillusioned. The first shot came unexpectedly and I jumped. I determined to steel my nerves for the second shot.

"9643—3 left—stand by—Fire!"

"Ping!" and I was deaf for ten minutes.

By watching the gun-layers I could tell when to expect another shot, but for some time I could hear no orders. The shooting was quite good and the two targets had a pretty rough time. The Gunnery Officer—Gunnery Jack as he is called—told me the range, but I couldn't hear what he said. At any rate I was able to count sixty rapidly between the actual firing of the guns and the responding splash of water showing that the shell had reached home.

The anxiety of a captain in charge of such a capital ship can be understood, but when I visited the "owner" at his post—by his invitation—I found a cool and calm

individual, passing comments, giving orders, and swearing in the same low *blasé* tone. But although the ultimate responsibility is his, he has no need to carry on his broad shoulders the entire burden of running the ship. Each of his lieutenants is a capable captain in himself.

From the pinnacle of the ship I went down again below to its very depths. I was shown the shell-room and the magazine. I need not describe my journey below, seeing that it is difficult to know which of the two evils is the lesser, climbing aloft to the skies or to the deuce below. The magazine was, of course, securely locked, and I felt, in view of what I knew about magazines, that after all it didn't matter. But the very courteous lieutenant politely insisted upon sending for the keys.

The first thing one kicked against on stepping into the dimly lighted room was a pair of rubber shoes. "This," explained my guide, "is a precaution against the nails of ordinary boots, which may throw up a spark. Cordite is very combustible."

"I believe," I said hastily, "I have nails in my boots." But the lieutenant hardly seemed to mind.

The magazine was stocked from top to bottom with cordite charges each as big as a man. Each shell was numbered in order to differentiate between the sizes and kinds in firing.

The lieutenant very kindly took the cap off one of these charges in order to show me the real thing, but it was jammed. I said it didn't matter, but he was annoyed with the thing, so he brought a hammer . . . and began to pound away at it. . . .

It was nice to be up again in the cool fresh air.

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Commander Dannreuther showed me the "domestic" side of the ship. It was an old story for me, but, as I could hardly point this out to my host, I went. And I am very glad I did. The improvement in this respect in the latest type of ship is just amazing. The men's quarters are veritable palaces . . . large, clean, and comfortable, I always think

it is a pity the scuttles cannot be opened, but there are several objections to this. . . . The bakery was an eye-opener. The ship not only provided bread for its own strength, but for certain destroyers.

The Commander was one of the very few officers saved from the *Invincible* at the Jutland battle. He now wears the D.S.O. He showed me photographs of the last of the great and glorious battle-cruiser and a souvenir taken from the sinking ship.

He talks of the glory of the "old home" and of what we have learnt since "Jutland." There is no doubt at all that we have taken very full advantage of any lessons that battle may have taught us. The Commander is very certain that the German Fleet was put out of action in that fight—"frightfully knocked about and rendered impotent"—but darkness came to give succour to the thoroughly beaten Germans.

We talk about the waste of shells. I mention the tremendous waste of Turkish ammunition at the Dardanelles. "Over two thousand shells from the guns," I remark,

"succeeded in putting out of action two men, four horses, a rubbish heap. . . ." "At Jutland," he replied, "the Germans fired 2,000 rounds at us: thirty-five hit us."

He, like everybody else I have met, talks about our hard luck at Jutland in not giving the Germans their *coup de grâce*.

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And now comes the signal "Return to base," the great ship is steered for home again, and a refreshing breeze has sprung up to give a breath of life to the pale, sweating men who come up from below.

CHAPTER VI

THE EYES OF THE FLEET

I. UP IN A WAR 'PLANE

IT has become an axiom that the war was a young man's war. Go to the Royal Naval Air Stations and you would see this was a very young man's war. The men who were doing the big things in the air had hardly reached manhood; most of them were mere boys, round-cheeked, smiling cherubs, who had not yet attained the stage when one becomes conscious of danger. These boys who flew did not know what it was to be afraid.

I went up 5,000 feet with one of them, and, although I cannot boast of being unconscious of danger, I would gladly go again on any number of voyages with our flying boys.

East Fortune Air Station is miles from anywhere, but it is very near being paradise itself. The grounds are beautifully laid, flowers are abundant, and the living accommodation really too good. If bustle and activity betoken war, there were no signs of them here. Conditions, in fact, were so obviously first-class that the men recognised it themselves.

“The whole thing is perfect,” said one. “That is, it would be perfection if there were a good train service to Edinburgh where we might spend the money we earn.”

I told him I would willingly exchange places with him, but he quickly withdrew his sole ground of complaint.

“No—we are perfectly happy, thank you,” he said with a smile.

When I was asked to take a flight in one of these war aeroplanes I imagined a different kind of experience. I pictured a greasy-looking aerodrome with serious-looking men overcharged with nervous energy. Instead, coming among the bracken were three tan-

complexioned boys who asked me if I was the man for whom they were waiting.

“I’m to take you up,” said the youngest of them all, and my heart fell. In Egypt the famous French aviator Vedrines, was to give me my first flight, but engine troubles spoilt our arrangements at the last moment.

I certainly did not expect to be taken on a war flight by so youthful a pilot. However, he was so very nice and he had such a cool and courteous way about him that it would have required more moral courage than I had to show any hesitancy.

The Commander apparently had purposely chosen him to be my guide, for he afterwards came along and told me about the young airman—whose record was a splendid one, to which he was going to add next week in France.

Young Fitts took me around the aerodrome—cutting across the great airship hangars to the aeroplane quarters. Here we examined almost every type of machine-engine, and my youthful guide certainly

appeared to have considerable theoretical knowledge.

Here were two types of Zepp-strafig machines with guns mounted ingeniously. Here was a "submarine" bomber or a "reprisal" machine. The bombs were all ready to be detached, and I certainly didn't like the manner with which he used them as a step to point out certain features inside the machine.

Many of the machines on this occasion, as it happened, were being overhauled.

"Don't worry," said my guide, "we'll find one."

And the one he chose was one upon which a notice clearly stated, "Not in action."

"Why isn't it in action?" he asked.

"Carpenters working on it, sir."

"Oh, I think it will be all right," he said, for this was his favourite machine.

I tried to point out that another machine would do, but he went around tapping a part here and there "to make certain."

"It's just as well," I commented, "find-

ing out any defects down here as up there.”

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The object of this aeroplane stunt was to patrol—to spy out the land—or rather the sea. From a fairly safe altitude, an aeroplane or airship can see whether any hostile submarines are in the vicinity. I was to be given a practical demonstration of this. We had our bombs—and, in case of an attack by Zeppelins or German aeroplanes, we had the gun ready. Also we had a brand-new wireless gear of which Fitts, who is behind me, is very proud.

We muffle ourselves up like Eskimos, although on *terra firma* it seemed quite warm enough, and he hands me a pair of goggles. *Voilà* the compleat airman! I see his mouth moving, and from his expression I gather he is addressing me.

“I’m sorry,” I say, although I cannot hear myself speak, “but if you will have the goodness to loosen these confounded ear straps . . .”

He laughs, makes no attempt to renew

these deaf-and-dumb motions, and waits for me to climb in.

In the meantime the mechanics are busy, two at the propeller and two on either side of the 'plane, holding ropes ready to pull away the wooden plugs or "rests" from under the wheels.

"Contact, sir," shouts the mechanic to Fitts.

"Contact," I can just hear him repeat.

"Switch off, sir."

"Switch off," the pilot echoes.

A sweeping motion of the propeller. . . .

"Contact, sir."

"Contact."

The propeller stops dead.

"Switch off, sir."

"Switch off."

I'm thinking it is taking the deuce of a long time starting, but to the others this is apparently the ordinary routine.

The mechanics hang on to the propeller, this time preparatory to a big effort.

"Contact, sir," one hears the mechanics for the third time. Round go the propellers,

whirring fitfully at first, then gathering momentum with a scientific regularity—faster—faster.

The noise is deafening. The spluttering threatens to overturn the machine.

“Ready, sir.”

“Right-o.”

The two mechanics pull away the plugs on either wheels, and the engine seems to be overreaching itself in its attempt to break its bonds. An outlet must be found somewhere. With a gentle whirr of relief the machine moves forward quietly along the grass, and then, when I am expecting it to mount, the noise subsides and the machine all but stops. Fitts steers it away from the airship hangars . . . once more the engines gather up their strength and the aeroplane is lifting.

At once I realise the necessity of a warm face-covering, and—why on earth have I pulled off my goggles?

“Good Lord . . .”

The machine is suddenly tilted till—another inch and it must capsize. I have a mind to

throw my weight on the other side in order to balance matters. But what would Fitts say if he saw?

Thank Heaven we are on the level again! These war machines are a trifle capricious.

“Heigh-o!”

Up shoots her nose, round she veers—and the blessed box of wireless bumps on my knees and opens. With one hand I try to close the box, with the other I alternately hold on and try to put my goggles on.

“Whoa!”

Up comes the earth at an angle of 45° . It looks like a photograph taken at an obtuse angle. We are still flying high over fields and barns, the whole scene below resembling (has it been described thus before?)—a jigsaw. Odd-shaped pieces of green, yellow, white, and black, all seem to fit in as they should—only here and there is a break as if one or two pieces were missing.

“Heave-o!”

Up and down she jolts for a minute like a ship on a bad patch. Then level again. Once more I look down over the sides to

study the jig-saw, but it has gone—vanished in a trice. On my port side and on my starboard side all is a haze. Anon, penetrating through the veil, I observe the jagged ends of earth and a sheet of blue—the sea at last.

But why has he stopped? It must be the wind holding him up, for the engines are still whirring for dear life, making an awful din; but apparently he is still unable to make headway in face of the gale. What is he going to do about it?

He side-slips again—I have decided at once that I hate this side-slipping business—and—he is climbing even higher.

Then, suddenly, the engines stop (I knew something would happen!) and—do-er—the 'plane is falling, falling—a sheer drop of miles it seems. Now the engines are clattering again, and we are on a level once more, perceptibly nearer the sea.

My interest is now taken up in looking for submarines. Easy enough, I think. That sheet of blue need only show an elongated patch of grey and—we have him. To press

one of these levers and pull—and watch the aerial bomb go whizzing below—oh, it's a delightful anticipation—I'm sorry to say.

Blue, blue, and no grey patches. For a moment a feeling that the business must soon grow very monotonous comes over me.

Going along at this pace, with this head-splitting noise, without seeming to move. . . . Oh, one must soon tire . . . I take to examining the wireless. I read the labels on each screw and I try to shut the box. It is, however, difficult with one hand. Try with two hands, and leave hold of my frail support? Not on your life!

This machine, I've soon got to know, has a nasty, discourteous way of tilting over on its side and taking a flying leap when it feels so inclined—and without giving due notice. No! the box can remain open and my goggles can remain off. What I've got I hold!

Then I look again below on the blue sheet, and for the first time I really become excited.

A long strip of grey was there sure enough, lying well out of the water, so it seemed to me. If he could only drop a few hundred feet it would be as easy as——

Goodness gracious! the idiot, having found his quarry, is turning back. With a few of these nasty side-slips I have already mentioned, he turns his back on the blue sheet and the grey patch and makes full track for the jig-saw.

I am as angry as can be. The jig-saw, the dots which resemble houses, the black lines which represent roads—all these have no interest for me. Aeroplaning is monotonous and foolish.

No wonder one becomes impulsive and executes stunts in the air. To relieve the monotony of jogging along like Stephenson's first engine—one would do anything.

Sea becomes a trifle tedious after a while, but here—why, if they'd only let me climb out on the wings it would relieve the monotony.

And the fool of a boy simply runs away from the submarine! What a time he takes

in getting back! Probably he is in difficulties. Why on earth they sent me out with a flyer who is in the course of training beats me.

Oh—here are big oblongs—the hangars, I suppose. . . . And what is he up to now? For up comes the earth, first rearing up like a wall and then—like a ceiling!

Has the pilot lost control of the machine or has he merely looped the loop? Oh, this isn't quite so bad—a slow, narrow spiral, round and round the same spot, exactly as if one were descending a spiral staircase. Now he hovers directly over the hangar . . . in a trice he will crash on top of it. In another second he has shot clean forward, and, with a sensation truly delightful, lands gently on the grass and gambols along till the mechanics catch us up.

“Well,” he calls to me. “Unstrap—Good Lord! why, you haven't strapped yourself in!”

Half my headgear is blown away—it is all very well (I was seated in front of the machine catching the wind full blast, while he was

behind), my eyes are watering and I am half numbed. Also I am very angry.

“Why on earth did you let that submarine go?” I impatiently ask.

“We’re only supposed to go for Boche submarines,” he says in a matter-of-fact tone.

CHAPTER VII

THE EYES OF THE FLEET (*continued*)

II. THE MODERN AIRSHIP

HAS the dirigible justified itself? I remember as if it were yesterday the heated controversy many years ago as to the relative merits of the airship versus the aeroplane. At that time we had met with a great deal of hard luck in our airship trials, and the verdict was wholly against the airship.

And now, after ten years' interval, we have started afresh after having permitted Germany to take the field herself. How have we fared? And also, as I asked in the opening sentence, has the airship justified itself?

I have been up in one of our best type of airships and I propose to give very shortly some of the points that occurred to me. "W.14" is certainly the outcome of

our experience since the war—or perhaps a year after war began—but it is understood we have gone even beyond the “W.14” type and have produced a super-airship, just as we have produced a super-submarine and a super-battle-cruiser. Super types of craft, however, do not always mean superior types. It is a mistake to imagine that the greater the scale the greater efficiency one can obtain. If that were so, there would be no limit to the size of our war-craft. But it was proved over and over again in the war that one may very easily spoil a ship by an extra yard or two of length.

There is a small type of submarine which is more popular with submarine officers than the super-type, just as there is a pronounced opinion in favour of a certain class of our big ships in preference to certain super-supers. In the aircraft world I found many flying men sticking to a fairly old type of airship in preference to those which have succeeded them.

The station I visited is a patrolling station with several airships of the same class. Its

situation is somewhere on the east coast of Scotland, and its duty is to look out for enemy submarines and bomb them, and to escort convoys or bring in our battleships.

There is a complete absence of war atmosphere here, but I am nevertheless informed that in something like a fortnight each airship has patrolled for over one hundred hours. They cannot actually lay claim to having sunk any submarines, but their usefulness is more in a defensive rather than an offensive direction. It is claimed, for instance, that the German submarine has an unholy terror of the airship and scuttles at the outline of one. The pilot of the airship I flew in told me that they had on more than one occasion arrived in the nick of time to prevent a U-boat from sinking a merchant ship. Also they have sought out and found stray boat-loads of survivors of submarine attacks, and have been the means of effecting their rescue.

This type of airship compared with the Zeppelin is at a certain disadvantage. In the first place the German ship is larger and admits of larger crews and more reliefs.

The Zepp can climb quickly to a great height, whereas ours cannot climb very high. This, however, it was pointed out, was not a drawback for the particular work it was engaged upon.

At a height of about a thousand feet, an airship is able to see distinctly any submarine on the surface and sometimes below.

One might imagine that the airship at such a low height would be an easy target, but experience all goes to show that an enemy submarine never wants to take the chance. Upon an occasion, however, one of these airships encountered an enemy seaplane and a terrific duel ensued. The seaplane put up a good fight, but could do nothing against the superior armament of the airship. This particular air-station, as I have said, does not claim to have sunk a submarine, but a station not very far off makes the certain claim to have disposed of two.

And now comes the question whether the actual results obtained by these airships justify the immense expenditure entailed by their upkeep. These large ships live in huge

hangars and not only necessitate the permanent upkeep of a big staff of mechanics but in addition require constant attention. Engines are always going wrong, cylinders or one or other parts want overhauling. But engine trouble is not confined to airships. I visited an aeroplane centre where most of the machines were out of action. The men who did the flying were keen and certainly capable, yet a general slack system seemed to prevail. It occurred to me that while this kind of atmosphere was due to the general system, much depended upon the personality of the local commander; and upon this matter the mistake seemed to be this: men are promoted to positions of command for brave deeds in action, but a brave man may be a poor commander. With the best will in the world, I cannot say I was at all favourably impressed with the manner our air-stations are run.

I should like to see the figures of the cost of upkeep at each station and to compare their results. The cost of gas alone is enormous—but war is a wicked waste

altogether—as we were not long in finding out.

We have given the airship a fair trial, and we have watched its failure from the time of our early ship Alpha to the Zeppelin. Would it not be preferable to concentrate on the aeroplane, which is cheaper, more reliable, and has much more promise?

P.S.—After writing the above I learnt that the airship in which I took the trip had come to grief. I have not heard what became of the crew. It seems that the airship commander reported that the conditions were not favourable for flying, but he was overruled.

CHAPTER VIII

“ Q ” BOAT “ STUNTS ”

WHEN I said that there had not been lacking the excitement and intense moments as most people had been led to believe, I referred to the “ stunts ”—the little hazardous expeditions—which were daily occurrences in the Navy. Of these, for various reasons, the public heard little or nothing, although I soon formed the opinion that much could have been told which would have helped to give a better estimate of what the Navy was doing, without being useful to the enemy. Nobody on our staff was ever able to say why, for instance, monthly estimates of enemy submarines sunk were not published to an anxious public. We thrashed this out once during lunch in the ward-room, at the admiral’s quarters, and, after a brief opposition

by the officer who had most to do with the business of beating the U-boats, it was un-animously decided that there was no reason why such an estimate should not have been published. The list might have been qualified. We could have said, for instance, how many we had attacked, how many were believed to be sunk, and the number known to have been sunk. It could not possibly have been of use to the enemy.

During the time I was stationed at the battle-cruiser base, several "stunts" were organised. Not all of them matured; but most of them came off very well.

I met an officer in the busy dockyard town whom I had previously met at Constantinople.

He apologised for his hurrying away.

"I've an appointment," he explained.

"Her name," I chaffed.

"Zeppelin No. 47."

And he was gone. I wondered what on earth he meant by this mysterious "appointment," and I puzzled the whole day when I learnt that my friend was an officer in charge of a very useful little vessel—which we secretly

knew to be a “ Q ”—which often hung about here, and was a great favourite with everybody. So I put two and two together, and waited. Exactly four days later the solution appeared. It came in the form of the following cryptic announcement issued by the Admiralty:

“ This morning our naval forces engaged and destroyed in the North Sea Zeppelin 47.”

In a few more days the modest little “ Q ” boat came into dock unnoticed and unheralded—the rule is “ no bouquets by request ” in the Navy—and anchored off the well-kept dockyard, from where she took dispatches aboard and put ashore two miserable-looking specimens of humanity, one of whom was heard to thank “ Gott,” or something of the pious sort, when he stepped ashore.

Somebody said “ Got her again, by jingo ! ” My officer friend smiled, and we began to talk about the day being very dull and overcast.

I met another fellow who was at the Naval School with me at Chatham. He introduced me to his brother—a lieutenant R.N.R.—and the three of us lunched together. We compared notes, and in the course of conversation I learnt that my friend's brother had gone afloat only last week. I congratulated him on having obtained leave so quickly, and he smiled.

“Torpedoed,” was all he said, and would say. I obtained the rest of the story from other sources that night, and it made one of the most amazing tales of the sea. It was here again where the Navy was handicapped, inasmuch as it was frankly impossible to tell *all* of what happened. But now I can tell this: This man, like my friend of the “Q” boat, also had an appointment with an enemy craft—but this time it was one of the U-boats. This man, like hundreds of others—volunteered and prayed to be sent on this mission (many volunteered, but few were chosen). This mission meant a dance with death as surely as a man seeks inconvenience when he leaps into a sea in-

fested with sharks. These men were not going to wait for the submarine ; they went out to meet it. They took up their stations on the clue from Whitehall and waited. Very shortly a message came through. It simply said : DELVO 64 N 27 W, which was Greek to the orderly who delivered it, but was sufficient for the disguised tramp to get up steam at once and be gone. In the ward-room somebody said — " Margarita's off again," and next day she was forgotten.

Sometimes you never heard any more of these adventures. They paid, these bravest of men, the penalty for their extreme daring, but often, too, they came back, like the other little " Q," and landed one or two mysterious " things " ashore. Here possibly they rested a day or two, and then were once more off to their secret rendezvous awaiting the magic word " Delvo."

What happened in the case of my friend's brother was this. Delvo had been reported N.W., but either it had moved much quicker than was calculated, or the latitudal figure was misquoted. Something went wrong.

Long before reaching the indicated area Delvo put in an appearance. But it told that it had kept the appointment by sending into the gallant adventurers a ton or so of explosives. The message was delivered into her bows. Otherwise there was not a sign of the U-boat! This first torpedo accounted for ten of the brave crew, all killed outright, and the lives of the rest were hardly worth signalling about. The foc's'le gun was completely smashed and the gun aft was now tilted at such an angle as to render it useless. The submarine commander apparently was aware of the ship's plight—although where and how in the Lord's water he could see, nobody knew, for there was not even a glimpse of a periscope. At any rate up he came, keeping at a very safe distance. He had met such boats before, manned by dare-devil Englishmen who apparently had not the intelligence to know when a game is irretrievably lost. From a distance of 1,000 yards he pelted shrapnel into the crew, some of whom had now taken to her boats. The fusillade thinned

down the remainder of the gallant blue-jackets. One man, wounded in the arm, gamely went to help the tilted gun aft. He was shot down. Nevertheless the gunners managed to manipulate the damaged gun until they obtained the range of the enemy. Two shots were fired ; both missed by inches, and the submarine dived. In a few minutes it had emerged again, this time perceptibly nearer. Then ensued a fierce duel between the two guns. Apparently the German commander did not think it necessary to waste another torpedo on the sinking ship, or perhaps he hadn't another to spare. At any rate, his 4-inch guns proved good enough, and the 6-pounders on the ship were soon silenced. Once more the submarine dived. In the meantime the game little crew had another try to save the doomed ship. Water was pumped out and an attempt to bolster up the great gaping hole was determinedly made. It was of no avail. Slowly the "Q" boat settled down by her bows, and her end was imminent. The skipper now made preparations to sink the ship's papers, and

to take a few provisions aboard the boat. But the submarine commander was too quick for him. Feeling secure beyond all doubt, he now came up almost alongside of the ship, and peremptorily demanded the ship's papers and ciphers. The answer was dramatic. From amidships somewhere on the sinking ship a gun sprung up, and in a few seconds had poured volley after volley on the fully exposed submarine. The German officers on deck were either shot off or flung themselves in the sea. Those below quickly shut down and submerged, but it was too late. The shots had damaged the submarine effectively, for she quickly came up again—making signs of surrender.

Almost as if the whole affair had been stage-managed for the cinema, two British destroyers now hove in sight. The commander of the submarine—an important personage with the significant nomenclative prefix of Von, was captured with the submarine, as were most of its crew. With the exception of those killed, all were saved on the British ship. The German submarine

commander, who spoke English perfectly, took his defeat graciously—for a wonder.

“ You men were amazing,” he said. “ I never in my life expected you could put up another ounce of fight.”

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Not a word appeared in the press concerning this amazing exploit. And one wondered why some people were querulous about the “ Silent ” Navy during one period of the war.

CHAPTER IX

SECRET CODES

“FOR instruction in coding.”

That was tacked on to our orders, and we wondered what on earth that might mean. Mysteries of secret codes, possible and fantastic, flashed through our thoughts, and we debated the whole subject on the lines of the lower-form school stories. The long and short of it was that it must mean that our duties would be to decipher secret codes of the enemy. The first night we spent at Chatham, and part of the morning too, was spent in my cabin at the barracks, in a general but vague cross-talk of the possibilities of our new career. The actuality, too, did not disillusion us. At the barracks we were shown into our class by the instructor, a perky, bright, and good-natured

warrant officer, who was to accomplish the double and unusual feat of cramming us and amusing us at the same time.

“Gennelmen! The art of coding is soon mastered—you know what I’m after. It’s thumbs up! Got me? Right-o!”

We didn’t quite “get him” at first.

“You’ll have a lot of books to master, but it’s easy—once you know it. ‘Appy! Right-o!”

He flung us some heavy green-bound books.

“Cipher XX,” he announced shortly. “Watch me!”

He wrote a few hieroglyphics on the board.

“‘Johnny Walker D.V. 2.147,’ which interpreted, as you will see, means ‘The German High Sea Fleet is out.’ Got me? Right-o!”

It needed little more to stir our imagination. Each of us pictured ourselves aboard a battleship, waiting anxiously for a message, which when it arrived began . . .

“Johnny Walker” . . .

We swallowed the contents of that book in a gulp! We learnt it all by heart in less time than we thought possible.

“ I think I know that pretty well,” said an officer, with justifiable pride.

“ That’s nothen’,” said the perky W.O.
“ There’s a lot more to come—lots ! ”

And lots more duly came. It seemed incredible, absurd, that we could be expected to “ take in ” at all, much less learn, these very important and complicated codes.

There were fifteen in the class when we started. At the end of the first day two very candidly said what they thought—that it would be hopeless—and gave up.

Next day somebody drew the attention of the instructor that there were thirteen in the class.

“ Oh, that’s all right. It’s a lucky number ! ” said the irrepressible W.O.

But half-way through the morning one officer was taken ill, and invalided out !

In four days we had gone through a curriculum that normally constitutes a year’s study. Three of us determined to go “ right out ” for it, for if it was a tough job, it was nevertheless interesting, and at any rate it showed that it was not a position which

every Dick, Tom or Harry could take up at pleasure.

On examination day, two of the three of us came top, and we received for our sins the first appointments, and consequently no leave. The great heap of codes became a swimming mass at the end of the examination; and to cap it all, our humorous but most efficient instructor said:

“There’s lots more to learn yet.” Which wasn’t so bad as his following remark: “Much of what you have learned you’ll never use. I didn’t want to tell you that before . . . because it would have disheartened you. Now there’s no harm in telling you.”

It was quite true. Out of the score or more different codes I was at pains to learn, I had occasion to use three in my first ship—and these were really new editions, for we were risking nothing those days, and if there was the slightest suspicion that a code was compromised (although any ships which are captured take good care first of all to throw the leaden-weighted codes overboard), a new one was brought out. Therefore, the work

of a coding officer was constantly changing, and he was not able for long to settle down in a groove. We thought, some of us, that it would have been as well if each officer were ear-marked for a certain port, so that he would be able then to learn the particular codes in use in that particular ship or station. But experience shows that that is not the best way, for men are continually changed about, and at each station he may have to use one of the other codes. Therefore, as our instructor said, "A sorter passen' or casual acquaintance with them all don't do no 'arm."

All signals, however, do not refer exclusively to the movements of the Fleet. In the Navy each man has an individuality. Signals are exchanged between the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet and super-Dreadnoughts regarding Stoker Smith, as well as Admiral Sir High Commander.

And not only the Grand Fleet, but our great merchant service had to use codes, although these were of a different order from those used by the ships of the Royal Navy.

On some war-ships there are no special coding officers. The work of ciphering and deciphering messages is undertaken by the Chaplain or Fleet Surgeon, or any officer whose duties permit the inclusion of this work. In war-time, however, specially trained coding officers are attached to the staff of most of our warships, since, in action, both the Chaplain and Fleet Surgeon would be occupied on their own particular duties. In peacetime, one is able to learn the codes at leisure. At Chatham, as I have said, officers were simply rushed through, and those who could not keep pace were transferred to other duties.

As a guide I give the time-table of our Coding Instruction at Chatham :

Monday. — A general introduction to coding.

Tuesday.—A rush through some of the more important codes (some of the officers seemed dazed—so did I).

Wednesday.—A last look around. Course finished !

Thursday.—A day for reflection ; officially means quiet study, in actual practice gossip

and the loosening of a torrent of pent-up hysteria.

Friday.—Examination.

From Chatham, those officers who had passed were appointed direct to a ship or station, not for any instruction or practice, but to begin work at once.

The anxiety of those of us who were appointed with hardly a break was, however, not justified, for the officers we were relieving rather expected a little freshness in those of us who came direct from the instructional classes.

At Rosyth I was able to “take over” at once, and it was regarded as being one more feather in Chatham’s cap.

CHAPTER X

SPIES AT THE BASE

NOSING about a great naval base in war-time is a dangerous pastime, especially if you have overlooked the necessity of first obtaining an official invitation. They have a disagreeable name for, and extend scant courtesy to, the well-meaning stranger who ventures unmasked within these sacred portals. Karl Lody was one of these pushful persons who roamed around this very place, gathering material for a book—or was it a report? At any rate, if Lody was a brave man, he was a poor spy. They say here that he was spotted from the very day he entered the Naval Base as a dockyard labourer. Lody, like the majority of spies, imagined that all was going well, so long as nobody interfered with the unofficial routine of his investiga-

tions. That was a fatal error. There are probably more spies moving in prohibited areas with apparent freedom than those who have been actually dealt with. It sometimes pays to wait—as they did in the case of Lody—until the spy has gathered all his available material before pouncing upon him and gleaning from his records how much it is possible for a spy to learn.

Lody's report did justice to his daring, but hardly to his powers of observation. His description of guns was grotesque. In estimating the calibre of these weapons he often referred to "pounders" when he meant "inches" and "inches" when he should have written "pounders." He placed imaginary defences where no defences were—because they were not necessary—and referred to places as being unfortified where there was a veritable network of guns, mines, torpedoes, and other formidable weapons bristling for all comers to see.

Efficient spying in such a vast dockyard appears to the outsider not a very difficult matter. It would seem impossible to hide



CENTRAL AVENUE.

THE GRAND FLEET AT THE FORTH.

the many and vast secrets of the Navy from the prying of trained observers. And yet such is the system in vogue that, so far as it is possible to learn, little ever leaked out, and probably every man sent by the enemy to spy out the land was under survey from first to last. Secret information came in—of that I shall write later—but not very much ever got out.

I obtained my first insight of what this organisation is in a curious manner. My uniform as naval officer, I thought, would at once dispel any particular interest in me, but I confess I was greatly taken off my guard when one of the intelligence officers said to me, *à propos* of nothing: “Rather hot time you must have had at the Dardanelles, sir. I suppose you’ll be writing another book about the Navy?” This was a very unexpected greeting to receive from an official, when I had determined to impress my status strictly as a naval officer. He saw my momentary embarrassment.

“Oh, you’ll find plenty of material here,” he ended nonchalantly. This much, how-

ever, was consoling. They apparently trusted me to know how much to say. Well, I did not in any case intend to give anything away; but I saw enough to know that there was plenty of opportunity here to tell the man in the street things which he yearned to learn, and which he had a right to know.

The Navy for a long time was far too modest about its excellent work. With others I had often asked, "Why is the Navy so silent?"; and after about two years' commingling with officers of all ranks, the reason became very evident. The average officer one met at the mess—and I met him in action at the Dardanelles as well as in comparative peace at the naval bases—has perforce to live a life isolated from the throbbing world outside which idolises him and chants its praises of him in his absence. The great multitude at home, as a matter of fact, had undoubtedly become vague and indistinct to him during the long period of peace, and he had become so exclusively submerged in his profession that he had been in danger of forgetting that he was, after all, responsible

to the people, and that the enthusiasm or moral of the people who maintained the Navy must be, on occasions, spoon-fed.

We once discussed this interesting question of publicity in the mess. It was a topic upon which everybody held views. The exposition of the case was soon forthcoming. "What they had to do," said the speaker, "was to carry out their duty, and that was all that was required of them." Another Commander, retired, but back again in harness, pointed out that anything of interest that one could say of the Navy might possibly be of value to the enemy. He agreed, however, that there was much which might be told with discretion. So the discussion raged throughout dinner. My point of view was one I have always held: that it was vital to keep in close touch with the people through the press. In the Near East our diplomacy had never availed itself of this "undignified" channel, and the consequence was we gave everybody else a long start. The war had proved conclusively that among the important branches of warfare publicity

was one of the foremost. Germany had maintained for nearly four years the spirit of her own people, and the friendship of some of the neutrals through this potent agency. However efficient the arm of the Service was, it was imperative that the moral of the people should be maintained, and we had taken the deuce of a long time to acknowledge the most obvious course. It was all very well to rule the waves ; it was just as necessary to keep on singing about it.

There was, much to my surprise, a general concurrence. It seemed to me that this obvious point of view had not been placed before the ward-room before, and when I told them that it was intended that some of the splendid work which was being daily performed by the Navy was to be brought home to the people, the "hear hears" were general and enthusiastic. It became apparent to me afterwards that while the spirit of conservatism still pervaded some of the officers of the older school, others of all schools were chafing under misconceived criticism which was experienced for the first time—criticism, let me

say, due solely to the reason that few people outside the Service knew of what was actually going on. The Navy of course achieved all that the most loyal ever expected of it. Indeed, I shall show that it performed duties more arduous—certainly more monotonous—than one ever imagined would fall to its lot, and that its service had not been lacking in excitement and “intense moments,” as most people had been led to believe.

CHAPTER XI

THE EXPLOITS OF SUBMARINE B.X. 2

THE arm of the Senior Service which more than any other in those somewhat uneventful days had most of the excitement of war was, of course, the submarine. While the great battleships, with a grandeur terrible and mighty to behold, lay in wait for the enemy, surrounded by a retinue of smaller craft in deference to their majesty as well as in protection against unseen dangers, the submarine was very often on the move somewhere, nosing around for game, great and small.

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This class of craft resembled the pawns on the sea-board. Its activity was mainly directed against the almost insuperable defences of the enemy—to pick up, more particularly, the second and third lines of

defences. Any success in this direction was gratifying enough; but it was always on the look-out for the first-line units—the greater super-Dreadnought.

It was with this commendable object in view that Submarine Commander B.X. 2 left his base in the early days of the war and made for a fairly well-known German haunt. He took with him three weeks' rations, a full complement of torpedoes, a little rum, and plenty of pluck.

The first part of the excursion was logged as "nothing to report"—except that the weather was fine, the sea favourable, and the prospect encouraging. Then came a tempter in the way of a German destroyer poking about gingerly, like an amateur burglar, well within scouting distance of her base.

"Not worth it this time," said the Commander, and the hundred or so of Fraus and Fräuleins had something to be thankful for in that decision. No, Commander B.X.2 was after greater game, and in a very short time he came within periscope view of it. How he managed to evade the tremendous

mine defences he alone—and perhaps somebody at Whitehall—knew. He seemed to steer this way and that, up here and down there, with such a degree of certainty that one almost suspected the Germans had sent him a special detailed invitation to look them up. It was now really a question of choice—a nice formidable-looking Dreadnought and a fat-looking two-funnelled flagship.

Commander B.X.2 decided to take the former. A command delivered in a suave, casual tone—not the sharp, tense tones which one had been brought up to believe were the correct thing in real life, as well as in school stories, and a seaman pressed a button and “clicked” something else.

The torpedo took to the deep water with a relish that was almost human. She was well on her way when—biff! something hard just scraped the side of the submarine and made a fearful commotion in the waters above and below.

“What was that?” the newest man on board asked.

“A fly—a dragon-fly,” murmured the boat cynic as the submarine, at a word from the Commander, submerged with very pronounced haste.

Ten feet — fifteen — twenty — twenty-five feet, the lower she went the easier the men felt. In a trice the whole swarm of submarine killers would be on the spot searching for her blood. Down, down she continued to go as if there would be no end—then a grating noise.

“Bottom,” announced the Engineer.

Yes—submarine B.X.2 was resting comfortably on the sandy bottom of the German head-quarters!

“Here we’ll bide a bit,” said the Commanding Officer to the Engineer.

No sooner had he made this pronouncement when a fearful explosion took place outside the ship. The noise was alarmingly significant, and the displacement of air shook the submarine as if she had been a toy instead of a vessel of the latest class.

Everybody knew what this meant. The Germans had all but located her, and were attacking in the dark by depth charges.

Commander B.X.2 bided on a bit—but only a bit, for the next explosion—very much nearer—nearly lifted the submarine and capsised it, so he piped through an order to the engine-room, and the great grey thing trembled, shook off the sand from beneath her lithe body, and moved on. And—judging by the sound again—only just in time.

The next attempts of the Germans were all well off the mark, for with a devilish ingenuity Commander B.X.2 had moved not away from the danger zone—but farther into it. Above him were German battleships and mine-fields, little enough space for their destroyers to move about freely to attack.

And who on earth would have imagined that the submarine would move into and not away from the pool of death? Certainly not the Germans. By and by all was quiet again, and B.X.2 was noted and officially proclaimed to the world by the Germans to have been accounted for “several miles away from the German base.”

“Our destroyers operating in the North

Sea located an enemy submarine and destroyed it.”

The only doubt Commander B.X.2 had was whether his torpedo had taken effect. He felt sure it could hardly have missed. It had all but got home before he had been given the tip to submerge. Anyway he logged the incident as—

“Patrolled German Coast 47° 54 W. to-day, Wednesday at 8 a.m. sighted several German vessels including two Dreadnoughts—class indistinguishable. Fired torpedo at close range, but, after a near shot from the enemy destroyer, submerged before effect of torpedo could be ascertained.”

Commander B.X.2 and his staff beguiled away the time at the bottom of the sea by a game of bridge, while the men at their stations sang sentimental songs about “Love” and “Home” fervently in different keys. Number 1 Watch soon turned in, as did, after

a while, the Engineer-Commander, who had had rather a hard day of it.

Several hours thus passed away, and by this time the submarine had settled comfortably on the bottom.

Drinks and a concert, a confab, another game of bridge, and a turn in brought up the period of waiting to seven hours. And still the Commander, who was as cautious as he was gallant, made ne'er a sign.

Eight—ten hours!

It seemed the dickens of a long time to wait, even to these hardened sailors, but they were giving the wily German no chance. After such an alarm in their very midst there would be little rest for their destroyers and patrol boats for some time afterwards. As it was, somebody would have the deuce to pay for not having observed the submarine sooner.

Thirteen—fourteen—fifteen hours had been passed in this anxious position, and now the Commander—stretching himself as if awakened from a long vigil—briefly announced, “ We'll get a move on.”

The engines were throbbing again and the bustle recommenced.

“Go astern—blow after tanks—astern full speed,” the Commanding Officer had signalled, but beyond a pathetic shudder the submarine did not move.

“Stop. . . . Full speed ahead.”

The engines for’ard went full tilt, but never a perceptible move was there.

The Commander went for’ard to investigate.

“Good Lord!” he said; and as it was an ejaculation he scarcely ever used, the men knew something—something untoward—had happened. The Engineer, too, made a brief examination.

“Good Lord!” he echoed.

“Snowed up——”

Almost up to her periscope Submarine B.X.2 was covered with and embedded in the sand. During sixteen hours of waiting she had slowly but surely dug her way into the sandy bed until she was firmly held.

“Try stern again—full speed . . . stop!”

At the angle they were held, this move would drag the submarine down more.

“ Blow for’ard tanks ! ”

Of course she did not budge, but with the full pressure “ lifting her ” and the stern engines shaking her as if she had ague there seemed to be a slight—a very slight—relief after an hour.

“ Stop . . . ”

The same experiment was conducted astern, and after three hours a slight move was felt. But at the end of six the submarine was still held firmly and almost hopelessly.

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For eighteen hours submarine B.X.2 fought for her life at the bottom of the German waters, and at the end a jubilant unanimous shout :

“ All clear, sir ! ”

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Commander B.X.2 is a household name. It is associated with imperceptible coolness even in the face of certain death.

“ But I was really in the devil of a funk,” he confessed. And when such a man is

brought solemnly to make the admission, one can realise the awful nature of the ordeal which he and his men went through, embedded at the enemy's base.

CHAPTER XII

A NAVAL INCONGRUITY

THE anomalies and incongruities of war are too numerous to detail. I have here and there in my notes mentioned a few of them. Most of the anomalies, however, are due to absurd management; while nearly all the incongruities are due to absurd temperaments. Why on earth, for instance, should Lieutenant John B. Travener, R.N.V.R., an expert in gunnery, move about the deck of H.M.S. *Tryst* as if it were pastures with the green grass removed instead of the deck of a warship with the bloodstains wiped off?

The fact is, J. B. T. was one of war's incongruities—a queer fish—one of the squares squeezed by an over-worked Government into a round hole. There is no doubt that some of these squares—to the amazement of many

—begin to fit in after a while. The rough-and-tumble life—the inexorable new mode—chips the corners off the square until it roughly fits the round hole.

I do not know, but I imagine that when J. B. T. joined up he thought that he would soon fit in with the life for which he then felt himself unsuited. Few—despite Carlyle's exhortation—know themselves, or what they are capable of achieving. Consequently few over-reach themselves; nearly all fall short—far short—because of the want of conceit.

I sometimes think the genuine Conscientious Objector would have been surprised to see how easily one's conscience, like one's outlook, "expands" after the plunge is taken. Ask many good fellows what they thought at the beginning when it was pointed out to them that they would one day impale a fellow being on a bayonet—and ask them now if the same feeling of horror, of the "sheer impossibility" of such an action, ever entered their thoughts when the moment came. It is possible in very many cases to create a soldier, as it is possible to create a

musician of a sort. The hardship is in the case of the exceptions. If a man cannot appreciate the difference between harmony and discord after being "smothered" with music, it is charitable as well as convenient to free him and permit him to work out his own destiny. Not so in the case of war. Drill a man however you may, immerse him day by day, hour by hour, into the rudiments of the Service, instil into him the necessity, the vital importance, of discipline—and what if he remains the same? Free him?

Never! The machine that turns the average man until he is the finished article will not stop to throw out the ever raw one even though he clog the wheels. Rather will it crush him. John Braithwaite Travener never "took" to the sea, and consequently he, of unusually cheerful and friendly disposition, never "hit it" with his friends on board. He told me one day that he could not understand them; that they and he belonged to different worlds. He thought they must be jolly good sort and all that—but he preferred to cling to his old ideals, since he found none

that suited him better, in his new environment.

J. B. T.'s one consolation was his daily epistle from the girl to whom he was engaged. His cabin was tastefully decorated with her photographs and flowers. Most of his books were autographed with a line or two from her, and a bundle of music comprised all the pieces they both loved. But they were never used. Nobody on board but him could appreciate that kind of music, and although I begged of him to let me hear him, he never did play.

"The others might not like it," he said. "The atmosphere . . ."

"Oh, what rot!" I said. "Some of them would love it. As to those who don't—well, it's up to them to clear off if they do not appreciate it. They play cards and smoke without asking our leave; why on earth should we care if they have a musical understanding or not."

But I never got him to play. He occupied his leisure in writing to his mother—I understand he was one of those "happy home birds"—to his sister and his sweetheart.

So it went on.

One day he came to my cabin and showed me a blue official letter from the Admiralty. "Read that," he simply said. It was an order directing him to repair forthwith to H.M.S. *Riley* for gunnery duties. Neither of us spoke for a moment. We both knew that *Riley* was a submarine attacking vessel—a class of mysterious dare-devils that had achieved amazing results—although not a word of their exploits had yet appeared in the Press.

"Er—good luck, old man," I said awkwardly, although we both knew how anomalous it was to appoint him—an incongruity—to a ship of that description.

But, as I have said, this sort of thing happens in so vast a machinery, and in the end, let us hope, it all pans out well.

J. B. T. sheered off next day, and I heard nothing more of him till a month later when I read that he had been awarded a D.S.O. I read the announcement in a naval journal a fortnight after it had been published. It gave no details beyond the official vague tag of conspicuous gallantry.

I penned him a note there and then, c/o G.P.O. London, and hoped to goodness we could meet some day.

We did, and sooner than I expected. I had turned in fairly early one night because I was to take first watch. No sooner had I closed my eyes than I seemed to dream of him. Although I had never met him before we both joined the old ship, I seemed to see him in a large garden of a big country house. A fine old grey-haired lady sat knitting, and at her feet, playing with a St. Bernard dog, was a pretty little child.

Presently there came in a tall smiling girl with a companion of her own height, dressed in afternoon attire. As soon as he saw her J. B. T. rose quickly from his deck-chair, flung away his book, and went to meet her with unfeigned happiness. Over the girl's handsome face, however, there appeared to hover a cloud of uncertainty—but it dispersed as he drew her to him and gently kissed her.

“Is that you, old man?”

I was still dreaming, for J. B. T. was calling me, although the picture had now disappeared.

“ I’m sorry, old man——”

“ Who on earth—— ? ”

I had now sat up (it was still quite light), and there in my cabin was the man I had been dreaming about. He looked pale and drawn.

“ My dear fellow——”

“ I’m sorry I woke you . . . I . . . er . . . didn’t know you had turned in so early.”

“ But——”

I now roused myself.

“ Congratulations, old man——”

Yet I couldn’t go on in that strain, for something told me all was not well.

“ On leave ? ” I asked. And then he burst out.

“ On leave, no !—or, rather, yes. I’m on my last leave. I am not going back—I can’t—this life was not cut out for me, and I’m throwing in my hand. I’m going back to the country and—my people.”

I tried once or twice to stem his flow, But

I soon saw the futility of this. The quiet, reserved man was loosing a torrent of passion which he had stored up for two and a half years. I knew it was useless to try to pacify him. Now and then he broke into poetry. He raved upon the beauties of life, and how mankind had ruthlessly destroyed them.

“What is the use of remaining in this hell?” he once asked, and immediately poured out a thousand cries that were awfully poignant and touching.

He would not wait until I dressed, but left with the same extraordinary haste as he had entered. I fell asleep and dreamed he was playing the “Valse Triste.”

In the morning I wondered whether his visit was part and parcel of my dream, but I had not time to ponder on these events, and was soon in the midst of my duties.

A message came to the ship's office in the usual way later on in the day that the body of Lieutenant J. B. Travener, D.S.O., was picked up off Forth Bridge by the ferry boat,

and it was generally taken that he had fallen overboard. I wonder whether the man whom they called strange, but who was simply strange to their mode of living, had indeed been thus saved from another fate. That he was a good fellow, sensible, and a man of high ideals I knew. The man they called "singular" was simply one of war's anomalies—a man whom God and a few mortals understand and approve of.

There are those who could envy his life if not his end.

CHAPTER XIII

A "YOUNG-FELLER-ME-LAD"

THERE was a "young-feller-me-lad" in my ship who wanted telling off. . . . He is not really a bad sort so far as feller-me-lads in a ship go, but his ideas are all out of date. They want regenerating; they could do with a course of treatment at the direction of a master mind. . . . So *I* took the young-feller-me-lad in hand! I waited first of all till he made another move. I knew I shouldn't have to wait long. He was for ever trumpeting views as hare-brained as a village idiot's and as barren as a German larder. . . .

He comes into the mess—he always seemed to be a ship's company on his own—and says *à propos* of nothing:

"There's a silly ass of an A.P. who is

annoyed because admirals and such don't bow to him or something when they meet him. . . . And his Highness but a R.N.V.R.—up for duration. . . . I like his cheek——”

“ Just listen here, young-feller-me-lad, and perhaps you'll like my cheek too. . . . Can you give any real reason why naval ratings—we'll leave the soldiers out of the discussion for a minute—can you say why they don't salute an A.P. R.N.V.R.? Are you—an R.N. by some misprint—are you going to defend breezy, honest Jack because he fails to acknowledge a superior officer who happens to be a Volunteer? ”

“ Of course I don't defend him——”

“ But you'll have to now! You fellers in the regulars—this applies to the Army too—are the most ungracious heathens I've ever struck. . . . Here you are living in times of peace at the nation's expense—preparing for war—and when it does come along you have to call in men who have made their way in other professions—thinking that they could leave the job of war when it came along to the men whom they paid and sang about——”

" My fear fellow——"

" Don't you dare dear-fellow me. I'm not your fellow—I'm a R.N.V.R. . . . These Volunteers come in, jeopardise their own callings to help you in yours, and then you have the infernal cheek to sneer at them——"

" But if only you saw some of the blighters at work."

" Well, glory be to them. Do you expect 'em to do it like clock-work first go off? You fellows have become machines—all of you in action, most of you in thinking, and you expect these fellows to carry on as if they were born to the work. Mind you, I don't deny that they don't do as well as a good many of you. Some of 'em forget to say aloft instead of upstairs—even that gets your back up—but I imagine they do a darned sight better in your profession than some of you could do in theirs. . . ."

" Ease on a bit——"

" Not on your life. Not till I've finished. You spoke the other day about the journalist chaps who come down here, and exaggerate the show—sneered at them for being senti-

mental—sloppy. Well, did you want 'em to tell the truth about some of you? Good lord, if they did, there'd be the devil of a lot of naval posts vacant. If the public had a picture of the real Navy instead of a newspaper Navy——”

“ Waiter ! a whisky-and-soda.”

“ That is your sole salvation. . . . Without whisky, soda, and bridge, life would not be worth living. . . . Of course, my poor fellow, I know there is little enough else offered to you in the unnatural life you lead. That is not your fault ; it is your misfortune. But that should hardly give you cause for the superior airs you assume towards the men who have come to help you. . . .”

“ Will you have a drink ? ”

“ When I have finished. . . . Your fetish of the gold braid is not confined to the ward-room or the lower deck. . . . You must go to Whitehall for its source. Whitehall is as full of the conservative snobbery and incompetence as it was a hundred years ago. How we manage to win wars God alone knows. It is some consolation to think that other

nations are maybe even worse than we. . . . Whitehall nowadays brands the R.N.V.R. It gives him a thin stripe of gold braid and insists upon its being crinkly so that the 'pukka' naval man shall know that he's an outsider—called in when there's any work to be done. . . . No, some of you fellows in the regulars want a dose of logic, gratitude, and broadmindedness. In truth you make me sick. . . . Thank you, mine's a Martini."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LOWER DECK

A VISIT to the lower deck of a modern battleship is an eye-opener. In point of space, comfort, and order, an amazing change has been effected within the last few years. It would seem, in fact, that in designing the present-day Goliaths, as much attention has been given to the improvement in the men's quarters as in that given to the great turrets and guns. Hygienic bakeries, bathrooms, promenades, recreation quarters, and other innovations have been introduced, so that the lot of the seaman afloat is bearable.

The routine itself, I believe, has hardly altered, however. Take the following actual war time-table of one of our wonderful battle-cruisers, the *Repulse*.

The day opens aboard ship at 5.30, when the bugle calls "Lash up and stow!"

It does not take very long after this *réveillé* before a complete metamorphosis happens, although for a little while after the call the ship's police hustle along with their shrill calls: "Out of them 'ammicks!" or "Show a leg!"

Human nature is always present. Some of the sleepy ones want coaxing.

"A place for everything," quotes the P.O., "everything in its place—so out of them 'ammicks."

At quarter to six "Hands to wash and cocoa!" is piped. In the early sleepy hours this order certainly sounds like "hands to wash in cocoa."

At ten minutes past six another call sounds, "Hands, fall in!"

Five minutes later—if the ship is in harbour—a party is dispatched in a picket boat for the ship's letters. From this hour till seven-fifteen, the duties are various; scrubbing down, however, being the most prominent.

Breakfast is at quarter-past seven. The ship's company is divided up into messes, at

the head of each of which is a caterer, who is held responsible for the smooth running of the mess.

“Slops” in the Navy refers to clothes. “Rig” is the more respectable term referring to uniform. To “take up slops” means to buy some clothes at the stores, which Jack very often had to do at his own expense under the old regulations.

The cooks and the caterer determine the day’s menu—whether it should be “straight bake” (roast), or a “pot mash” (a stew with vegetables or a pie), or duff (pie, pure and simple).

The following is a caterer’s time-table :

7.25. Provisions served out.

11.45. Rum.

11.45—1.15. Dinner.

4.0. Bread.

5.0. Potatoes.

5.30. Meat.

At 10.30 a.m. “Request men and defaulter” are piped. By a “request man” is meant one who has asked through the ship’s police to see the commander, in order to

make some request. The proceedings are simple and formal, and are dealt with briskly.

Before a little table stands the Commander accompanied by a part of his staff. In front of the table is a mat. The request men are dealt with first. At the signal, the first man "doubles up" to the mat, with his cap on, and salutes. He briefly states his request. It may be for leave to see his sick mother, or perhaps to make a formal application for a stripe or other award that is due to him.

The Commander decides in an instant. In the course of a long experience, these requests become rather stereotyped, and he has no difficulty in either "granting" or "not granting" a request.

The Master-at-Arms repeats the Commander's decision :

"Granted. . . . Right about turn. . . . Double !"

When the request men have been all served, it becomes the turn of the defaulters.

They take a little longer to be dealt with. Each man, when called upon, doubles up with cap off.

These defaults are more often than not of a minor character, such as for smoking in prohibited places, or unpunctuality.

Such minor misdemeanours are dealt with lightly.

“ 10A ” is usually the verdict, which may mean loss of leave or being mulcted of pay.

Another offence which comes under the heading of “ minor ” misdemeanours, but which nevertheless may be regarded seriously failing a convincing explanation, is that of having “ been adrift ” (or absent without leave, or overstaying leave). The excuses invariably are “ lost train ” or “ lost boat.” In genuine cases 10A is given.

To “ go adrift ” is a popular expression in the Navy. Not only men, but letters and parcels go adrift.

Nothing is ever lost, stolen, or strayed in such cases ; the article is “ adrift.”

It is a bad habit for a man on leave to go “ adrift ” even if it is nothing more serious than losing a train or missing a boat. Two trains missed may alter the issue from “ adrift ” to “ desertion,” in which case the

defaulter goes before the Captain. Only more serious offences are dealt with by the superior head, although in very private or important minor cases an ordinary A.B. has the right to see the Captain.

Orders aboard ship are "piped"—that is, a bugle-call is made in every part of the ship where men are likely to be. This "pipe" is a warning to listen to the order which is, immediately after, shouted out. First the bugle is sounded, and then the Bos'un with his pipe makes a tour of the ship. This prevents excuses that "the order was not heard."

Seamen afloat have numerous rig-outs—according to their special occupation—but the four general rigs are :

1. Serge trousers and jumpers.
2. Duck rig-out.
3. Painting rig.
4. "Best."

The last is usually termed "No. 1" or "Sunday best."

The rig of the day is "piped" during breakfast. Up to about 8.15 Jack is "messing around." He may smoke or "fuss about"

with his wardrobe, or have a scrape (as he terms shaving).

Work in earnest begins at 8.15, when the bugle pipes, "Hands, fall in!"

The men are then told off in parties to their various duties.

At nine o'clock the pipe is "Divisions!" when all line up. This may mean an inspection by the Commander to see whether the right rig is being worn, or whether A.B. Simpson has "scraped" or P.O. Gunning or Bell have their hair combed nicely.

No one is permitted to miss "divisions"—no matter what other duties may offer an excuse.

After "divisions," "Church prayers" and after these devotions probably a run round the ship for about a quarter of an hour. This necessary exercise over, the men go back to their duties till half-past ten, when the bugle sounds the "Stand easy." This allows an interval of ten minutes for a smoke, etc.

From twenty minutes to eleven the men are at work again for an hour, at the end of which time "Cooks to the galley" is sounded

off. These cooks simply go to bring the dishes, but as a fact they really do no cooking. About the same time the bugle sounds off "Rum," when a man from each mess goes with his "Fanny" (or kettle) for a supply sufficient for his mess. The caterer of each mess is held responsible for the exact number of "tots."

The ship's cooks consist of a special rating of men who can actually cook, for although Jack is a man of all trades he prefers his cook to be a specialist, and further, although not in the least fastidious, he likes his "scran"—a name he applies to food—to be wholesome and tasty! By the way, just as the word "lad" has no relation to a "ladder," so is "scran" no relation to "scran-bag," which is the seaman's receptacle for lost property.

The "cooks" who were told off to the galley to bring the dishes are responsible for the cleaning up, so that it would seem that the term "cook" is a misnomer for "orderly."

At 1.10 hands again fall in, and much the same routine is carried out in the afternoon

as in the forenoon, that is, till seven bells, when first dog-watchers troop off to tea.

“Eight bells” (four o'clock) signifies the end of the afternoon watch, and the welcome “pipe,” “Cooks to the galley for tea,” is sounded.

“Liberty men to clean” indicates that the men who that morning were granted leave may drop their particular work on which they may happen to be engaged, and are to don their “No. 1” togs.

Then the call is :

“Liberty men, fall in!” After which they are marched off the ship under a senior rating.

Other “pipes” during the day may be :

“Port watch for exercise, fall in!”

“Starboard watch, darken ship!”

“Port watch, close water-tight doors.”

“Fire drill.”

Supper is “served” at seven o'clock.

At 7.30 the pipe is “Stand by hammocks netting!” which means, “Get out netting, and sling it wherever your billet is.”

Before turning in, Jack invariably has a

sing-song, a smoke, or a game. Between 9.30 and ten the men gradually turn in. Ten o'clock is actually the "pipe down."

Something attempted, something done has earned a night's sweet repose—even in a hammock.

CHAPTER XV

“QUEER FISH” IN THE R.N.V.R.

CAPTAIN CARPENTER, V.C., the hero of Zeebrugge, has emphasised the worthy part played by officers and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in that soul-stirring action.

That acclamation—since followed by the announcement of the V.C. to a lieutenant R.N.V.R.—must have surprised not a few who imagined that the man with the crinkly gold braid was a land-lubber disguised as a sailor. The distinction signifies a difference merely of category and not of service.

The composition of the Volunteer Reserve force was complex. It included all sorts—from mercantile marine sailors and yachtsmen down to bankers and provision merchants. Men with some sort of sea experience

or of engineering ability were, after a brief training, drafted to launches—a side of the new Navy which, as the enemy knew to his cost, was very largely developed.

As the Zeebrugge dispatches show, these launches were detailed for work which required absolute fearlessness, initiative, and dexterity in handling. Each of the launches which played so great a part in these and other operations was nearly always commanded by a lieutenant R.N.V.R.

It must not be imagined, however, that the Zeebrugge enterprise afforded the only opportunity for these citizen sailors. Day and night the R.N.V.R. men in launches or trawlers were patrolling the coast as scouts, or were out farther afield hunting for enemy submarines. The full story of their valuable work in this connection is yet to be told. The R.N.R. in their trawlers, or the R.N. men in their destroyers, have not had the monopoly of those stirring adventures with the U-boats.

The general misconception of the duties of the R.N.V.R. is due to the fact that the

Royal Naval Reserve was supposed to have included all reserve officers and men with some previous sea experience. The mistake is shared by a few naval men. The exigencies of war—perhaps it was with an idea of economy at the time—were responsible for roping so many qualified sailors into the R.N.V.R. At any rate, I came across officers and men of the R.N.V.R. performing every possible duty—similar to those which devolve upon the “ pukka ” brand of officer.

Even in the accountants' branch, this expression of confidence in the R.N.V.R. personnel by the Admiralty has been made manifest. There was a period in the war when it was decided to offer commissions in the accountants' branch to qualified men of low medical category, or those discharged from the Army. To these were allotted such duties as ships' accounts, paying, victualling, coding, or carrying dispatches.

Such men, with experience in book-keeping and accounting, were given commissions as assistant paymasters in the Royal Naval Reserve, while others with no such experience

were drafted to the R.N.V.R. for coding and secretarial duties. Thus a large number of "pukka" officers were released for more arduous duties.

Of course, there is a very human side to the story of the Royal Naval Volunteer. It is strange indeed that more has not been written about him in the course of this war. Shut up within the sides of the leviathans that went out again and again to challenge Fritz to a fight to a finish, he has been indeed lost to the world.

Let me therefore give a little picture of one of the types of R.N.V.R.—great naval heroes—who have so far been overlooked in the struggle.

I met him in the lower deck amid a score or so of ratings who were told off to scrub the decks. He had a round face, big earnest eyes, and a crop of hair which had no right on the head of a son of the sea. Baggy trousers and a round hat serve to equalise all men. The ornament of a stripe of braid works wonders, of course, but the men in the uniform hats have uniform souls—or ought to.

This son of a 12-pounder hadn't. When I came along with a very superior officer this man came to attention in much the same manner as the rest of the crew. But there was a subtle difference, which I was quick to notice. He did not look so set as a regular lower rating has a right to look. He seemed to have no objection at all to our coming into the underworld, as he afterwards called it.

I was glad to stay aboard this super-Dreadnought, because—among other things—I had an idea this young-feller-me-lad and I should meet.

It was Sunday morning and the naval chaplain was hard put to find an organist—a substitute for the officer who had been transferred to the *Tiger*.

“ Perhaps somebody among the crowd can play,” I suggested, but he, more cognisant as he thought of this region, laughed the suggestion aside. But the young man who had taken my fancy had somehow overheard my suggestion. He came forward, a bit shy, but eager, and saluted.

“ I can play a little, sir,” he said.

“ You can ? ”

The Chaplain looked round at the man as if it were an amazing thing. He had been in the Navy for years, and apparently had not taken in the new conditions which had admitted into the ranks gentlemen lower ratings.

“ What can you play ? ” he asked.

“ I could play a fugue or a sonata—all the church music—and something from Chopin or Mendelssohn as a finale.”

The Chaplain gasped.

“ What’s your name ? ” he asked.

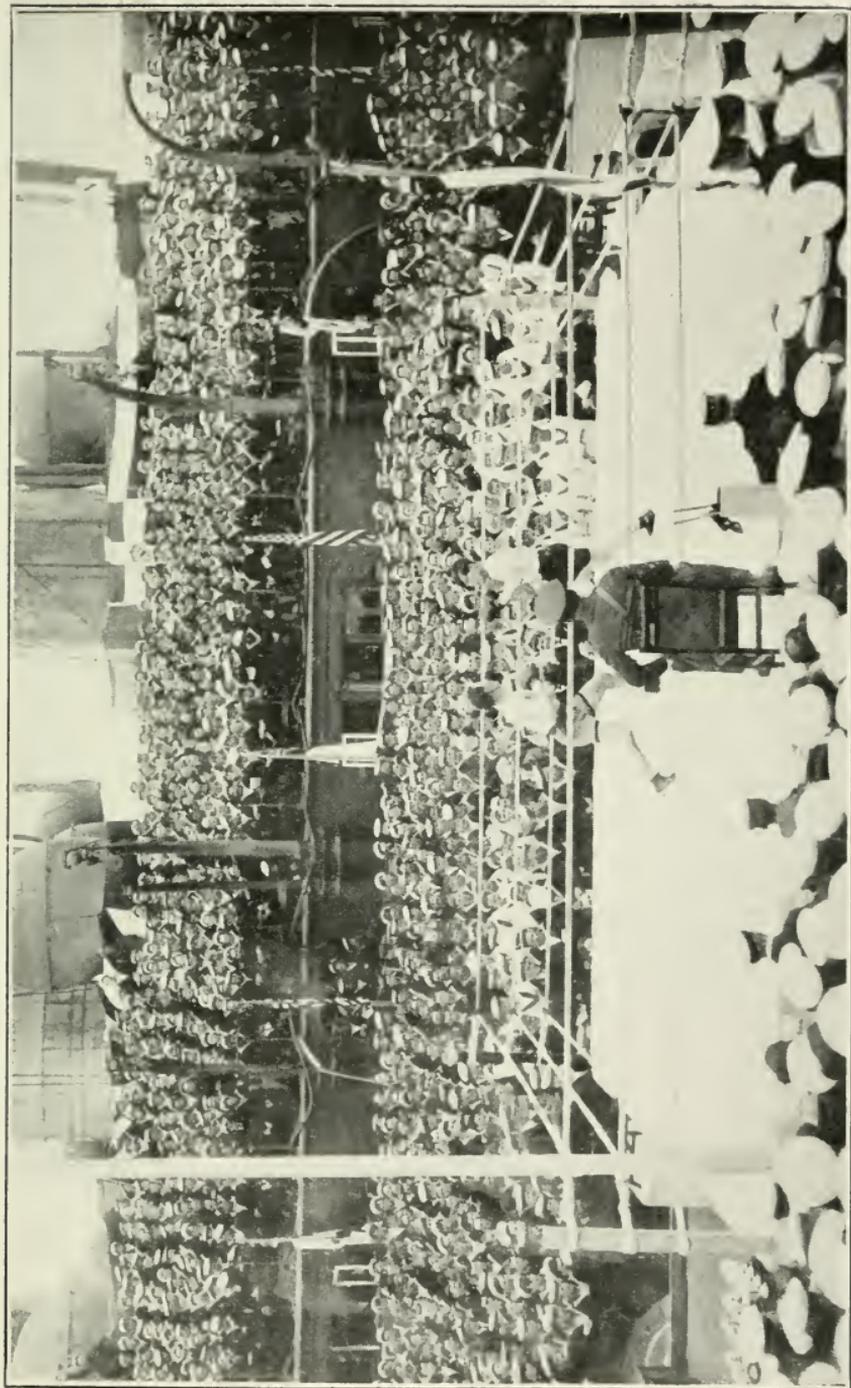
“ Dickson.”

“ Your real name ? ’

“ Oh—er—does it matter, sir ? ”

Dickson and I met after the church service. He had played with a marvellous touch and technique, which at once revealed a scholar and a natural musician. From that day onwards, I may say, he became the “ gentleman-rater ” of the lower decks.

“ I joined up like the rest,” he told me. “ I rather fancied the Navy, and the only thing open was the R.N.V.R.. Of course, candidly, sir, I didn’t know quite what the



JACK AMUSES HIMSELF AFLOAT.

Official.

life down here was going to be like. . . .” He laughed. “I’m glad I didn’t. It might have made me hesitate a bit, and I should have missed a side of human life about which I had never dreamt.”

I nodded. I knew enough and had seen enough to know that the life in the Navy was fitted only for the great strong physical beings who were broken in when young, in order to make up this arm of the great service. And yet aboard this magnificent vessel I found a motley of society, of which few people outside—and a good many inside—the Service never dreamt. Much had been sung about the poets and millionaires who were masquerading in khaki, but little we dreamt that some of the best men had joined up as able-bodied seamen in the lower decks of our great warships, and had put to sea in the company of thousands of men who had known the sea and the Navy from childhood. Here in this ship were bankers, baronets, and scholars, living a curious life among men with whom they had nothing in common beyond the great common object. To have conceived

such a life in normal times would have been a nightmare to these men who had come in on their own account. I daresay in after life many of them will wonder how they ever were able to stand it. Withal, I doubt whether any of them will regret their wonderful experience.

That morning a young lower rating had gone on the mat and asked for leave.

“What for?”

“To see my father off to the Front.”

“Who is your father?”

“General Sir . . .” naming a well-known general.

Nobody had ever guessed the identity of the young seaman volunteer.

Dickson himself was an M.A., D.Sc., and a composer of music. The story he told me was a simple one, and very touching. He hesitated at first, but I won his confidence in the end. To those who are away from all they love best, there come moments of yearning which are strangely touching in strong men. A good many are clever enough to hide all trace of these natural human feelings, but

sometimes one has a brief glimpse below the veneer of conventional hardness, and then one beholds the common heart which beats throughout humanity.

“Before the war,” said Dickson, “I was the head master of the —— Grammar School. I spent three years at the —— Higher School, and there met my future wife. We married and went over to Yorkshire.”

He stopped to light a pipe.

“There has been no sweeter bliss than my seven years of married life. Quiet, mind you, and perhaps uneventful, but happy. We had a nice house and a garden. My wife is artistic, and arranged the house to my taste. At four I used to return home, and we would have tea and take a walk together before dinner. She was as splendid a cook as she was a pianist. At night I would either continue my studies while she read, or we would have some music. Nothing seemed wanting. . . .”

“And then?”

“And then, just as I was promoted, war broke out. Her father was wounded, and

the first signs of grief overclouded her life. Then I said I must join up. We closed our beautiful little house. She went out on war work, and in a trice we were separated."

He knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Why?" he asked, speaking as if to himself. "I had no quarrel with any man. I lived my life in the sight of God as man should. Now I am cut off from her, in the best years of my life, and these days can never be regained. Still," he said suddenly, "I do not regret this amazing experience—no! It has hardened me a bit, I know—but I'm sure I shall be all the better for it."

That was the strange part about all the queer fish I came across. They had yearning moments of retrospection, but the future always seemed brighter and more hopeful than ever.

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It amazes me now that when I joined up I should have expected to be in a strange world, where I should be the only land-lubber. The

world afloat is certainly strange enough—but the company is not half so strange.

In a few months I had met all sorts of queer fish dressed up as sailors. Here aboard this very ship are dozens of men of the new Navy, all of whom no more dreamt of being in blue than of flying.

In the ship on our starboard—a great battleship—is an R.A. rated as a second-class painter! The captain is rather proud of him—especially as he is only a second-class painter. You’ve got to be somebody big to be a *first*-class painter in the Navy! A light cruiser “across the way” boasts of a famous etcher who is also a rating. H.M.S. — alongside us has an M.A. (Cantab.) in her lower decks. Being a parson, however, he has just been singled out to read the lessons at church service! Another “queer fish” of the new Navy is a head master of a well-known school.

This new type has been altogether overlooked by the world outside. And no wonder. Even when you become acquainted with the Navy from the inside you hardly recognise

the new matelot in his war paint. That is why the garb is called a uniform. The new matelot goes about his work unostentatiously ; scrubs decks, cleans guns, climbs aloft to the " spotting top," as if he had been cradled in the Navy. Coming into a much stranger world than the Army really is, he settles down in a remarkably short time. You hear him upon the first day asking whether he might go " downstairs," or whether he ought to take the first turning on the " right." He very soon learns to refer instead to " below " and " aloft " as if he were never acquainted with the beach terms. I have met since I joined the Navy a stockbroker, an opera singer, an author, a doctor, an insurance agent, a chartered accountant, a provision merchant, a banker, a lawyer, and a bookseller—all of the new Navy !

These men usually belong to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, or those with some knowledge of seamanship or of accounts join the Royal Naval Reserve. A great number of the latter belong to the trawler fleet. They come from the seaside resorts, most of

them, where they picked up a livelihood by fishing or hiring out boats. You know the type. The tanned face, slouching individual, who would tell you it was a fine day for a row or a sail. This crowd of Bohemians all went into blue, and a few weeks of severe training simply transformed them. You certainly would never recognise them, with their neat attire, and their smart, keen, and willing manner.

The Navy is very proud of this type of new seaman. “A queer but very useful sort of customer” is the verdict. “When the war is over,” a well-known commander said to me, “the King ought to inspect three Fleets—the Royal Navy, the Auxiliary, and the Trawler Fleets. I consider the last to be most deserving of all.”

I paid a visit to a certain busy centre up north, where the base of the trawler fleet is. The men were hard at work “rigging”; some had just come in after having executed divers missions of which the nation will learn in good time. These new seamen did not care a hang for the Boches’ U-boats,

and not a few of them have had a tussle with those submarines and consequently know exactly how much respect ought to be paid to them. I could tell some of their stories of these adventures with the German U-boats—stories of wonderful valour, cunning, and sometimes treachery, which, more often than not, met with its due reward.

Another new type in the Navy was the junior officer. These men—many of whom were either discharged soldiers or above military age—did very useful work in the various departments of the Accountant Branch of the Navy. A large number of them, too, were men with expert knowledge—such as qualified chemists, engineers, chartered accountants. Many of them were assistant paymasters, which, as I have already mentioned, does not necessarily mean that they “pay” the men. Some dealt with the victualling of ships or stations; others had a knowledge of secret codes, confidential work requiring concentration, steadfastness, and patience.

Others of these young officers of the new

school were engaged in highly confidential work which in the ordinary way would first entail years of experience. In these abnormal conditions, and with their special gifts, these men have been able to pick up the complicated administrative routine and have in this way rendered considerable service to the country. From what I have seen, in fact, by far the hardest work in the Navy was being done by these accountant officers—or “retired” Royal Navy officers recalled to do staff work.

I had a novel experience on board one of the battle-cruisers on the day the King came to visit the Fleet. Two of the seamen whom I first saw I had known in the City. One was my solicitor’s chief clerk and the other—my barber!

Queer fish indeed!

CHAPTER XVI

OUR SECRET SERVICE

IN the chapter on "Stunts" I gave two actual episodes out of many—one of a submarine attack and another of a Zeppelin fight—as examples of what was being done by the Silent Navy. In one instance we simply had a bald announcement that a Zeppelin was "brought down" by the naval forces; of the second encounter we had never a word. The ordinary man in the street, reading of the Zeppelin fight, thinks it was "jolly fortunate" that while it was trying to bomb the "Q" boat a chance shot settled the German airship's own fate. He never for a moment conceives the vast amount of intelligence work which is involved before we can come to grips with the enemy on our own terms. To take the offensive is one

thing ; to know when to take it is another. Also to have the chance of coming to grips at all is a third proviso which, alas ! has often to be taken into account. I have seen so many messages received from scouting vessels of all classes that they become heartbreaking even after but six weeks' vigil. Imagine the feelings of those whose vigil has extended to nigh on three years.

“ H.M.S. *Calliope* reports having returned from patrol ; nothing to report.”

Not only the man in the street, who can only obtain his information after it has passed and been distorted through a number of channels, but I have heard people from whom we would expect broader views holding forth on the “ wonderful intelligence branch ” of the German Navy. These people, let me add, have never had the advantage of being even remotely connected with our own Navy. If they had, they could never have had any doubt at all of our considerable supremacy over the Germans in this respect. When

one remembers that the enemy was for a long time at a great advantage over our naval forces through his Zeppelin scouts, it is amazing to think that all he was able to accomplish was a safe retreat when he found himself too close to our forces for his liking. That is to say, all the hopes Germany long cherished of being able to take us off our guard, by these means of seeing where we could only feel, were doomed to disappointment by our Secret Service, whose duty it was to know as much as possible about the enemy. It may or may not be generally known that Germany more than once made, or pretended to make, preparations for bringing out her High Seas Fleet for the Great Day. The strictest secrecy, of course, was observed in these movements; so much so, that upon one occasion few people outside the highest German naval circles were aware of what was afoot. The plan of the German Commander-in-Chief was a very clever one. It was indeed more brilliant than bold, for he was staking all upon our remaining completely in the dark as to his *coup de grâce*.

Two days before our Grand Fleet was to have been smashed up and our shores invaded, Whitehall, in the ordinary course of business, sent out a secret code to "Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet."

The Commander-in-Chief read it and went on with the usual routine. The daily mass of messages was circulated in the ordinary way, but among them were instructions which only crop up now and then: submarines were ordered to take up stations; the Battle-Cruiser Force was ordered to move to such-and-such a destination: 47 North, 27 West—perhaps! The Grand Fleet after that got up steam, and then the gossips at the base began to get busy!

The few in the know waited with an anxiety all will appreciate, and the ordinary code messages which came in were pounced upon by superior officers who were always suspected of being too dignified and proper to pounce at all. These messages only referred to the amount of coal in port or a fishing trawler returning to the base! Officers who had been on watch for twenty-four hours

stayed on nevertheless, and they were soon rewarded. Among the crop of messages was one addressed to the Admiralty. Deciphered it read :

“ The German High Seas Fleet out.

“ Have prepared to engage the enemy.”

What an interval of suspense to men who had waited day in, day out, for about two and a half years for this chance !

And then look at the sequel. After a few more messages giving position, direction of steering, and composition of the enemy's fleet came the laconic but fatal message :

“ Have sighted Zeppelin 47 N. 26 W.”

And then we knew it was all over—that the Great Day was to be postponed. It was we who had sighted the Zeppelin, but what it actually meant was that the Zeppelin had sighted us too—that the eyes of the German High Seas Fleet had warned Kiel that the elaborately worked-out scheme to catch us napping had failed ; that the British Fleet was prepared for them.

Few officers waited up after that to read the ultimate message :

“ Enemy made off. Am returning to base.”

No. The man in the Navy is, if anything, a more complete grumbler than his brother-in-arms in the other Service. I know, for I have been in both. The grievances of the man in blue—real and imaginary—would make a Food Controller despair. But about one thing he was always quite clear. The Germans would never catch us napping if the Great Day came, not so much because we were prepared, as because we would assuredly know beforehand when *they* were prepared to come out.

Every move of note on the German chess-board was known to Whitehall. . . . I have said every move of note because I know there will be the inevitable growl from somebody : “ Why haven’t we known when the German raiders were going to attack our coasts ? ”

I am not so impatient with that question as a “ pukka ” naval man would be, for I have put that query myself and have never

been quite convinced by the answer. It is extraordinary, however, how even slight association with the inner working of the Navy broadens one's perspective. The field of enterprise is so vast, the areas from a purely military standpoint so numerous, and the temptation to risk the great in order to safeguard the smaller so alluring, so persistently trying, that it becomes more and more amazing how we managed to keep our heads and our fortunes to the end. Before I had been in the Navy six months I was already so impatient with the enemy for not venturing into the battle area that I am sure I could never have waited as we have waited; but would have played into his hands—the hands of almost certain destruction. It is perhaps as well that the leadership of our vast Fleet was with men who, although just as desperately anxious to settle accounts, had the fortitude and patience not to gamble our inheritance away. There were those who cavilled at our policy, to the delight of the enemy, when a couple of fast German destroyers rushed across a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch of map,

bombarded a non-military town, and dashed back again. These impatient critics never seemed to remember the bitterness with which our men, simply mad for a fight, and searching every hour over *several vital feet* of map for it, had to hold back in silence and accept these stinging blows—till the ignominious surrender of the German Fleet gave them well-deserved relaxation.

CHAPTER XVII

TWO GAY SUBMARINE E YARNS

I

I TOLD in brief outline of a certain dramatic submarine story which I heard while at the Dardanelles. Curiously enough, I met at Rosyth and now obtained full details of the adventure from an officer who took part in it. What I made out at first to be a most dramatic episode was really a very funny occurrence. It seems that Submarine E, while cruising about in enemy waters, sighted two very ordinary-looking dhows in the vicinity of the Sea of Marmora. Just to make sure of the situation, Submarine E put on a few knots and, soon getting within hailing distance, called upon the vessels to stop, which they promptly did. Submarine E had a good look around and, not seeing anything in the nature of a disturbing

influence, proceeded in calm fashion to train her formidable-looking guns on the dhows to back up her "argyment."

The people on board the dhows were panic-stricken. Prayers to Allah were mingled with appeals to *Mein Gott*, and to cut short the moving spectacle the submarine Commander decided to sink one of the vessels. Being a Britisher and not a Hun of the frightful order, he purposed saving the people aboard, and to do this he had to spare one of the vessels upon which he intended to embark the passengers of the ship he was going to sink. It was a toss-up which one he would choose. He didn't take long to decide. The vessel he was going to sink had less people aboard than the other, and these he ordered to cross over to the other dhow. The Turks needed no second bidding, but one fat little German lingered on behind the rest. . . .

He was a curious spectacle. His rotund body was draped in a vest of pink silk, and he endeavoured by mute appeal to get the Commander to alter his decision. He only succeeded in making him and the crew much

amused. When, however, he saw the submarine Commander meant business, he waggled along quickly enough, and hauling his carcass over the rails safely got aboard the spared vessel. But here instead of offering up a prayer for his deliverance, he continued his bemoanings all the more.

It was funny to watch the fellow with his short strides trying to cover as much of the deck as possible, the narrator told me. Occasionally he rolled his eyes to the Turkish heavens, calling out to *Mein Gott* for something or other. That not coming along, he tried "Allah"; but here, too, there was nothing doing! Something was evidently preying on his mind, and he raised the natural curiosity of the Captain, who had now spotted him.

"Hulloa, you!" he called. "What's the matter—afraid of being sunk? Can't you see I've put you aboard that ship to help you? . . . We're saving your crowd . . . and thank your lucky stars for it."

The effect of this little speech—whether it was understood or not!—was that the little

German burst into a flood of tears which reached a pitiful climax a minute later, when the ship he had deserted was blown sky high. . . . The submarine Captain came alongside the other vessel and gave instructions where the ship might proceed. He was just sheering off when the German, between his sobbing, came forward and called out to the Captain, "You know why I cry? I tell you! See, you haf saved this ship—*hein!*" (this with a contemptuous gesture)—"this full of cheap water-melons—*hein!* and see there—you haf sunk—*all mine gold!*"

And then he went below, leaving behind him a much enlightened and much disconcerted Captain.

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"Just our confounded luck!" the Captain said afterwards to the Second-in-Command. "It took the breath out of me for the moment. . . . Here were two blinking ships—both easy game—one full of over-ripe melons and the other *carrying all the gold of a Turkish bank across to Asia where they reckoned it*

would be safer. . . . And in choosing to sink one I had saved the melons and sunk a cargo of d——d real gold ! ”

Captain E. has never got over it !

II

These fellows always seem to see the amusing side of a tragedy. There is the story of the submarine that met an innocent-looking vessel which, after being followed, aroused suspicions. The Captain finally called upon it to surrender, which it seemed pleased enough to do.

Whereupon our submarine went alongside, and one of our officers made ready to board her with a view to examining her papers. The officer aboard the vessel—they say he was a German although the vessel was Turkish—held out his left hand pretending to help the submarine officer aboard ; while with the right he whipped out a revolver and fired pointblank at him. The movement was so unexpected that the submarine officer made no attempt to move. He took it for

granted, he afterwards said, that he was a dead man and that he had no right to take any further action until he was called upon to do so by his friends in heaven.

While in this strange state of mental aberration he might have indeed become a dead man. A watchful brother officer on the submarine, however, quick as lightning, saw the treacherous move of the German and the lucky misfire. In a trice he had shot the German dead and had rushed forward and pulled his colleague back into the submarine. In doing so the officer who thought himself dead dropped his watch into the ditch below. . . . That brought him back at last.

“ My watch, George! Oh, my watch! ”

It was a presentation watch which he highly valued. . . He insisted on its recovery. . . . As a “ dead ” man it did not matter perhaps. But while there was life in him he must have the watch, risk or no risk. They made an effort and actually recovered the watch—after they had blown up the ship with all hands. (Our fellows do not

always wait for Archbishops' opinions on reprisals.)

They rose to see whether they had done the job properly, and found no signs of the vessel. But they beheld something else—a sight that rather tickled them. A miserable-looking Turk had sunk up to his neck in a ditch. . . . Apparently he was making no effort to get out of his somewhat hopeless hole. It was a pitiful situation even for a Turk, and so the Captain, with the magnanimity which even the Germans could not destroy, gave orders for the man to be “fished aboard.” . . . His action was misunderstood. As soon as the Turk saw his would-be rescuers, what did he do but bob his head completely in the ditch! . . . When the laughter had subsided and the submarine was about to be submerged again, up bobbed the head again. . . . Once more the submarine crew tried to save him; but once more the strange apparition bobbed his head into the ditch.

“We'll give him one more chance,” said the Captain.

So they waited until he came up again. Imagine the sight he looked! It was impossible to distinguish his features.

“Hi! . . . hold on . . .” the Captain began.

But the poor frightened fellow was taking no risks! He bobbed for the third and last time. He had indeed stuck it to the last ditch!

CHAPTER XVIII

UP IN A ZEPP

CONSIDERABLE interest was aroused some time ago by the official publication of a photograph of a Zeppelin type of airship built for British use. To go up in this latest type of airship is a pleasant and soothing experience—weather conditions and duration of journey considered!

I escorted L. 20 on a short naval patrol stunt. Our object was to cruise along the coast and over the sea in the hope of "picking up" or frightening away German submarines which were reported to be lurking in the vicinity. For that purpose we are fitted out with divers high-explosive bombs and formidable-looking depth charges. This Zepp of ours is a useful weapon. What crew she carries does not matter except that upon this day she carried an extra man. It should

be mentioned, however, that airships are fastidious creatures and must be pampered by much attention and good weather conditions. This necessitates a large staff of mechanics and meteorologists.

When I arrived at the air-station the sun was shining and there was scarcely a breeze. I was informed, however, that the weather officers had reported adversely upon coming conditions, and that it was doubtful whether the ship ought to set sail.

It was decided, however, to risk it.

A great swarm of ratings—I have often commented on the splendid discipline of these men—upon the word of command seize hold of the ropes and “walk” the great Zeppelin out of the hangar. There are four ropes, and each is held in tow by a long line of men. In the sun the body of the ship gleams joyfully, and the pilots, catching the mood, climb aboard with agility.

Watching the airship before climbing in, one wonders how she manages to remain so still—just far enough from the ground to keep clear her gondolas. Without doubt the

manipulation of these craft has reached a fine art, for, as unwieldy as one looks, it nevertheless yields to the slightest whim of its pilot.

“ Jump in,” he calls to me.

But it is easier said than done. The ship towers above me and offers little or no foothold. However, with a helping hand I clamber aboard and sink deep down into a comfortable seat. At once one feels a sense of security and complacency. The great gasbags above shelter one from the glare of the sun, and so deep is the “cabin” that I can easily sink low enough to keep sheltered from the wind. Below are the hives of busy mechanics, a petty officer directing operations.

In front of me, each in separate comfortable cabins, are the pilots, the engineers, and others who may have a particular duty to perform. I am in the after cabin and can therefore see all that goes on. The pilot is shouting instructions to the petty officer in charge of the landing party, who in turn calls out to his fifty men, who are still hanging on to the ropes.

Now and again we sway slightly, but on the whole the ship might well be a fixture.

“Contact, sir!”

It is the same preliminary as in the case of the warplane.

“All clear, sir!”

The fore propeller has begun to whirr merrily, and soon its companion aft is in motion too.

“Let her rip!”

A blast of a whistle and a great murmur. With a queer soothing noise the airship glides forward, and within a half minute we are well over the uplifted heads of our colony of helpers. They have done this sort of work times out of number, but from the manner with which they all stand transfixed watching with strained interest the departure of our ship one might imagine that this was the first air voyage.

The immediate sense of comfort which I have mentioned was such that I felt justified in taking out my two-inch-square notebook to slip down some figures I had been given.

But the pilot has seen me! A message is

handed on to me: Will I please take care not to let any paper fly about, as it might do some damage.

As there is no likelihood of this happening, I jot down my notes and feel a trifle conscious of doing the unusual. (By the way, it is good moral exercise to make notes calmly in such moments. At the supreme moment in the submarine when we were just diving and the atmosphere was really tense, I took out this little book and jotted down a curious expression of the "owner's." I did this in defence of the land-lubber!)

.

Leaving the earth in an airship is different from a similar experience in a warplane only in this respect:

Instead of the jig-saw earth coming up perpendicularly at you there is a much slighter angle, as the nose of the airship tilts. When she does poke up her nose the sensation is of standing on the tail of the ship which is coming up from the fore to meet you. Presently it dips, and you imagine that in a

minute you will be standing on the top of a vertical wave.

We are up about 1,000 feet, and the country below is still very distinct. We can even distinguish the people, who all troop out of their homes and shops to look at us. To them, at any rate, the airship is still a novelty. Some we see clearly are shading their eyes, others wave to us and we reply. As for picking out a particular spot upon which to drop bombs, nothing could be easier. To take a photograph—with a time exposure, one almost feels—or to draw the topography of the surrounding country would also be simple.

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But now we have reached the blue sea. Since we are in the vicinity of the Grand Fleet base, the water below us is rather blackened and oily, and I observe at once patches here and there which, at a higher altitude, might easily be mistaken for a submarine. However, the trained eye of the pilot—who looks below through his skylight—is sure enough to tell him the difference between the oily



Central News.

A SUNSET SCENE FROM DECK OF "QUEEN ELIZABETH."

wake of one of our battleships and the shadow of a submerged submarine. At any rate he drops no bombs. But presently, when we are well out and the jig-saw has vanished in the distance, with its dots of waving hands, he detects a strange something which may or may not be real. At any rate, whatever it is and whatever its object, it had no right in this particular area, so he raps out an order to the gunner behind him.

In a second the latter has pulled a perpendicular lever (which looks like the top of an umbrella in a stand) till it is at the horizontal, and then fires in rapid succession a dozen rounds. . . . All bull's-eyes—or very nearly so.

And now comes the inevitable trouble. The after engine is working badly, so the officer in oilskins in the compartment immediately in front of me climbs overboard, walks along the rodlike foothold and juggles with the engines and such obstinate pieces of mechanism with as much nonchalance as if he were in an engine shed.

He soon returns, and eventually observes my look of admiration.

“That’s nothing,” he shouts in my hooded ears. “On the last journey I spent nearly four hours messing about with her.”

We climb higher.

The wireless operator has now donned his head-gear, has let out his aerial, and is turning a handle like that of an ordinary telephone.

“Getting into touch,” he calls out to me.

This shock-haired be-spectacled young man is more than a wireless operator. He is Jack of other trades aboard this ship. He can semaphore as well as wireless, and he looks out for enemy craft. Should occasion warrant it, he can act as a gunner, and—I should not wonder—pilot.

The ship, despite the unfavourable conditions, hardly sways. Occasionally, in order to climb, she makes a sudden movement, but it is not the sharp motion of aeroplanes. Here, you think, you could go on sailing for ever. But after an hour or so a feeling of drowsiness overcomes you, and a feeling of having nothing to do begins to assail you; so that you are glad when the ship is steered in the direction facing the wind—when it

becomes a trifle breezy. That at any rate gives you refreshing thoughts.

I was surprised to hear from the pilot that the reason for the great rush of wind is due, not so much to our fairly fast speed (we average about forty-eight knots), but to the motion of the propellers. We are using more than one engine, so that the wind is churned fore and aft. He remembers the ship covered with ice in midsummer! . . . This young fellow told me a serio-comic story of his taking up with him his best girl's "pet Pekinese." "Sweet Peekie will simply love it!" she exclaimed. But Peekie didn't; Peekie died in mid-air.

"How are you going?"

The pilot hands on this message to the engineer behind him, and the latter climbs out of his seat, leaning well forward in order to shout the message in my ear. I can't catch altogether what he says, for the wind and the engines combine to render all other sounds void. So I unstring my flying cap.

“ Mr. S—— wants to know how are you going ? ”

“ O.K.” I reply. “ Could go along for a year.”

Back comes the answer :

“ Try a day of it.”

No, on second thoughts I shall not try a whole day in an airship. The danger is not the uncertain engines—you can get along with one, or as a last resort land anywhere—but the awful monotony. A pilot I met on my way home assured me he had fallen asleep while directing an airship.

“ I realised the danger,” he said, “ but I simply couldn’t keep my eyes open.”

.

Conditions are growing worse—there is thunder in the air—so we make tracks for home. By and by we pass the great boom defences, which know all about us and permit us to continue unharassed. The familiar landscape returns—a medley of roofs and chimneys, a railway hedge, a passing train (a sure target !), and then the huge hangars. The fellow in the spectacles in front of me

has some kind of a lamp glued to his eye and occasionally presses a button at the same time. As he does so, there is a sharp flash. It is a kind of signalling apparatus I have not seen before.

I look in the direction of the signal and see distinctly flashes in reply from the ground miles below.

“ He says we can't land now. . . . Another ship is just about to land.”

Sure enough from the opposite direction comes another great gasbag. She veers gracefully round, nose-dives till she is almost on the top of the hangar, then suddenly lifts, rushes forward and stops, surrounded by a crowd of mechanics—mere dots—who have just rushed forward to meet her.

As for us, we alter our direction and climb higher till the coast is clear. Then we slowly descend—engines are stopped, and we hover above the meadows for a minute, depending upon the generosity of the air till we are caught hold of by the lilliputians. The sheep grazing near by hardly deign to notice us, although the fowl scamper away at our

shadow, which looks weird enough on the grass.

But it is not all over yet. Orders from the ship to the petty officer ashore, and from the petty officer to the men, are shouted across. You hear the orders "Port!" and "Aft!" and "Haul away!" repeated again and again.

Finally all is ready. The men are lined up holding the airship in position. There is a silence, and the scene suggests a staging, the actors standing motionless in order to be photographed. Then comes the command, "Walk ship to port!" and the ship is "walked" with the utmost docility into the hangar, opposite a great collection of broken ribs and pieces of airship envelopes—souvenirs of a destroyed *German* Zeppelin.

CHAPTER XIX

TWO SENTIMENTAL SAILORS

THEY say sailors are void of all emotion and sentiment. What about the following, the first sent to me by my worldly friend John Jay, of H.M.S. *Lion*, and the second taken from the diary of another supposed cynic?

I

LONELINESS

“ I had three days’ leave. I could, after ten months of servitude, go whither I wished. I wanted very much to go to London ; but, since the journey would take a big slice off my available time, I betook me to the seaside—somewhere in England.

“ Let me say at once that I set out with the intention of taking things easy, and of having generally a quiet time. At this

out-of-the-way place, I should know nobody—although, in the uniform of a naval officer, I should still be, in part, a servant of the public.

“ Alas ! the great crowd of animated people soon brought on a feeling of loneliness. I seemed to be a lost soul yearning for the sympathy of any willing human fellow. I tried, but failed, to concentrate on a favourite book I had brought with me, and I could hardly sit out an excellent rendering, by a string orchestra, of my beloved *Lohengrin*.

“ I began to feel self-conscious. These people around me, I felt, must think I am an outcast with no friends in the world. Everybody but me had companionship—not even excepting one old lady who carried on a vivacious conversation with a collie dog. The girls who passed were comely enough, and any one of them would have served to ward off what was rapidly becoming a desperate desolateness.

“ But only a few bolder ones ventured to look in my direction at all ; and it was, of course, out of the question that I should rise and accept a possible encouragement by

following them round the bandstand. Such would have made, no doubt, an excellent public display of the art of 'getting off'; but one of the necessary adjuncts of holding the King's commission is to suppress one's emotions—be they sentimental or otherwise. So I sat alone, and so the day dragged on. This was a new experience for me, and it made me a wiser man. It gave birth to a sympathy for those girls who go out to get off in order to avoid the heart-tugging solitude through which I was now passing.

.

“In the course of the day I passed and repassed many modest girls, each walking alone. These had also come on a holiday, but, alas! poor lonely soul-mates, they looked as forlorn as I—yes, and as determined to maintain their English maidenly pride and self-respect, by speaking to no man except through strictly conventional channels. To them, as to me, the music must have been uninspiring—perhaps yearning—and the bathing shallow in all respects.

“There was a girl who came on the pier,

next day, alone. She was pretty and neatly-dressed, and, judging by her manner and the number of times she had passed and repassed, I am sure she would be much happier if she got out of herself.

“ But who was there to help her to do it ?

“ In the evening, I went alone, but with desperation, to a concert—the last of the season—and since I was in uniform I was given the privilege of a front seat. How much better should I have appreciated a back seat, where I could have skulked in unobserved, rather than that the whole auditorium should review and remark on my loneliness !

“ Strangely enough, however, four other officers came in, singly, during the performance. Evidently nobody loved them either.

“ There came in, too, some very sweet cultured girls. How could I get to know them ? How can one meet them through the so-called proper channels, for with this type of English maiden there is no other way ?

“ Why, if we cannot emulate the Continent

by a display of human kindness, can we not put into operation our well-known business ingenuity, and open up a legitimate inquiry office for certified lonely souls? It would do well.

“ P.S.—Do you know, our breezy boys from the Colonies don’t do so badly.”

II

MAL

“ I met a girl. Her name was Mal for short. Malcolm was her full name—most boyish. But that was the only thing masculine about her. Demure, sweet, shy, she was Irish to the backbone. . . . She came from Donegal in the county of Clare, which is in Ireland. . . . Her eyes—well, girls’ eyes have been sung about before, so I shall not emulate in this direction. But she had a ‘way wid her’ about which no poet has ever sung. . . . She was unassuming, a wee bit afraid, and—trusting.

“ Only she was a mere girl, an Irish lass with all the attractiveness of her simple,

glorious countree. . . . I was the heavy father. I, with my worldly wisdom, with my 'knowledge of such things,' could view affairs from a broad altitude—with a standpoint at once detached and untrammelled.

"She told me all her love affairs—not exactly love affairs, but passing friendships. She, in common with her sex, must needs do something *pour passer le temps*. So that any decent knight who played the part of cavalier was welcome.

" 'I have had forty-two friends,' she confessed with childlike innocence. Thenceforward I became 'forty-third.' . . . 'Dear 43,' she once wrote, 'I have nothing to do tomorrow. Will you be here?'

"Would I be there? I asked myself. Well, here was a little girl who wanted looking after. . . . So I was there right enough. . . . We walked the undulating fields of bonnie Scotland, and she called it perfect. She wanted 'nothen' to eat—no chocolates—no ices—no tea till I made her. All she wished was this walk in the country where the sun shone, the wind sighed, and the cattle grazed.

“ ‘ Oh . . . ’tis like me home in Donegal,’ she said, as her eyes filled with tears.

“ So we talked about Donegal and her home by the great Atlantic, and the hills and horses (which she used to ride without a saddle), and I wondered why on earth this sweet child ever came to the contamination of an irresponsive and unsympathetic city. . . .

“ Three times I took this child out, and one day we went to the seaside.

“ ‘ Asn’t ut—splendid!’ she exclaimed, and I looked to see her face light up with pleasure. Instead, those tears came again. . . . She turned her pretty head from the sea and still said, ‘ Asn’t ut splendid—asn’t ut?’

.

“ There was something about the child that made the part of the heavy father in me become a trifle strained and unreal. . . . I found myself wanting to see her.

“ When she was in a quandary she clicked her tongue—just as little boys and girls do.

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“ From the heavy-father business I became

the heavy brute (there isn't a long distance between the two). I had to lecture her severely one day, and she said it was 'ul-right.'

"It was always 'ul-right' with Mal. . . . When she wriggled with her emotions and her wee mouth assumed different shapes in her pain, it was still 'ul-right.' One day I became vexed with her, and this is what she afterwards wrote :

" 'I broke my promise. I know I did. . . . But you shouldn't have gone away as you did. You have a temper like an Irishman. . . . But if you wish it—it's ul-right.'

"Sweet Mal, it wasn't all right. . . . I could not sleep for the pain I knew I had inflicted on you. . .

.

"At the earliest moment I went to meet her and found her waiting for me. . . .

" 'It's ul-right, Mal,' I said, holding out my hands.

" 'Oh,' she said—and her broken tone touched me—'you know fine when I'm

talken to you it's the truth ul-right. . . .
Not insincere or untrue. Neither it is!'

“ Oh, Mal, to-day we have had to part,
and I take with me memories that are plea-
sant but hurtful. Who is to look after
you, Mal, child of innocence? . . .

“ ‘ You must not go,’ she said. ‘ Let them
do their worst.’

“ So I let them do their worst, risked a
court martial, and went with her into the
country for the very last time. . . .

“ But the image of the little girl who chose
me after forty-two others is still with me,
following me wherever I go. . . .

“ A heavy father, forsooth. A sentimental
kid! ”

CHAPTER XX

WITH A SUBMARINE CRUISER AT SEA

THE most thrilling moments of war are those when a submarine, having spotted the enemy, dives, and makes ready to fire. War, on sea perhaps more than on land, is not half so exciting as the layman imagines. Excitement is spasmodic and rare. A battle certainly offers a thrill when men at a given word leap from their trenches and charge with the bayonet. Such a charge, however, comes after a prolonged period of monotonous inactivity, and the order to charge is in the nature of a relief to men weary with waiting. As regards flying in a warplane, the only thrill is the mad rush forward—on *terra firma*!—before the machine has risen. After that—when you have soared high enough—it soon settles down to a noisy sameness.

An airship is the most monotonous, if pleasantest, of all, like its younger brother the kite balloon. This does not mean there is no danger—the airship I went up in came to grief just a week later—only the danger during the flying is not apparent.

In the submarine, however, there are always possibilities of the unexpected. Anything may happen, and this constant feeling dispels all monotony. The great tension when diving and during firing operations lends sufficient excitement to the life in a submarine to last during the entire journey.

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The ship in which I went down is a super-submarine, one of the latest type—the K class. Beside her the submarine of yesterday is a mere toy. In construction, and in possibility, she is as different from the famous E-boats as a ship of the first line in Nelson's time is from a modern Dreadnought. The K boat has a displacement of 2,000 tons on the surface and 2,700 tons submerged. Its length is 340 feet, with a beam of $26\frac{1}{2}$ feet—a veritable submarine cruiser! It has a surface

speed of 24 knots and a submerged speed of 10 knots an hour. It is self-contained. *On the surface it is driven by steam.*

It is not easy, if you are not of the submarine personnel, to get aboard these huge vessels. They possess secrets which the Germans would have dearly liked to get hold of, and the Commander in command of the flotilla does not encourage "visitors." In my instance, however, the barrier was raised, although he wasn't particularly keen about it.

"I've fixed you up, Moseley," he said one day. "K12 goes out to-morrow. . . . Here, signalman! 'Commander (S.) to Captain K12.'" He writes out a signal saying he is sending me aboard.

"That's all right. Half-past six to-morrow morning."

"Good," I say. . . . He stops at the door of the cabin as if something more were wanting.

"I hope you damn well get drowned," he says as a kind of a cheerio.

"Well," says I, "the conditions are all in

your favour, sir. To-morrow is Friday and the 13th!"

"By jingo," says he, "that makes it certain. You'll never come back."

A very excellent submarine officer, Commander (S.), but a trifle indifferent in the choice of sweet words.

Not everybody of the old school, quite naturally, fully trusts these "new-fangled" giants, and certainly nobody trusts Friday—or the 13th.

"I hope to go down in K12," says an old lieutenant, "but I'll see her—*when she's in dock.*"

"Friday! Good Lord! You're not going out on a Friday?"

Oh, a cheerful lot of knaves!

Superstition dies hard. It is believed that the Admiralty actually issued an order giving captains the option of altering any vessel numbered 13 to any other number not on the pennant board.

I discover, too, that the submarine I am going down in is sister to the one which

sank on her trials. The story is most tragic and thrilling. The K13 had over seventy persons aboard, including the naval constructors and builders. It proceeded to Gareloch, near the Clyde, when the order was given for her to dive. When she was below, the surface water began to pour into the ventilating shafts astern which had been accidentally left open. Thirty-one persons who were in the compartments aft were drowned. The fore compartments, with forty-two persons, were fortunately shut off. The Admiralty Salvage Department soon sent divers down to investigate. These discovered that the stern of the vessel was embedded in many feet of mud. It seemed a hopeless task, but, strangely enough, replies to their tapping were heard. What happened next can only be conjectured. It would seem that Captain Goodhart, D.S.O., who was one of those entombed in the submarine, decided to escape by using the high-pressure air bottles. With the aid of these contrivances, he was to be projected through the conning tower and shot into the water, hoping to reach the

surface and give help and information to the rescue party. The brave attempt failed, however. Captain Goodhart was hurled with terrific force against a support in the conning tower and was immediately killed. For his brave attempt he was posthumously awarded the Albert Medal in gold. Another effort to escape by a commander was more successful. The officer was fortunate enough to reach the surface and was caught and saved by the rescue party. The information he was able to give the salvage men helped considerably the work of rescue. Divers were able to get into communication with those imprisoned in the submarine by means of the Morse Code. Working in conjunction with the imprisoned men, the engineers were able to insert a flexible hose through a water-flop which was momentarily opened from the inside. Through this, not only fresh air, but meat extract, chocolate, and other food were pumped in to the entombed men.

The chances of rescue were still slender, but the imprisoned men were always full of heart and asked for cards to be pumped

down in order "to beguile the tedium of waiting." By the aid of the air bottles—for which they now had no need—they blew out the oil fuel stowed forward. This resulted, eventually, in the submarine rising at a high speed by the bows in a perpendicular position. The salvage party at once made a big hole in her with acetylene burners, and the forty-two men were rescued by midnight and conveyed to a neighbouring hospital. The escape was timely, for before long the vessel settled down again and was seen no more. Altogether the rescued men had been entombed in the deep for fifty-seven hours.

.

Sharp at 6.30 on a grey, uninviting morning I am conveyed alongside K12, which has been lying about a mile south of us. The slip rope is rove and she is ready to proceed. There is no time to lose, and as soon as we draw alongside one must board her. But how on earth am I to get aboard this elongated ball? You simply have to make a jump for it, and as you slip back—catch hold! That's all. It is of no use waiting

aboard the picket boat all the morning. A civilian can demur; an officer must go ahead as if he were used to this sort of gymnastics and had been for years!

I jumped, slipped, caught hold and hung on. Then I tried to walk the slippery round deck to a hole which led to the "ward-room." (A ward-room in a submarine!) The hole, to do it justice, is no smaller, if no bigger, than the "holes" on board battleships. So I squeezed me down and found myself in a square, comfy cabin, chokeful of domestic comforts and ship's gear, and discovered that this was the ward-room, from the table which was laid for a certain number of officers. The captain's cabin was opposite.

This ward-room, mess-room, bedroom, and store-room all in one strikes you as a trifle stuffy first thing in the morning but you soon get to know it as a veritable haven. Especially when the bunks are pushed back into their lockers—like a chest of drawers—leaving no sign of beds. There are cosy arm-chairs, a huge gramophone, a settee, ventila-

tion fans, or a fire if necessary! After a couple of hours on the bridge, later on, I was very glad to come down here, throw myself in a cosy chair and drink from one of the numerous treasures hidden away in the "wine-cellar!" Aye, life in a submarine might be worse. . . . The Captain pokes his head out of his portable cubicle and, as he straightens his tie, calls out to me, "We shall slip in three minutes!"

"To-day is Friday," says I inconsequently.

"Lord!—I hate it! Something always goes wrong on a Friday!" he replies seriously.

The "First" intervenes.

"Yes, last time I was out in a submarine on a Friday the 13th we had a fortnight in dock!"

Another cheering set of mortals, to be sure! And they are not even pulling my leg!

We clamber up the long, narrow ladder of steel to the bridge, by way of the conning tower.

"Make ready there! Stand by forward!"

A signalman is busily hoisting flags or

making semaphore. The engines faintly throb and K12 gently glides away from the buoy.

From the time we start till she picks up the buoy again the air vibrates with the voluminous orders from the Captain. Not even the captain of a battleship has so much to do. There are no flies, to be sure, on the Captain—and no hair either! I noticed that most of the submarine captains I have met are almost bald. The job is enough to do it. Some manage to retain a lock or two which stand out in isolated glory, and it is, I am told, from the manner of these well-cared-for tributaries that the barometer of the Captain's temperature is ascertained by his staff. "When the wisp stands perpendicular all is well. When it veers to the north there's a squall a-coming."

.

"Revolution for 16 on," calls the Captain.

"Revolution for 16 on," comes the reply.

"Signalman, hoist G12."

"G12, sir," he repeats, and disappears.

Back he comes shortly.

“ Gates open, sir.”

“ Revolution for 15 on.”

The crew aboard is a mixed one. We have about a dozen men from another boat of this class training with us—“ taking the dive,” they call it.

The Engineer-Lieutenant is a laughing-faced youngster in oilskins, bustling about when necessary but always grinning.

“ Come and I’ll show you my engine-room,” he says.

The boat is well under way, and I slip along from fore to aft pretending to like it, but holding on to the slack rail like grim death.

Down another hole, down, down, down! (These flat-bodied submarines are not so flat as I thought!) The engine-room isn’t so bad. It is hot, as indeed most engine-rooms are; but this is neat and spacious. Here, as in the other compartments, a tall man can walk upright with care. There are more “ clocks ” (indicators) than I can count.

“ Come in here.”

He opens an airtight compartment, we

crush in (it is just large enough to hold us both), and the draught of air beats hard against my ear-drums.

He opens another airtight door which releases us from our cramped prison. This is the motor-room—a medley of scientific instruments which simply baffles description. It takes an engineer expert to appreciate all this use of modern science ; it is just enough to awe the layman. Who would think in looking at the exterior of a submarine that she was so chokeful of such ingenious contrivances ?

The boat is now going at sixteen knots when I join the Captain on the bridge. He is still shouting orders.

“ Executive ! What’s the bearing—what ! what ? ” . . .

.

We are now well out in the open sea, and, failing the kindly promise of support by a German vessel, we have to fall back upon one of our destroyers for torpedo practice. (How our submarine personnel envy the

U-boats!) We are to fire a real torpedo at her—with a dummy head on.

It is, of course, not quite the same target, firing at an expectant destroyer, as at a surprised enemy.

We prepare to dive. On the bridge all scuttles or hatches are firmly screwed down, but the gun remains as it is—the breech alone protected from the water. From the bridge one sees, fore and aft, the smooth, elongated body of the submarine “closed up” like a show taken down for the night. Somebody shouts to me a piece of advice one has received more than once: “Don’t get left behind.”

It doesn’t often happen, but sometimes men through their own fault, are left aloft somewhere in one of the stowings and consequently are washed out.

On my return from the engine-room (I had come away without my engineer friend), I felt a momentary sensation of what it is to be left behind. Nobody was about, and I knew we were about to submerge, and I had to hurry along the slippery deck from

aft to the bridge gangway. It seemed a great distance. As it was, I got below none too soon, for the watertight door clanged down almost directly after.

“ All correct for diving ? ”

“ All correct, sir.”

“ Dive ! ”

I stood below in the control-room and watched the tense faces of the crew, and I wondered whether this was the only ordeal which despite repetition never quite palled.

The men at the hydroplanes were busy turning wheels and shouting results to the Captain, who now stood on a platform, eyes glued to the periscope.

“ Ten feet, sir.”

A young seaman stands by, taking down the records shouted out to him by the Captain ; a curly-haired Scotch lieutenant—the “ First ”—is at the chart making calculations, other hands are at the tanks, my oilskinned friend from the engine-room has reappeared still smiling—to him there is nothing doing till we emerge again—and another lieutenant—

a good-looking, kindly-natured boy—is standing by, ready to take charge of the torpedo firing.

“ What angle is she ? ”

The Captain is still shouting questions and orders, and puts fire, by the manner of his words, into the men.

“ One degree, sir.”

“ Fifteen feet.”

The air is fairly good, just the warmth one would expect in a small compartment holding a number of busy men. There is a rumbling noise of bolts being shut, of machines running, of a million voices being in conflict.

And above all I hear :

“ Dive 25 feet ! . . . open external . . . ! ”

The rest of the command is drowned. Voices repeat the order, and the diving gauge duly registers 17, 19, 20, 23, 25 feet.

“ One-and-a-half degrees, sir.”

“ Are hydroplanes correct ? ” the Captain demands.

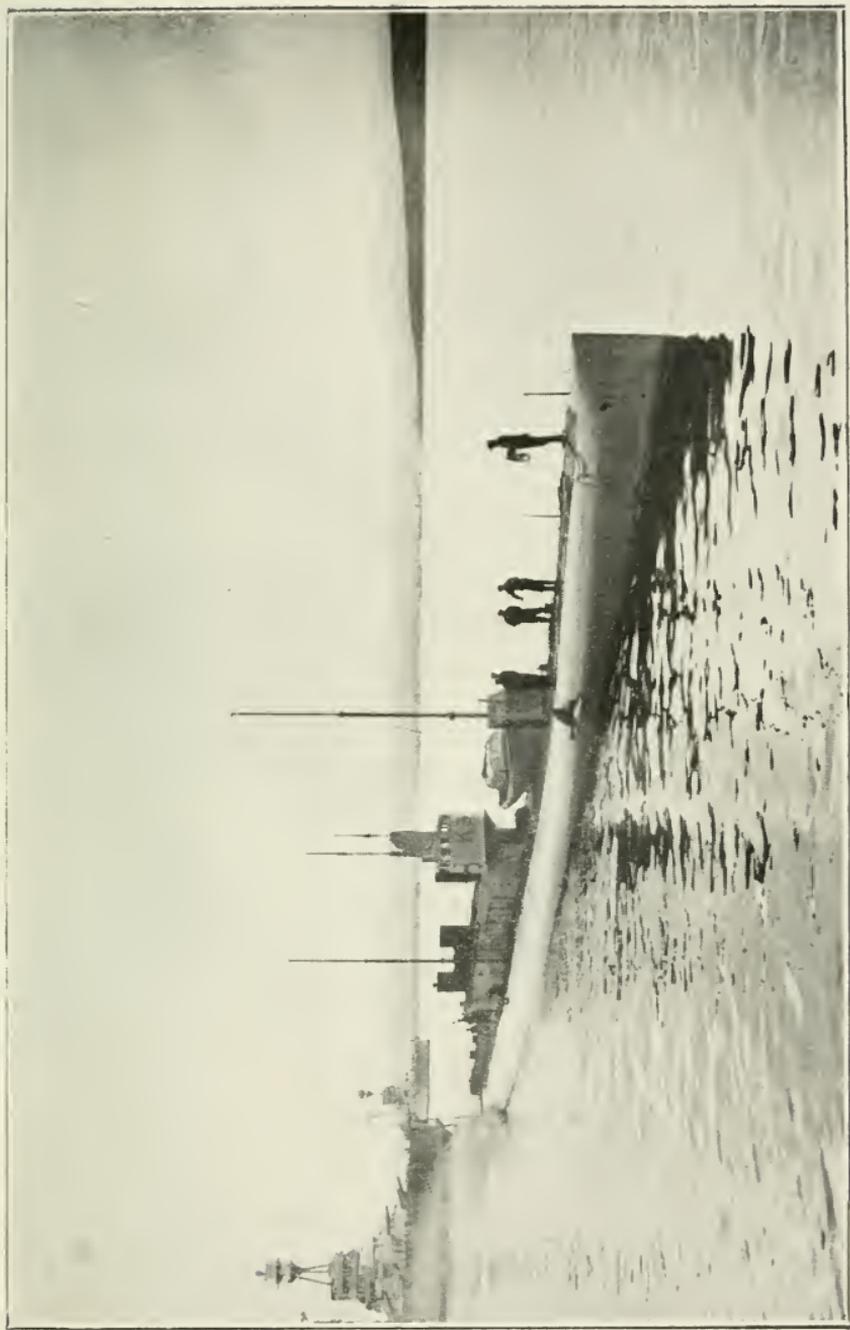
“ Hydroplanes correct, sir,” comes the reply after a brief pause.

Then another order, which produces a

miraculous change. All engines cease to throb, voices cease to shout, and there is an intense and strange silence. The crew at their stations stand by, looking strained and expectant at the Captain, whose eye-balls—which reflect a ghostly green—are still glued to the periscope which revolves as he himself moves round the platform.

“Keep an eye on destroyer bearing 30 red,” he breaks the silence with.

The activity begins afresh. At a motion from the Captain, I mount the foremost periscope and try to pick up the “enemy.” The atmosphere above the water is still hazy, and at first all I can see is a blur. For a moment I look to see whether I can adjust the lens to suit my sight! But as I move round, the unmistakable outlines of a destroyer come into focus until one can almost make out her number. But she moves rapidly out of the picture, and you have to follow her hurriedly. She seems to be going at a terrific speed, but a mere turn of the periscope defeats all her splendid efforts to get away.



A SUBMARINE CRUISER, K CLASS.

The Captain on the after periscope shouts out an order hurriedly and excitedly. He is body and soul in his work and the men seem to catch his whole-hearted enthusiasm.

“Immediate action! Down foremost periscope!”

The order rings out like a siren, and at once all becomes bustle bordering on pandemonium. In the midst of this hubbub I clear off at the run to the torpedo-room, for I am hungry to see everything. This torpedo quarter at the nose of the submarine is cool and well stored with ammunition. The great shining torpedoes are nicely shelved; but one shelf is empty. The torpedo which was there is now in Tube No. 1 and the operator is anxiously standing by till the word (or signal) comes to fire it by electricity—or if that happen to fail, as the lieutenant warns him, to fire her by hand. The glass screen is lighted up in red from the control-top. It reads, “Flood Tube No. 1.”

A seaman sits aloft on the tube ready to open the valve when the torpedo is fired, in order to balance the half-ton deficiency by

an inrush of water. He must count 1-2, and not hurry.

The screen lights up with the words "Stand by." The operator's hand twitches eagerly.

"Fire!"

He pulls a lever: an immense sizzle, a tremendous splash, and a deafening bang, as if all the noises in the heavens were belched forth, a great number of new orders, and the torpedo is on the way to her new billet. . . .

The problems that now worry the Captain are: "Is she going true?" and "Have I estimated the right deflection?"

When I rush back to the control-room, I find the crew a-sweating and the Captain still gazing anxiously through the periscope, trying to pick up the torpedo by her wake, but this morning there is little wake. The kind of torpedo we use nowadays leaves little wake. He now gives the order "Surface!"

The clanging, which one has got used to, is succeeded by a new sort of noise. The indicator, from showing a depth of 34 feet, now gradually drops 30—28—27—down to 10. Hatches are opened, and the Captain

and I quickly climb aloft into the fresh cool air. The boat is still half submerged, for hundreds of tons of water have to be blown from her tanks. The gun is dripping, and soon the men are at work on her "putting her to rights again."

"An exciting ten minutes, sir," I say to the Captain.

He turns on me. "Ten minutes! Why, we were submerged forty-three minutes!"

The Captain, in the middle of talking to me, is still giving orders, and he hears with a sigh of obvious relief that the "mouldy" or "fish" or torpedo has gone true.

It is no easy matter firing at a target 4,000 yards away, coming at the rate of 20 knots toward you, and conscious, as our destroyer was conscious, of our presence and whereabouts. To make an appointment with a vessel with the avowed object of torpedoing her is like an angler making a "date" with a fish.

And now the electric motors are being recharged, her funnels are up, and as the tanks are blown one by one we emerge fully

and are steaming along, cutting gracefully through the waters, at a speed of 20 knots.

.

There is much a layman learns in such a voyage. To him the submarine was a great shell, with hardly anything inside except two levers, one which made the boat submerge and the other which brought it to the surface again.

As a fact the ship is full from stem to stern with the most ingenious contrivances ever invented by man, and to say that the Germans could turn out a submarine in a week is sheer idiocy after even a cursory glance at a submarine from within.

“More like a year,” I estimate, and the Captain echoes:

“Hardly less.”

Another item which surprised me was the great preparations necessary before the boat can dive, and, *vice versa*, before it is ready to proceed on its surface engine. It is not, as one fondly imagines, a matter of rushing below and pressing a button.

Finally, the torpedo does not fly from a

submarine and, in a jiffy, reach its object. Ours took five minutes.

The class of boat I have been describing was still in its experimental stage, and this particular boat had been as yet upon few voyages. While she has, as I have said, revolutionised submarine construction, there is no doubt she only represents a step towards even more startling changes. Already, I understand, advances have been made on her, and in the next flotilla we shall have vessels which can hardly have been in the conception of engineers a year ago. I do not profess to speak as an expert, but from what I have recently seen I should think that if ever war comes again it will be fought exclusively under the sea and in the air.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GREATEST SUBMARINE STORY OF THE WAR
ENGINEER-COMMANDER LIMPENNY calls this the greatest submarine story of the war. . . . And he ought to know, seeing that he had a certain control over most of the submarines which came to the Grand Fleet base.

Besides, captains of the various class of submarines looked in at our mess, and all of them afterwards foregathered in Commander Limpenny's cabin aboard the *Crescent*, where they had a regular old pow-wow.

Each to his shop! You may affect a superiority towards such a natural outlet which the talk of shop affords, but you will talk it just the same—given the opportunity.

Well, Commander B—— and the host of gallant captains all used to spin yarns of their experiences every time they came aboard us.

Some of these I heard ; others only Limpenny and one or two others knew. Of these the Commander votes the following as having created the profoundest impression on those present.

“ And when,” as he says, “ you get a body of submarine captains so taken up with a submarine exploit that there was hardly a whisper—well, I think you may bet that there is some story.”

.

This is the tale :

Captain Redax of Submarine E was bitterly complaining of inertia to his gramophone or glass of “ ginger ale ”—that the German submarines had all the luck, all the blessed excitement of war. Here was he stuck in a blooming area full of every kind of vessel—except those of the enemy. The U-boats only had to go out a few yards before encountering some kind of spoil, and sometimes more than they bargained to find. Well, he wouldn't go so far as to say that they didn't bargain for some of the things they had the misfortune to find. The captains of the

U-boats knew that all kinds of weapons—some of a very mysterious order—were looking out for them night and day. Wherein lay all the fun—for what was the use—even to a U-boat—of picking up harmless little vessels and sinking them without some sort of risk? . . .

As he finished his “sherbet” and put a new needle in the gramophone reproducer an orderly appeared before him.

“Dispatch officer from the Commander-in-Chief, sir.”

“Right. Let him in.”

A big, smiling, fresh-coloured first-lieutenant R.N.V.R. duly appeared.

“Got some very important-looking love-letters for you, sir,” he announced.

These volunteer officers didn't quite get the “pukka” way of addressing superiors, but they got on extremely well with the men they came in to help. . . .

“Have a drink?” said the Captain, slitting the envelope with his finger.

“Soda—please—with some whisky in it.”

“ Phew ! ”

It was the Captain reading the dispatches.

“ I knew it was a billet-doux,” said
“ Pa.”

“ Just pour yourself out a drink and then
pour yourself off. . . . Smithers, ask Mr.
Tenby to step this way.”

The dispatch officer gulped down his drink,
bounded up the ladder with considerably
greater agility than his age warranted, and
leaped into the little dispatch boat that lay
alongside. . . .

“ Not for me this journey,” he said, waving
his hand to nobody in particular.

.

From this submarine he went off to a neigh-
bouring battleship to leave a cipher book,
and by the time he returned Submarine E
had already got up her chains and was ready
to shove off.

“ *She's* up to no good,” thought “ Pa.”

He watched her slip anchor and glide
safely through a twisted route, past the mul-
titudinous war craft, toward the open sea. . . .

Some considerable period afterwards, the Captain sighted his destination—a certain island at the back of which he knew—according to the dispatch to hand—was an enemy battleship. He also knew that there were rows of mines, nets, land torpedoes, and such contraptions made specially for such vessels as his. . . . Of course nobody but a fool would expect a battleship to be at anchor without insuperable barriers. . . .

Were they insuperable? In his own mind he rather thought they were. . . . But that was none of his concern. Besides, it was giving him the spice of adventure for which he had long been praying. . . .

He gave the order to dive, and submerged as far as his periscope would allow. . . . With eyes glued through the “finders” he tried to detect some sign of enemy activity. But apparently the battleship relied completely on the mines and nets. There was not even an aeroplane about. . . .

He called down the speed till the submarine was going at about eight knots. Then he realised that against the strong current in

these parts his speed would hardly give him control. . . . So he decided to risk it and increased the speed to twelve knots. . . .

In order to steer clear of the first row of mines he had to dive to an extreme depth. This, of course, cut off his means of seeing what was going on, so that virtually he was groping in the dangerous darkness to his fate. . . .

"I believe we've cleared the first lap," quoth the "owner" to No. 1.

No sooner had he said this than the vessel bumped against "something."

"I don't think we have, sir," said No. 1 laconically.

Luckily the mine—for it certainly was a mine—failed to explode, and Submarine E continued her audacious career in the throat of the enemy. . . .

"All sorts of unusually weird noises were going on outside," the Captain afterwards said. "You knew the blighters had thought out all sorts of new devices, and I wondered what on earth some of them meant."

The outward journey, however, proved to

be, with the exception of the mine incident, without mishap. . . . According to the compass, Submarine E should now have reached her destination. . . . To make sure of things—if it were possible at all to make certain of any step connected with such a hazardous enterprise—the Captain decided to rest aground for a while. . . . He did so, and after an hour came up gingerly. . . .

“ Fifty feet, sir.”

Imagine the tense air of expectancy as the vessel rose till it was possible to see where they were by the aid of the periscope.

“ Thirty-five feet, sir.” And then :

“ Action stations ! ” the Captain bawled.

Lying not a couple of hundred feet off was the great prize he was seeking, entirely unprotected. . . . Only a little supply boat lay alongside her, unloading a consignment of meat.

“ Inclination 40 . . . 250 . . . Flood No. 1.
. . . Fire ! . . . Dive ! ”

The two orders were delivered within a half-minute of each other. . . . The Captain had

not time to wait and see the "fish" go right home, but he saw it long enough to show him that it could not miss. . . . And a deafening explosion which shook his own vessel gave him additional proof of the correctness of his aim.

"Got her! Right in the neck!"

As a matter of fact he got her amidships. The great vessel broke in two and sank like a stone. . . .

Submarine E made her way homewards modestly and hugging the earth, so to speak. . . . After she had gone a little way, the Captain decided to rest a bit, so down to the bottom he took her, and he and his small but jubilant staff of officers wended their way to the ward-room, drank to the "damned good luck," and wondered how in heaven they were going to get out again.

It is one thing—and a big thing too—to get into close quarters with the enemy; it is quite another to get away again. . . .

"Have a drink! . . . This time to another piece of damned luck."

In a couple of hours the "owner" decided he might risk continuing the journey homewards. . . . It was a narrow, uncertain channel he had to steer through, and he soon found that, compass or no compass, he didn't know where he was. . . . The "First" groped through a chart with black and red dots spattered over it. . . . The "owner" tried the compass all sorts of ways, and the two, with the aid of the torpedo officer, "figured" it out together. But as they came to different conclusions the Captain decided to rise to a height near enough to have a peep through the periscope. . . .

It was now three hours since the dreadful misfortune to the enemy battleship, and surely those on land would have forgotten and forgiven the iniquity of the poor little submarine. . . .

"Besides, it wasn't our fault; it was that 'orrible torpedo," so these gallant men chivvied; but when it came to the actual rising, they became serious again. . . .

"Blow tanks!"

Slowly the submarine began to rise and

soon her "eyes" would be open again. . . .
Up . . . up . . . 40—30—20—feet.

"Ease her!"

But up she continued to go with a bound until she broke surface. And then, horrors! From three different directions, straight and as fast almost as arrows, five torpedo-boats and a trawler were making for her. . . . They opened fire—"chucked stuff about," is Commander B——'s version—at this short range, and were making doubly certain by trying to ram her. . . . One shot alone got home. It completely smashed the after periscope just as in response to the Captain's sharp command of "Dive! Dive, man!" Submarine E submerged at an angle of 45°!

"10 feet, sir."

"Go on."

"25 . . . 30 feet." . . .

"70 feet, sir."

"Hold her!"

"100 . . . 120 . . . 160 feet . . ."

The electric current had failed. . . . In the darkness they could feel themselves dropping into what seemed a bottomless pit. . . .

Submarine E was now resting 280 feet below surface. The Captain had blown his ballast, had lost all sense of direction, and above the water, five enemy destroyers—probably more by now—and all the land batteries, including land torpedoes, were on his track. . . .

“Let’s have a hand at bridge,” was his solution.

It was now simply a waiting game. If he won that the next bout mightn’t be so difficult. . . .

After the round of bridge, they put the gramophone on, the men had a little sing-song all on their own, and then the Captain called all hands to stations. The engineers had been hard at it, and were confident now that the boat had been put “to rights.” “Thirty feet” was the order. . . . But as soon as she began to rise it became impossible to stay her, and once more, hardly before they were aware of it, she had broken surface.

“Dive! Dive!!”

The game of rising and diving was repeated, and soon Submarine E had again bumped her long, lithe body on the sea bed.

“Damn the thing!” said the Captain. He thought hard for a minute in tense silence, for matters were now becoming serious. . . .

“Blow tanks . . . full speed ahead!”

He had decided to risk it without coming up to ascertain his whereabouts. For some miles all went well and the heavy atmosphere of depression began to lift a bit. . . .

“Now we shan’t be long!” was the remark the Captain heard from the fore end of the ship. And he smiled. It was good to have such men around when in such a tight corner.

“We ought to be nearing ——,” began the Lieutenant at the chart, when there was a great crash! (“a damn thundering smash-up” is my narrator’s term). The crew were shot forward as the submarine collided with something outside, and the ship began to sink—*but only at the bows*, till the vessel was pitched on her nose with her tail above water. . . . Surely they were lost now. But a sort of providential fate which had guaranteed their safe return came to their help. . . . Although expecting any second to have her

bows blown clean out of the water and to see the water pouring in, the officers and men continued to take the last chance.

“ Blow all tanks ! Full ahead hard ! ”

Slowly the ship from its extraordinary angle righted itself and cut *clear through the great net which had suspended it.*

That was a deliverance indeed. But the amazing fortune of these men was not over. . . . Somebody reported water coming in through a watertight door. This screw was loose, and that crank was missing. . . . They began to wonder when the boat was going to break. . . . One more attempt. . . .

“ Surface ! ” her Captain ordered.

The crew thought he was mad. But to the surface they went, and there, lined on the banks, were crowds of people gesticulating jubilantly. They imagined he had come up to surrender. But where were the destroyers and the trawler ? . . . Not knowing of the tussle he had had with death below, they imagined he was well ahead and so had gone on far in front. . . .

The few moments of respite proved invaluable. The Captain saw that the great obstruction was a portion of the net hanging on to the stern of the ship. . . . Diving once more by the stern, he was able to rid himself of the octopus; and to the unbounded relief of all, Submarine E continued her course without further mishap.

.

With her log written up, the "owner" now prepared to go in person with his report to the chief. He therefore ordered his "glad rags" to be placed in readiness. His other tugs were torn to tatters and were soaked in oil. . . .

Well away from the enemy zone, Submarine E broke surface again and opened up, giving her crew a much-needed supply of fresh air.

"Hang my togs over there," ordered the Captain.

.

"The most miserable part in the whole business," he said in relating the story after-

wards, " was that some blighter, wanting to clean up in a hurry, mistook my best togs for rags and used 'em to clean up the guns."

Loud laughter greeted this unexpected ending of the yarn.

CHAPTER XXII

THE INVASION SCARE

PEOPLE still ask to-day whether, while the war lasted, there was any real danger of our being invaded and treated like the ravaged countries of Belgium and France. There is no doubt that until the Armistice was signed there lurked at the back of a great many people's minds some such horrifying vision. The only opinions one ever heard upon this point never came from those who were best qualified to judge—the naval officers. I had the opportunity of discussing the matter at our naval head-quarters mess one day. There had been many grave rumours, I remarked, of an unsettling nature to the people in London, and it would be interesting to know whether such alarms were justified by the facts.

The replies were reassuring. There was

no doubt that at the early stages of the war the state of our defences were such that a determined *coup de main* by the enemy might have succeeded. It was known that the German preparations for invading our shores were planned and arranged with a thoroughness that equalled their preparations for defence. They had, in times of peace, "spied out the land" with remarkable assiduity; so much so, in fact, that the information they had gathered concerning the resources of each English district was perhaps more thorough than the information we had ourselves. In the days when it was possible for German tourist parties—invariably posing as students—to tour our English coasts and towns, it was possible for anybody to make discreet inquiries and learn all that was needed for a military offensive.

They took a census, for instance, of the producing capacity of, say, Town A—Margate. How much bread could be produced here? How many shoes could the local blacksmiths forge, and in how much time? The stocks of local chemists were noted, and

possible gun sites. Also certain large houses were earmarked as possible hospitals! The topography of each village hamlet was, of course, carefully noted. So that there can be no doubt—there certainly is no doubt in the Navy—that an invasion of these islands was one of the prime moves contemplated by a ruthless foe.

This admission, admitted by naval men who know that the success of such a venture was well within the bounds of possibility in the early stages of the war, is enough to make the civilian turn cold and prompt him to ask whether conditions and circumstances which admitted of such a grave possibility remained till the end of the war.

And the reply is that they did not!

At the beginning of the war the harbour defences had not been completed. It was possible of course to lock the Grand Fleet up at a safe, as well as a convenient point, say Hull, but in that case we should have been locked in by our own mines. What we had to do, then, while preparations at our harbours were being completed, was

to take risks. Our cruisers patrolling the coast, in the face of submarines and enemy mines, paid the penalty, as witness the loss of the *Hogue*, *Cressy*, and *Aboukir*. Such ships, steaming at a low speed and sometimes stopping to help a disabled merchant vessel, were sure targets for the enemy's lurking submarines. This was playing the Germans' game to the full. But as soon as our harbour defences were complete we were able to alter our strategic plans accordingly. Instead of a constant patrol of dangerous centres by our light cruisers, mine-fields and other stationary means of defence made an effective bar against any surprise attack.

The possibility of an invasion after our defences were organised was therefore not only slight, but almost inconceivable. Besides having brought up our land defences to the highest state of efficiency we had taken our lessons from the new experience gained in the course of the war, and had instituted other means of protection on which it is not desirable even now to dwell.

It is a point worth emphasising, however,

that while in the early stages of the war the enemy succeeded in sinking our larger warships with the number of smaller submarine craft which he had at his disposal, he had comparatively speaking, with his greatly increased number of super-submarines, little or no success during that last U-boat campaign. All his chances lay in taking advantage of the natural handicaps we suffered under then. The toll he exacted was a comparatively light one. He was too late afterwards. Try as he might he could not get at our warships lying, within striking distance, at our many great naval centres and at sea. Invasion therefore was out of the question. A scare on a moderate scale—such as the landing of a few battalions to be sacrificed for a momentary victory—was not possible, so that all the sheaves of valuable information for the benefit of his Hunnish soldiers who were to ravish and rape our land on a more advanced scale than Belgium have been so much waste paper. They probably made use of it to wrap up their disappointment at the Armistice Conference.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE KING WITH THE FLEET

THE man in the street can hardly realise what a visit from the King means to the British matelot. The promise of the great event arouses such suppressed excitement as can only be compared to the state of healthy children about to proceed on a school-treat. What it implied on that memorable November day when King George visited the Grand Fleet ere it left for the historic scene of the great surrender in the North Sea defies description. I can never forget one of the earlier visits that I was privileged to witness.

“ The King is coming ! ”

Let the Powers that Be try, however much they may, to maintain the secret of this great event, nothing can prevent the joyful tidings from being whispered around till the secret is everybody's. It was more than usually

necessary to withhold the news of the King's visit until the last moment, but that was an impossibility. The electrical atmosphere, the concentration of the Fleet at the base—arrayed in order of inspection—the hurried new coatings of paint, the renovating of gear, and a thousand other significant signs told the men what they were forbidden to know.

So far as I was concerned, the news was heralded by the pleasing announcement that a party of journalists would be coming to the base. These old confrères of mine, I knew, had been accompanying the King on his tour of inspection for a fortnight past, and I knew what their visit here really meant. Conversations in an undertone between the two-and-a-half and three stripers :

“Anything afoot at sea?” I ask innocently.

“Good law no!” is the just as innocent reply. But I go away humming “Spring is *coming!*” with the accent on the *K!*

It is rather an eye-opener to watch these brave officers bustle about making personal preparations for the great occasion. Some

of them are to be decorated with orders well deserved. Others are to be presented to his Majesty. It will be interesting, I think to myself, to see how each carries himself at the solemn ceremony. . . . The great day arrives and there is an unusual stir everywhere in the early hours. Men who were off duty at 2 a.m. are up again two hours later. Commanders rush about in cars ; everybody is bedecked in his best ; monocles make their appearance unexpectedly upon certain austere personages, who upon this promising morn are nervously eager or unduly stern. This is where the naval disciplinarian is in his element. . . . But not everywhere. Certain junior officers are making very merry. To them it is a joy day, an occasion of mirth and gaiety. Nevertheless one suspects everywhere an undercurrent of " nerves."

At the Hawes Pier quay is the Vice-Admiral's car. Two minutes more and a bright-looking launch, cutting her way in our direction, comes alongside and reveals aboard her a galaxy of blue and gold braid. And this is but the Vice-Admiral and his staff. The

King is yet to come. Suddenly there is a chorus of the sirens' high-pitched call of welcome, and His Majesty King George V., Admiral of the Fleet, has arrived.

From the shore end comes into view a picture in curious contrast. A group of civilians headed by a naval officer—a Commander—hurries upon the scene. They are my friends, the specially selected party of journalists, looking very conspicuous in their ununiformed attire, golf caps, trilby hats, panamas, bowler hats—all relics of a dim past, of an old and perhaps better world. . . . Only very privileged civilians can be found in these most privileged places, and the only very privileged civilians are the very privileged journalists. They come as a refreshing element. Fleet Street at the Fleet. . . . We all join up and board an excellent little motor launch which has been set apart for our party. It is skippered by a smart young lieutenant, who knows pretty well all there is to know in the handling of these craft. He manœuvres past the myriad of vessels and pulls up alongside a great towering

ironclad—a magnificent battle-cruiser upon whose decks the grand investiture is to take place. (This ship—H.M.S. *Princess Royal*—had to be chosen as a substitute for the special occasion at the last moment and the whole ship, from beam to beam, had to be repainted in twenty-four hours. You have to gasp in wonderment at some of Jack's achievements!) We clamber aboard. A scarlet-covered dais and stool suggest the knighting of some favoured and gallant subject. . . . The whole ship's crew is mustered, each man looking smart and spruce in blue with white cap-covers. The band of the Marines—what excellent players are these Marines!—is in close attendance waiting for the signal to strike up "God save the King." We mount the fore-turret and have an excellent view of the whole proceedings. . . . The water is rippling in ecstasy, and the great bulwarks of the surrounding battle-cruisers (the flagship *Queen Elizabeth*, the *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Australia*, *Canada*—a magnificent force) are lined with hundreds of eager sightseers. Jack's homage to his King is whole-hearted. At

length the royal launch comes up alongside and the Vice-Admiral and his staff go forward to greet the King. The Sovereign and his officers stand facing each other on the quarter-deck at the salute, while the National Anthem is being played, and then the senior officers are presented to His Majesty—who shakes hands with each.

We now make a move to the bridge on the fore-deck, from which an even better view is obtained. The King mounts the little scarlet platform. Lord Cromer, as Equerry-in-Waiting, stands on his right, ready to hand His Majesty the decorations which he is to bestow.

“Vice-Admiral Sir William Pakenham” is heard, and a tall, senior-looking, much-beribboned officer steps forward, doffs his cap, and kneels on the stool before His Sovereign. The King takes the sword from his equerry, and lightly touching either shoulder of the kneeling Admiral, invests him with his regalia, beautiful to look upon even from our position aloft. . . . There then follow, in order of seniority, officers who

are also to receive some distinction at the hands of His Majesty.

It is interesting to watch these great sailors. Not all of them carry out the same formality of advancing bare-headed, saluting, shaking hands after being decorated, saluting again, and passing round the Vice-Admiral to the rear. Some forget to do one thing or the other. One imagines all the rehearsing these great men have had in private, only to "fall down" on one trivial point when the great moment arrives! Some omit the salute upon leaving His Majesty, another—a Captain—salutes with his cap off! While others show momentary hesitation in deciding what to do after they have been invested. . . . However, all ends merrily and without any real hitch. In an interval the strains, slow and appealing, of "Come Sing to Me" are heard. It might be from a band on another warship in the distance, but it comes as a fact from the Marine band we have just left amidships. Music was never more agreeable.

And now another move is made, this time to the starboard side, where a grand "March

Past" begins. This is a jolly spectacle. The band thunders out stirring marches, and an endless line of Jack Tars march smartly past the King at the salute. Here again one is whimsical enough to notice the different modes of saluting. Hand after hand in quick rotation is raised to the forehead, and the individual idiosyncrasy is amusing to note . . . the half swing, the half shake, the jerky withdrawal, the withdrawal nonchalant!—it is a fascinating sight to watch the interminable line which swings along like a well-oiled machine, and each part of which comes to the salute at a given point, with clockwork regularity. The stream is only broken now and again by the officer in charge of each company falling in by the side of the King and then falling into line again when the officer of the succeeding company relieves him. And so it goes on. . . .

We soon have to leave our point of vantage upon this great battle-cruiser, to make our way to another Dreadnought of the latest type. She is the mysterious "Hush! hush!" mine-layer—H.M.S. *Courageous*. We leave

behind the photographers and the cinematograph-operators. These useful adjuncts to a modern King's retinue have been very busily occupied. They have seen all, and have taken an impression of everything. Little of the historic scene has escaped their vigilance, but not all of it will see the light of day—yet. . . .

Here, on board the *Courageous*, we clamber up the narrow steps of steel to the fore-castle bridge, millions of feet, it seems, above the sea-level. . . . Below aft, on the main deck, the ship's company is formed up in such a picturesque manner as to win the admiration of all. The white cap-covers—we can only take in a sea of heads—and the flash of gold braid in the sun, the occasional glimpse of red stripes on blue, and lastly a small party of Indian orderlies from the neighbouring hospital ship attired in a garb of resplendent iridescence, all help to make the general colouring of the picture a memorable one.

Here too we have a march past, executed to the smallest detail with a wonderful

thoroughness. And somehow even the band music is novel and more enlivening. Once more the King's pinnace draws up, and His Majesty departs with three ringing cheers which surely must startle the bottled-up Germans in Kiel Canal. . . . But the day's round is not over. King George certainly exhibits an energy and interest which the most casual observer cannot fail to note. And somehow the impression is that the sailor King is never so happy as when afloat. The round of visits he paid would surely try the strongest, and yet our King betrayed no signs of fatigue or flagging interest.

From H.M.S. *Courageous* we cut along smartly to the famous floating aerodrome, the *Furious*. And it doesn't take long even for the layman to observe the modern improvements, the latest ingenuities of these beautifully constructed ships. . . . Her aeroplane platforms—from which aircraft can ascend—aroused the King's interest. One more march past and we dash ahead of the King to pick up the *Gorgonzola*, as we call her, before His Majesty's arrival. But

fleet as our excellent launch is, even faster is the pinnace which conveys the King. So we pull up as the royal pinnace approaches, and the King, responding to our salute, passes on ahead to the *Galatea*.

To us it seemed a most magnificent panorama which hardly gave you time to breathe; and yet there was more to see. At the new destroyer base—Port Edgar—the officers and men of a number of destroyers were lined up ashore to greet His Majesty. But some of us who had duties ahead of us could not wait.

Just as the piping of sirens announced His Majesty's arrival, and the great company of very superior officers and ratings were waiting expectantly on either side of the narrow pier, I had to run the gauntlet—a humble A.P. R.N.V.R.—of this long, narrow line. I looked neither to the right nor to the left, but with clenched teeth and crimson cheeks marched through the expectant lines of braid!

It was strange upon meeting my old colleagues again to find that one or two did not recognise me in my naval uniform.

The most technical naval questions were hurled at me by naval critics—experts!—and one or two old friends addressed me as “sir.” Good Lord! when they discovered I was one of them in disguise . . .

But it was nice to meet the boys again, and it gave me an odd thrill when I saw the fuss that was made of them. . . . Now if they’d only been mere naval officers . . .

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

I

FROM Naval Staff, Intelligence Division,
Admiralty :

DEAR MOSELEY,

I should be very pleased if you would go ahead with the suggested articles and let me have them.

Yours very truly, . . .

II

To Commander-in-Chief, Rosyth (from me) :

I venture to ask for facilities which will enable me to write up a series of articles on what the Navy is doing. The idea is to

give the man in the street a popular account of what the Navy is doing.

I have the honour, etc.

III

To Commander-in-Chief from Assistant Secretary :

This officer, at present serving as Coding Officer on your staff, is the author of *The Truth about the Dardanelles* and *With Kitchener in Cairo*. He was the official Press Representative at the Dardanelles until he was invalided home.

Will Commander-in-Chief consider favourably this officer's application ?

If so, I suggest that he should state what facilities he requires—which can then be placed before you for your approval.

IV

Commander-in-Chief to Secretary :

Yes.

V

Assistant Secretary for Secretary (on leave)
to me :

I have placed your application before the Commander-in-Chief, who wishes you to state in writing the nature of the facilities you require. He will consider his approval for the facilities asked for.

VI

To Commander-in-Chief's Secretary (from me):

I am obliged for your letter. I submit that facilities be given me—

- (1) To go down in sea-going submarine operating from this base.
- (2) To go up in a coastal airship and aeroplane.
- (3) To go out on a cruiser on battle practice.

I have the honour to be etc.

VII

From Assistant Secretary to Commander-in-Chief :

If approved :—

“ A ”

- (i) C.S. to C.O. 13th Submarine Flotilla asking for necessary facilities to be granted.
- (ii) C.S. to C.O., R.N.A.S., East Fortune, directing necessary facilities be granted.
- (iii) C.S. to R.A., B.C.F., asking if he will be good enough to grant facilities.

VIII

To me from Admiral's Secretary :

Please note hereon how it is proposed to carry out the above without interfering with your duties as a Coding Officer. Probably (i) and (iii) above would not fit in with your “ days off,”

IX

Secretary to Staff :

Now take action as at " A."

X

To Secretary (from me) :

In reply to yours of to-day's date I have made mutual arrangements with my colleagues to carry on should it become necessary. I do not think, however, that my proposals will necessitate such action.

I am, etc.

XI

Chief of Staff to C.O. 13th Submarine Flotilla :

This officer, now serving in H.M.S. *Crescent* and on my staff, is the author of, etc., etc., and desires, etc., etc.

I have no objection to this proposal. It is therefore requested that facilities may be afforded to this officer for obtaining the

experience he desires. He has been authorised to communicate direct with you on the subject.

XII

Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Commanding
Battle Cruiser Force :

This officer is, etc., etc. If you concur, should be glad if facilities could be afforded him for obtaining the experience he desires. If you concur, it is requested that you will inform me by signal when it is convenient, etc.

XIII

Chief of Staff to C.O., R.N.A.S., East Fortune :

(On the same lines as XI.)

XIV

From V.A., B.C.F., to Commander-in-Chief :

Your communication of No. 130 H June
25th.

R.A. 1st B.C.S. has been requested to give

facilities in *Repulse* or *Renown* on occasion of next practice, and to inform you when and to which ship officer should be sent.

XV

C.O. 13th Submarine Flotilla to Commander-in-Chief :

“ Certainly soon as opportunity presents itself ” (or something to that effect).

XVI

C.O., R.N.A.S., East Fortune :

“ Certainly any day will suit me ” (or something to that effect).

XVII

To C.O. 13th Submarine Flotilla (from me) :

(Nice polite letter—as requisite!—asking for facilities.)

XVIII

To V.A.C., B.C.F. (from me) :

(Nice polite letter—as requisite!—asking for facilities.)

XIX

To C.O., R.N.A.S., East Fortune (from me) :

(Nice polite letter—as requisite!—asking for facilities.)

XX

V.A.C., B.C.F., to me :

Be aboard H.M.S. *Renown* Thursday, 21st inst., at 0730.

XXI

C.O. 13th Submarine Flotilla to me (*viva voce*) :

“ Well, we’ll see what we can do, anyhow.”

XXII

C.O., R.N.A.S., East Fortune, to me :

With reference to your letter of 29th June, 1917, it will be quite convenient for you to visit this Station on the date you suggest or at any other date convenient to you.

It would be best to select as far as possible a day when the weather conditions are favourable, as these naturally influence the flying to some extent.

XXIII

Commander-in-Chief to H.M.S. *Crescent* :

Picket boat should be ready to take A. P. Moseley to H.M.S. *Renown* Thursday 21st inst. at 0630—1230.

XXIV

H.M.S. *Crescent* to Commander-in-Chief :

Yours 1230. Picket boat will be ready Thursday 21st at 0700.

XXV

H.M.S. *Renown* to me :

Come aboard 0630 not 0730.

XXVI

Commander-in-Chief to H.M.S. *Crescent* :

My 1230. Picket boat should be ready to take A. P. Moseley to H.M.S. *Renown* 0600 not 0630—2310.

XXVII

H.M.S. *Crescent* to Commander-in-Chief :

Your 2310. Picket boat will be ready for A. P. Moseley 0600.

XXVIII, XXIX, & XXX

To all concerned (from me) :

Thank you very much.

XXXI, XXXII, & XXXIII

All concerned to me :

Not at all. Very glad to oblige you.

XXXIV

Censor (to me) :

Nothing doing ! Not till the war is over,
PLEASE.

CHAPTER XXV

FOOD FROM THE DEEP

THE extraordinary and successful manner in which England met and overcame the very critical months of the war when, according to the statisticians, our food larder would be at its lowest point, has puzzled the pessimist and won the admiration of neutrals.

How was it done? How was it that when according to the figures we should have been starving, our actual state as regards food was surprisingly good if not plentiful?

It was perfectly true that for a period the new German submarine campaign was achieving a greater measure of success than we had foreseen. It was also true that not only in large ships, but in valuable cargo, the U-boats had given us many an anxious moment.

It is permissible now to tell for the first

time the following personal experience as indicating in part the manner in which England was able to checkmate the German in his plan to starve us out.

The wonderful work of the Navy in its defensive and offensive campaign against the U-boat has become gradually known. Night and day the British Fleet incessantly waged war against the trump card of Germany, mining, patrolling, escorting, and bringing the enemy craft to action by a variety of ingenious methods—one of which we now know was the "Q" or mystery boat.

All this combined to render abortive to a great extent the work of the U-boat. But it did not exhaust the naval counter-schemes. An amazingly audacious campaign of salvaging food from the deep was conceived and carried out with considerable success. About this little so far has become known to the public. It was only by a stroke of luck that I was able to witness an actual salvage operation at sea wherein many tons of valuable food were saved for the country.

Invited ashore to "a bit of supper" by a friend at one of our seaports, I was pleased and surprised to find that the bit of supper consisted of fine tinned tongue, raspberries, greengages, and cream, and pastry made with *white* flour and jam, and several *Christmas puddings!*

I expressed my surprise that such excellent food was obtainable in those days. And my host replied with a mysterious twinkle in his eye: that it was "still obtainable—from the deep." The general scepticism of everybody present at what he went on to describe as a "salvage feed" can be imagined when my host further informed me that the excellent tongue had been recovered from the sea after being sunk in ten fathoms for nearly a year. Raspberries, greengages, and cream had been salvaged from thirteen fathoms after eight months!

"The blighter's pulling our leg," somebody said, but a few days later I was to witness one of the actual operations which had been the means adopted for some time past of quietly and effectively

recovering much of England's food from the deep.

.

The ship we were out to salvage was one of 8,000 tons, laden with a variety of food-stuffs. She had been a Hun prize before the days of the efficient convoy system. Coming from across the Atlantic she had had an uneventful voyage until she neared the English coast, when, without warning, a torpedo struck her astern full tilt. Efficient seamanship enabled the ship to keep afloat long enough for the crew to abandon her. At one time, in fact, it seemed as if she might be towed in. But down she went. The boat itself, despite the damage, was valuable property, but more so was her cargo. In fact, during her three years under the sea she had increased so much in value as to become a veritable food treasure ship. It was the consciousness of the great prize we were after that stirred us so deeply when we set out to salvage her. Not even the crew aboard the ship which went a-sailing

in quest of Stevenson's *Treasure Island* could have felt such a throb of expectancy as we did that day aboard the tug *Olive* which convoyed the tender with her salvaging paraphernalia to the scene of the wreck.

From first to last it was an eventful trip. To begin with, we had to take care to avoid mines and submarines—a mere detail. Then we were to locate the treasure according to our skilfully drawn chart—again reminiscent of *Treasure Island*. Then having located the food treasure ship we were to begin at once preliminary operations—that is, we were going to send a diver down to see whether salvaging was possible and worth while, whether the food was get-at-able and, if so, whether it was still fit for human consumption, or, failing that, fit for cattle food.

.

Olive is a fascinating tug. The men she carries adore her. In fair or foul weather she is always the same, responsive and out

for a bit of sport. She is a very venturesome creature and her successes are considerable. Should the operations be successful we can save food for England; several thousand bags of flour, oats, oatmeal, tinned meats, fruits, and grain. A treasure food ship indeed!

Our first essay is quite successful. We locate the vessel easily, for the simple reason that she has shifted with the tide and has grounded upon a sand bank. Her masts are well above water—as we hardly expected—and at low tide it should be fairly comfortable work for the diver. She is encased with green slime due to the exposure, and she shows every appearance of her lengthy submersion.

The tug *Olive*, having put us aboard the salvaging tender, heaves off and awaits our further pleasure.

This tender presents a curious workaday aspect. Her deck is littered with cables of various sizes, pumps, ropes galore—a jumble of rust which would bring tears of envy to the eyes of an old-iron merchant.

She manœuvres alongside the sunken food treasure ship, slips her cable—by the aid of a rowing-boat—through the foremast and gradually pulls herself round until *she is right across the sunken decks of the great vessel*. In the meantime pumps are being set up in sections, the huge crane is put in motion, beginning at once to throb with tense activity.

We examine the plans of the sunken ship. They at once reveal points which have to be considered before the diver can be sent below. First of all the abandoned vessel is resting at ten fathoms with a list of seventeen degrees. One of her holds is smashed in, but our expert salvage man confidently declares it may be possible to remove the cargo from her even under these difficult conditions. Hold No. 2 is 3,700 square feet, which, according to the expert salvage man, is “equivalent to a thousand tons of food.” No. 3 hold is rather larger, and he estimates that with careful salvaging we might lift altogether some 7,550 tons of food. **Of this he allows broadly just over 2,000 tons**

as wasted. Therefore the net salvage should be about 5,500 tons on dry weight.

The diver, too, must be careful to avoid other parts of the vessel which are known to have fallen in. A half-inch out on the chart might prove fatal. . . . The salvage operator, having examined the hydraulic pump, declares the operation ready to be opened. The diver, armed with a small spade and a hammer, goes below and lands directly upon the hold where the grain had been stored. He gropes around for the pump and manipulates its nose well into the food. Then he gives the signal to be hauled up again. In a half-minute he reappears with a handful of the grain, which he hands over for inspection. At the same time the pump has begun to suck up the food, which is caught and strained through an ordinary wicker basket.

Now a strange comparison is noted. The grain which the diver brought up is of a much better quality than that drawn up through the pump. The force of the churned water, my expert friend informs me, has

destroyed the solidity of the grain, and he thinks that, although the process might be slower, it would be far better in his opinion to use the "grab" rather than the pump for salvaging this particular species of food. But before the expert finally decides upon the latter course, the diver is sent below again and readjusts the pump deeper into the grain where it is thought it might be more solid. Again the pump is given a chance, and again a torrent of thick black churned mud is pumped up and caught in the basket. But it is of no use. The grain after being carefully strained and washed shows marked signs of deterioration.

"The grab," finally announces my friend, whereupon the pumping gear is hauled aboard and dismantled, and a council of war held. The preliminary operations are at an end.

.

Such operations, once they get into full swing, may extend of course over many weeks—sometimes months. Weather conditions

must be favourable or else a whole salving staff and their gear must remain idle—as indeed they oftentimes are for days at a stretch. Upon this occasion, however, we are more fortunate. The weather gave every promise, and it was decided to go full steam ahead with the operations next day. The grab, it is estimated, will be able to pick up between a ton and a ton and a half per dip. It is decided first of all to recover the grain. The divers scuttle overboard and back as if it were child's play among the sunken wreckage. The grab is adjusted, it dips, and in a short time has flung aboard our awaiting ship over a ton of grain. This first consignment, however, proves as regards quality somewhat disappointing—although it must be remembered that to recover grain after a period of immersion had never even been thought of before, but in those times when there was such a shortage of cattle and poultry food one had to be alive to every possibility of effecting a salvage.

“It will do for cattle and poultry food,” announces the expert. The next ton, how-

ever, is much more promising, and the third consignment even better.

.

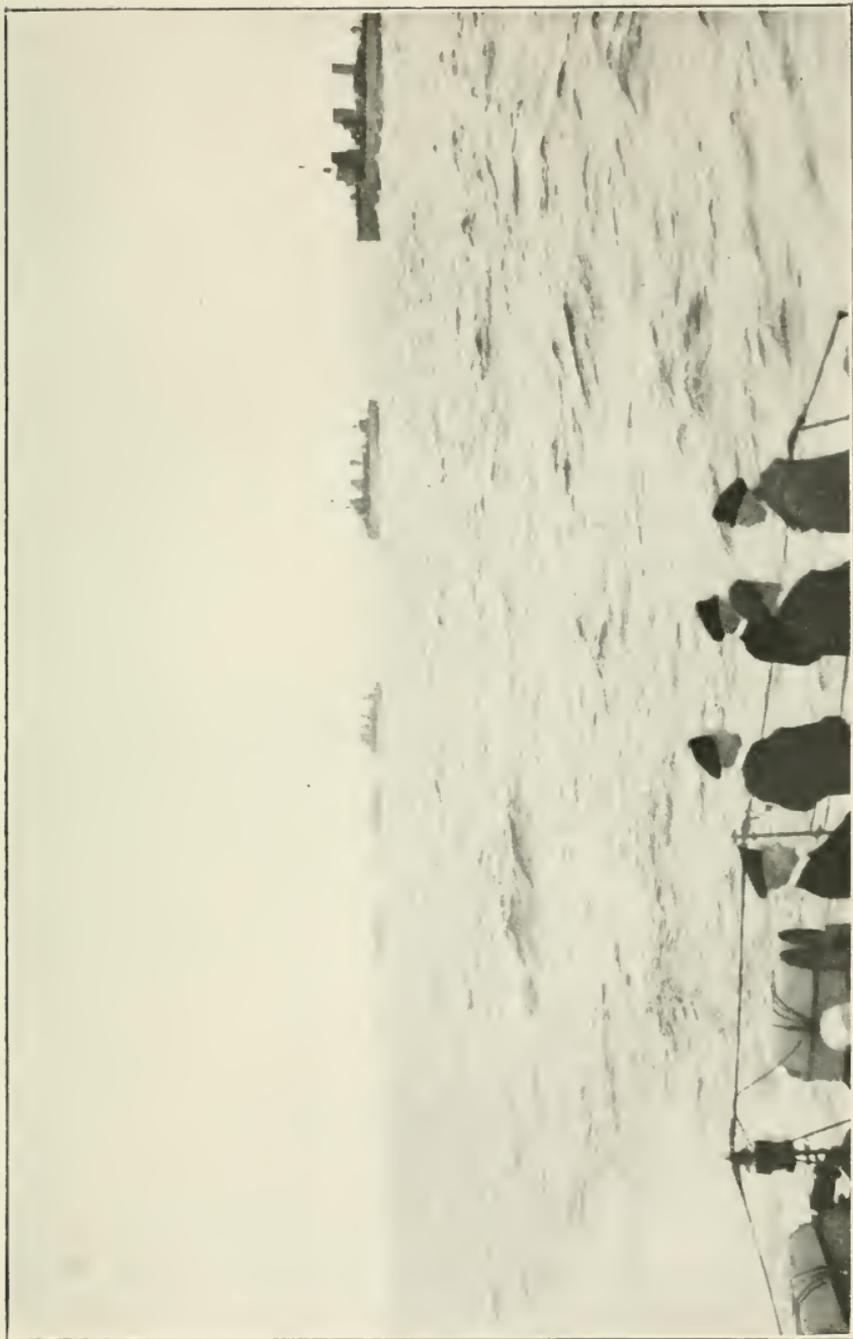
To watch the recovery of flour, fruit, etc., from the depths of the sea is no less interesting. For this kind of salvage the pump is of no use. The diver holds the stage. In a trice two of them have disappeared below, and at a given signal the men aboard haul up from the deep a great case dripping with water, but, beyond that, looking quite undamaged. The recovered food is dropped gently aboard our rescuing ship and the crane dips again—this time with a wire basket attached to the chain. In a few minutes dripping sacks of flour appear magically from the deep. The water had crusted the outer layer—had, in fact, caked the outside of the bag so effectively that the rest of the flour was untouched by the salt water. . . .

All day long the grab and the crane dip and dip again—always reappearing with a quantity of the food which the Hun thought

to be irretrievably lost to us. It will interest him to know now that not only the food but the ship which he succeeded in putting down has, in a great many cases, been recovered—that many a ship which he still officially declares to be lying beneath the sea is being doctored up in harbour ready to put to sea again, while the food which he believed is rotting is probably on the breakfast-table!

It must not be imagined, however, that rescuing the food from the deep completes the work of restoring the food.

This part of the salvage operations would be of no use unless the food were dealt with expeditiously upon being recovered. An immersion for a long period in the sea renders tins containing food sensitive to new atmospheric conditions. Therefore a vast amount of work is entailed after the food has been landed. Huge tanks of water are always in readiness and a large staff—mostly of girls—immediately unpacks the tinned goods and flings them into the tanks of water until they can be further dealt with.



Topical.

THE DÉNOUEMENT: SURRENDER OF THE GERMAN FLEET.

After the salt has been washed away and many other operations performed they are packed into new cases which once more encompass this food from the deep, bringing it in a few hours within the reach of the English housewife.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE NIGHT NURSE

AT eight o'clock the lights were turned down, and the light-hearted nurses were gone. They had had a long day of it.

Then she came on—to darkness, silence, and monotony. So I thought. And I thought I knew! In a moment, however, she had created a big blaze in each side of the hygienic stove which stood in the middle of the ward. She did it deftly and noiselessly, for the patients were beginning to doze off.

Then she switched on the light in the ante-room and prepared a mixture. Finally she lit the red-shaded lamp, where she might sew at odd moments. But those odd moments were few; for if there was light there was also sound, which came agonisingly from different parts of the big ward.

“ Nurse ! ”

You could scarcely hear the whispered appeal, but she heard it right enough, and was at the spot in an instant. The sound came from “ dad ”—so-called because he is so profound and wise—whose expression of resigned helplessness never once changed. When you saw the cadaverous-looking spectacle who grunted as a sign of uneasiness and snorted as a sign of thanks, you could scarcely help questioning the utility of all the attention and care which were given him.

“ I feel uncomfortable,” he said childishly.

In a moment she had lifted him bodily into an upright position. She prevailed on him to drink this and to swallow that, and then rebandaged his rheumatic body. I watched her expression throughout this trying task of hers. It was just an expression which combined interest, tenderness, and sincerity. And it never changed.

“ Comfortable now, dad ? ” she asked. The reply was a snort which I had soon learnt to be a signal of acquiescence.

She had scarcely left his bedside when a deep sigh took her to another part of the ward. The patient was asleep seemingly; but as she tenderly readjusted the bedclothes he opened his eyes and met the two blue eyes of earnestness. She lighted up his weary heart till he smiled.

“Nurse, please, something—something to drink!”

And so on all through the night. Monotony! In the twelve hours which followed not once did the little nurse remain inactive. If she was able on two occasions to sit down by the little red lamp and begin to sew, it was only to be called away after a minute's effort. A mere lad in the far end of the room, who had remained perfectly quiet during the day, soon felt the pangs of night.

“I feel miserable,” he whimpered to nurse.

“Any pain?” she asked.

“I don't think so, nurse.”

“Then what shall I do for you, Tommy?” She evidently knew the answer, for when she had given him something to drink his murmurings ceased.

There were times when a patient, spurred more by pain than by reason, complained ; but it was accepted in the good-natured spirit which never once left her.

There is something in the night picture of a hospital ward which is dreamingly fantastical. As I lay half dozing I seemed to forget my environment and allowed my imagination to take full flight abroad. It must have been the harmony of the light of the fire, the rays of the lamp, with the background of darkness, bespeckled with the whiteness of the beds and faces, which gave the ward its enchanted atmosphere. You pictured a ring of goblins joining hands round the fire and laughing in their impish happiness.

First they were content to run round slowly and quietly, stopping now and again to give an additional turn to the dance. Gradually they quickened their pace till each was lost in the maze. And the noise they were beginning to make ! Surely the patients would be aroused. . . . A tall fairy, dressed in white and carrying a wand, which I thought

was slightly out of proportion, approached them warningly. They all separated, and with the wand she poked the fire instead! I could see the elves disappearing up the chimney one by one, their legs dangling longingly, until the flames spurred them to hurry!

It was quiet again. But for a minute only. A rough jangling of bells brought one down to earth. The noise came from a cart in the streets below, and it occurred to me that the driver was a man who had never been in hospital. The patients stirred uneasily, and one man sat bolt upright in his bed. The night fairy went to him.

“What time is it, nurse?” he asked anxiously.

“Three o’clock,” she whispered in reply.

“Can I get up?” he asked in a tone which indicated the answer.

“Up? Up? To sleep with you!”

“But I have slept all day long,” he pleaded.

“Go to sleep now,” she advised, “and I’ll let you get up at five!”

He lay back on the disturbed pillow, and counted the minutes and heard the quarter chimes till it wanted ten minutes to five. Then he fell asleep!

To me dawn came quickly: but to those who were compelled to count more dawns than one the hours were so many weeks.

Dawn came, and the red lamp was extinguished; but the energy of that little girl with the blue eyes remained unconquered. You never conceived that so much work was needed; but you could plainly see that were it not for the minute training and the scientific method, all that work would have been beyond her.

In the morning two of the patients, almost convalescent, arose. They strutted to the kitchen and came back laden with cups and saucers. I have never seen men more willing to express a sense of gratitude. And they looked so odd! As they served the tea so the nurse served the toast. And as she worked she hummed softly. It might have been the beginning of her daily duties instead of the end.

“Nurse, you’re very happy,” someone remarked.

“Happy!” she replied gaily. “Why, I am always happy!”

And she hummed a plaintive melody!

A thin voice interrupted. It seemed to come from underneath the boards on the floor.

“Nurse,” it piped, “did you say you were happy?”

“Yes!” she responded with vivacity. “Certainly I’m happy!”

A pause. Then the voice was heard again:

“How does it feel, nurse?” it asked.

Daylight strengthened, and the fantastic figures threw off their cloaks and showed themselves to be just beautiful ornaments. And the day nurses came on duty again. They glided in, fresh-faced, fresh-witted, charging the atmosphere with a delightful vigour which did more good than all the medicine in the world. The thoughts of woman in such a capacity can only be expressed in poetry:

O woman! Lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you;
Angels are painted fair, to look like you;
There's in you all that we believe in heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

It seemed to me that as a rest-cure the ward of an English hospital was better than the Riviera. In Italy and France, and in Germany too, the nurses take their work too seriously. In the wards the patients are constantly reminded by the grimness of things that they are confined in a sick-room. In England the radiance of the nurses spreads till it reaches the gloomiest of patients.

The most interesting point in the character of nurses is the most baffling. It is also the most creditable. Many of their duties would be spurned by the woman who cleans the steps every Friday—of a class admittedly inferior in every way: in education, intellect, culture, and physique. Why, then, is the standard of nursing so high? It is certainly not the remuneration which attracts, and just as certainly not the hours. The nursing profession is the most badly paid of any. I

suppose to obtain the answer one must go back and trace the influence of Florence Nightingale. It is wonderful and inexplicable. Yet it would be interesting to know what profession would have attracted these women, did not nursing exist.

When ten o'clock comes, and the patients are either conversing or reading, the work is in full swing. Beds are made and remade, the incessant cries for nurse are answered, meals are prepared, medicine is served at varying intervals, temperatures are noted, charts marked, and the instruments for the surgeon thoroughly cleansed.

The man in the bed next to me spoke but two words during the twenty-four hours he was there. They referred to the little nurse, who seemed to have charge of things in the absence of the "sister."

"Wonderful girl," he whispered, watching her flitting to and fro.

The hands of the clock, like the nurses, continued on the move; but even the second hands kept out of time, by a hundred beats, to the constant trip-trip of the little feet.

Eight o'clock again! A pretty face which for some hours has been missing makes a welcome reappearance. It is a face lit up with two blue eyes which are directed to the spot where the red lamp is.

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