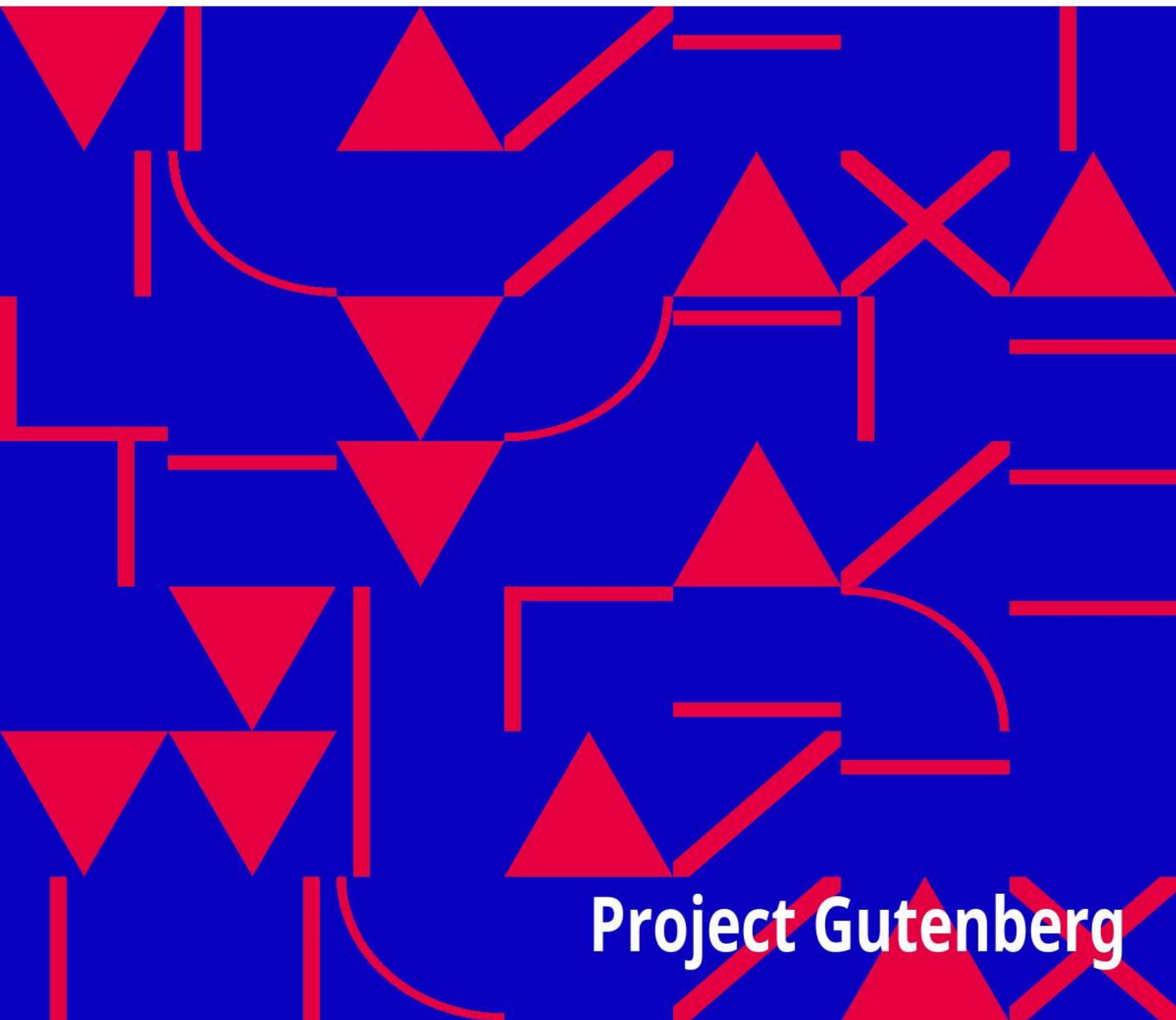


Stand By! Naval Sketches and Stories

H. Taprell Dorling



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Title: Stand By! Naval Sketches and Stories

Author: Henry Taprell Dorling

Release Date: July 13, 2008 [eBook #26049]

Language: English

START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK STAND BY!

E-text prepared by Al Haines

Transcriber's note:

"Taffrail" is the pseudonym of Henry Taprell Dorling.

The book from which this etext was prepared was missing the leaf containing pages 41 and 42.

STAND BY!

Naval Sketches and Stories

by

"TAFFRAIL"

Author of "Carry On!" "Pincher Martin O.D., Etc."

London
C. Arthur Pearson, Limited
Henrietta Street, W.C.
1916

**TO THE SHIP'S COMPANY WHO ARE SECOND
TO NONE**

PREFACE

It seems almost unnecessary to remark that the characters and ships figuring in the sketches throughout this book are entirely fictitious.

"Bunting," "The Acting Sub," "Our Happy Home," "The Lost Sheep," "The 'Muckle Flugga' Hussars," and "The Mother Ship" appeared in the *Daily Mail*, and "The 'Pirates'" in the *Weekly Despatch*. They are here reprinted, with minor alterations, by kind permission of the Editors.

TAFFRAIL.

1916.

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"PUFFIN"**

STAND BY!

THE "ACTING SUB"

He was a very junior young officer indeed when the powers that be first gladdened his heart and ruined his clothes by sending him to a destroyer. A mere sub-lieutenant with "(acting)" after his name, which, as any proper "sub" will tell you, is a sign of extreme juniority. Moreover, the single gold stripe on his monkey jacket was still suspiciously new and terribly untarnished.

Not so very long before he had been a "snotty" (midshipman) in a battleship, a mere "dog's body," who had to obey the orders of almost every officer in the ship except those few who happened to be junior to him. It is true that he exercised his authority and a severe discipline on those midshipmen who had the misfortune to be a year or so younger than himself, and that he expressed a lordly contempt for the assistant clerk. But he lived in the gun-room, slept in a hammock, kept all his worldly possessions in a sea-chest, and bathed and dressed in the company of fifteen other boisterous young gentlemen.

Then he had his watches to keep at sea and his picket boat to run in harbour, while his spare time was fully employed in mastering the subtleties of gunnery, torpedo work, and electricity, and in rubbing up his rapidly dwindling knowledge of engineering and x and y . It was well that he did so, for at some distant period when the war ceased he would have to pass certain stringent examinations before he could be confirmed in the rank of lieutenant.

So on the whole he had been kept fairly busy, more particularly as watch-keeping at the guns with the ship at sea in all weathers in war time was not all jam.

But when he was sent to a destroyer he found the life was more strenuous, for the little ship spent far more time at sea. The weather was sometimes very bad

indeed, and at first he was sea-sick, but it was always a consolation to have a cabin of his own, to live in the wardroom, and to be treated as a responsible officer instead of a mere "makee learn."

He had to work at least six times harder than he had in a battleship. For one thing he had all the charts to correct and to keep up to date, no small labour with pencil, dividers, parallel rulers, and much red ink in these days of war, prolific minefields, dangerous areas, extinguished lights, and removed buoys. He also assisted with the ship's gunnery, and at sea kept a regular three watches, eight hours out of every twenty-four, with the first lieutenant and gunner. But it was the sense of responsibility and the feeling that he was doing really useful work which gladdened his heart and kept him keen and energetic.

"Have you ever been in a destroyer before?" his commanding officer had asked him as soon as he joined.

"No, sir."

"Ever kept officer of the watch at sea?"

Again the answer was in the negative.

"Well, you'll have to do it here, my son. If you want to know anything come to me. There's nothing much in it so long as you keep your eyes skinned. You'll soon learn."

* * * * *

The skipper had said there was nothing in it, but the first night at sea he found himself alone on the bridge in charge of the ship he thought differently.

A light cruiser squadron and two flotillas of destroyers were steaming at 20 knots in close formation without lights. The night was as black as the wolf's mouth, and the rapidly rising wind cut the tops off the short seas and sent them flying over the bridge in constant showers of spray. Moreover, the perpetual pitching and rolling soon gave our friend a squeamish and altogether nasty sensation in the region of his waistcoat, and in ten minutes, by which time the water had found its way through his oilskins and was trickling merrily down the back of his neck, he felt miserable.

The ship was in the middle of a line of eight destroyers. Two hundred yards ahead of him he could just discern the dim black blur of the next ahead and the occasional splutter of whity-grey foam in her wake as her stern lifted to the seas. At times, when a driving rain squall came down from windward, he seemed to lose sight of her altogether, and, through inexperience and in his anxiety to catch up, increased the revolutions of the engines not wisely but rather too much. The next thing that happened was that the squall cleared, and he found himself almost on top of her, and had to put the helm over and sheer out of line to avoid a collision. At the same time he reduced speed to drop back into station. Sometimes he reduced more than he should, with the consequence that the next astern nearly bumped him, while the leader shot ahead and vanished into the darkness like a ghost.

It was then that he had horrible thoughts of being scrubbed for the deadly sin of losing touch with the flotilla and meandering about the ocean like a lost sheep looking for his next ahead. If he did not succeed in finding her somebody's blood would be required.

It was rather trying for a novice, and many times he remembered the commanding officer's standing orders. "Do not hesitate to call me if you are in doubt or difficulty," they said, with the "Do not" underlined twice. Should he rouse the skipper or should he not? He was asleep in his clothes on the cushioned settee in the charthouse underneath the bridge and would be up in ten seconds if required. But the acting "sub" did hesitate to call him unnecessarily. After all, it was quite possible that the "C.O." might be rather peevish if he was hauled out for no reason. He was not really "in difficulty," he persuaded himself, and he certainly did not wish to patent the fact that he could not keep the ship in station, whatever the circumstances.

No; he would not call him. He solved the problem by increasing the speed of the engines ever so slightly above the normal, and five minutes later heaved a sigh of profound relief as the black shape of the next ahead hove up out of the darkness.

In an hour his helpless feeling had gone and he was jogging merrily along without any difficulty.

* * * * *

But the skipper, who was accustomed to the ways and tricks of newly-joined officers generally, and sub-lieutenants in particular, had been awake the whole time. He always slept with one eye open at sea, and as the charthouse was immediately beneath the bridge and the shafting of the wheel and engine-room telegraphs passed within a few feet of his head, he knew at once from their agitated movement when anything really desperate was happening. So when the helm went overhand the revolution telegraph revolved frantically five or six times in quick succession he yawned wearily, flung off his rug, and sat up.

"I won't go up and interfere unless he sends for me," he thought to himself. "He must learn." He had been a "sub" in a destroyer himself. The summons never came.

At three o'clock, by which time the dawn was breaking, the "C.O." did appear on the bridge.

"Well, Sub?" he asked. "What d'you think of station keeping at night?"

"Quite easy, sir," said that young officer blandly, quite unaware of the acoustic properties of the charthouse. "As easy as falling off a log."

"Did you have any difficulty in seeing the next ahead?"

"Not much, sir. It was a bit dark at times, though."

The "C.O." smiled to himself. He knew.

* * * * *

The "sub," he has passed out of the "acting" stage, is now an expert at the game, and, to use the phraseology of his latest confidential report, is "energetic and trustworthy" and a "most promising and capable officer."

THE MOTHER SHIP

Sixteen years ago, when the ships of the Royal Navy still disported themselves in black hulls, with red water-lines, white upper works, and yellow masts and funnels, she was a smart cruiser attached to one of the large fleets. She was as spick and span as elbow grease and ingenuity could make her, and the show ship of her squadron and the pampered darling of the admiral, went by the name of "the yacht."

She was easily one of the cleanest ships afloat. Her blue-black side, anointed daily with some mysterious compound rubbed on with serge, a compound the exact ingredients of which were known only to her commander and the painter who mixed it, was as smooth and as shiny as a mahogany table. Her decks were as clean as scrubbers, holystones, sand, and perspiring blue-jackets could make them, and woe betide the careless sailor who defiled their sacred whiteness with a spot of paint, or the stoker who left the imprint of a large and greasy foot on emerging into the fresh air from his labours in the engine-room or stokehold.

Her guns, steel, and brass-work winked and shimmered in the sun. Her funnels were brushed over at frequent intervals with a wash the colour and consistency of cream, and before she went to sea her yellow masts and yards used to be swathed in canvas lest they should be defiled by funnel smoke. Her boats, with their white enamel inside and out, their black gunwales with the narrow golden ribbon running round inside, the well-scrubbed masts, oars, thwarts, bottom-boards, and gratings, the brass lettered backboards, and cushioned sternsheets, were the pride of her midshipmen and the envy of nearly all the other young gentlemen in the squadron.

But then, of course, this all happened in the "good old days," the palmy days when men-of-war spent no great portion of their time at sea and when, in some ships, Messrs. Spit and Polish were still the presiding deities. No doubt, as we were sometimes asked to believe before the war, the Service has gone to the

dogs since 1900, for noisy and blatant Mr. Gunnery has usurped the place of the above-mentioned pair and life generally has become more strenuous. The ability to hit a hostile ship at a distance of twenty miles or so cannot be inculcated in the fastnesses of a harbour. The job simply must be taken seriously.

* * * * *

If you turn up her name in the "Navy List" of to-day—wild horses will not make me disclose it and the Censor would not pass it if I did—you will see that she still figures as a cruiser, though the fact remains that she never goes to sea for any war-like purpose. They have even added insult to injury by removing some of her guns.

This may be a matter for deep regret on the part of her officers and men, who, since they belong to the Royal Navy or the Royal Naval Reserve, naturally long to assist in an active manner at the discomfiture of some floating Hun. Their thoughts may not exactly be pleasant when they read and hear of the warlike doings of their seagoing sisters, but they may console themselves by recollecting that the ship of 1916 is probably infinitely more valuable to the country than that of 1900, and that at the present time the Navy could not do without her.

She is still clean but is no longer a "yacht," for her purpose is strictly utilitarian. She performs the multifarious duties of a dépôt ship, and as such attends to the ailments, aches and pains of, caters for the needs of, and generally acts as a well-conducted mother to a large number of destroyers. You have only to ask these latter what they think of their parent, and there is not one of them who would not tell you that they could not get on without her. Of course they cannot! For destroyers, like delicate children prone to catch mumps, whooping-cough, and measles, cannot thrive without careful nursing, particularly in war time.

And so, if the dépôt ship receives a plaintive wail by signal to say that one of her children has been punctured through the bows by a projectile from a belligerent Hun, or that another, in a slight altercation at sea with one of her sisters, has developed a "slight dent" in herself to the accompaniment of leaky rivets and seams, she merely says, "Come alongside!"

The destroyer does so, and, lo! an army of workmen step on board with their tools, and with much hammering and drilling, the outward application of a steel plate, some oakum, and some white lead, her hurts are plastered and she is

rendered seaworthy once more.

Sometimes the defects may be even more serious, as, for instance, when one of her charges, having been badly cut into in a thick fog or having unwisely sat down upon a mine, limps back into harbour with several compartments full of water and serious internal injuries as well. But the *depôt* ship is quite equal to the emergency. She sends her shipwrights, carpenters, and other experts on board the afflicted one and, with a large wooden patch, more oakum, and buckets of red and white lead, the destroyer is made sufficiently seaworthy to proceed to the nearest dockyard.

Again, there may be engine-room defects, such things as over-heated thrust-blocks, stripped turbines, and leaky valves. There are boiler troubles and the periodical cleaning of the boiler tubes. There can be defects in the guns, torpedo-tubes, searchlights, or electrical fittings; defects anywhere and everywhere, even in the galley-stove funnel or the wardroom pantry. Mother has a large family and their ailments are very varied and diverse. But she competes with them all and, save in cases of very severe damage, rarely confesses the job to be beyond her powers and has to send her troublesome child to a dockyard.

* * * * *

But this is not all she does. If Spud Murphy, able seaman of a destroyer, carves the top off his finger or complains of "'orrible pains in th' stummick," he is sent to mother to be nursed back to health by her doctors. If Peter Jones imagines he has not received the pay to which he is entitled, if he wishes to remit a monthly sum to his wife, or if he desires to become the possessor of a pair of boots, a tooth-brush, and a pair of new trousers, mother will oblige him. Moreover, the fond parent distributes the mails and supplies the beef, vegetables, bread, rum, haricot beans, tinned salmon, raisins, sugar, tea, flour, coffee, and a hundred and one other comestibles necessary for the nourishment of those on board her protégées. She will also supply many other unconsidered trifles in the way of ammunition, torpedoes, rope, canvas, paint, emery paper, bath-brick, oil, bolts, nuts, pens, red ink, black ink, hectograph ink, foolscap, pencils, paper fasteners, postage stamps ... I will leave it at that.

Heaven alone knows what else she can disgorge. She seems to resemble a glorified Army and Navy Stores, with engineering, ship fitting, ship chandlery, outfitting, haberdashery, carpentry, chemists, dry provisions, butchers, bakers,

stationery, postal, and fancy goods departments. We have forgotten the certificate office or research department, where they will tell you the colour of the eyes of any man in the flotilla, the number of moles on the back of his neck, and the interesting fact that Stoker "Ginger" Smith has a gory heart transfixed by an arrow, together with the words "True Love," indelibly tattooed on his left forearm.

The Criminal Investigation Department, which seems to be aware of the past history of everybody, will deal with offenders, while, to go to the opposite extreme, the depôt ship's padre will be only too happy to publish the banns of marriage for any member of his flock.

In addition to all this the officers of the flotilla are honorary members of mother's wardroom, where, despite the fact that she sometimes has great difficulty in collecting the sums due at the end of the month, she allows them to obtain meals, drinks, and tobacco. Lastly, she gets up periodical cinematograph or variety shows to which all are invited, free, gratis, and for nothing.... What more could her children want? She is a very good mother to them. Her greatness has not departed.

OUR HAPPY HOME

Compared with that of a "27-knotter" of twenty years ago the wardroom of a modern destroyer is a palatial apartment.

Imagine a room about 15 ft. long, 25 ft. wide—the whole beam of the ship—with about 7 ft. headroom.

It has white enamelled sides and ceiling. A table, long enough to seat ten people at a pinch, runs athwartships, and ranged round it are various straight-backed chairs.

On the after bulkhead is a square mahogany cupboard with a railed top, on which reposes a gramophone, while to the right, in the corner, is another cupboard reaching to the deck above and divided into numerous square lockers. It is really intended for stationery, but provides an equally useful receptacle for bottled beer and stout.

To right and left along the ship's side, with its row of small scuttles, are cushioned settees, and on the foremost bulkhead, to the left of the door, is a bookcase with cupboard underneath. Except on Sundays, when the latter is specially tidied up for the "rounds," it will not bear close investigation. It may be found to contain half a Stilton cheese (rather fruity), pats of butter, two bottles of Worcester sauce, fruit, one tin of Bluebell polish, and a large lump of oily waste. No wonder our butter sometimes tastes peculiar!

To the right of the door is a sideboard, a solid mahogany affair, with racks for glasses and tumblers, and cupboards for wine. In the centre of it is a mirror which, on sliding down into a recess, reveals a small square hatch communicating with the pantry outside.

Overhead, secured to the beams, are various pipes, electric light fittings, brass curtain rods, and a couple of swinging oil lamps. Several more oil lamps are in

the bulkheads or walls. They are used when steam is down and the dynamo is not running. The furniture and fittings are completed by a comfortable-looking, well-padded armchair, a couple of steam radiators of polished, perforated brass for warming purposes when the ship is at sea, a red and blue carpet, curtains, a letter rack and notice board, and the stove.

The latter is fitted to burn anthracite. It looks well, with its highly polished brass casing and funnel reaching up through the deck above, but it has a very decided will of its own. Sometimes, in a fit of contrariness, it persists in blazing like a blast furnace on muggy days until its sides are nearly red-hot and the heat of the wardroom is well-nigh intolerable. But on chilly mornings it occasionally rings a change by refusing to burn at all, and merely vomits forth clouds of acrid, grey smoke. This generally occurs during breakfast, when folk are sometimes apt to be snappish and irritable. We have never really quite fathomed the idiosyncrasies of the stove. Maybe it is sadly misunderstood, but at any rate we can always empty the vials of our wrath for its misdeeds upon the head of its unfortunate custodian, a newly caught officer's steward of the second class, with long hair and a mournful aspect.

We are at war, and there is little or no attempt at decoration in our habitation. The bright red and black tablecloth of the usual service pattern gives the place a touch of colour, but beyond this and a couple of vases of tightly packed flowers on the table, and on the ship's side a print of the gallant old admiral after whom the ship is named, everything serves a strictly utilitarian purpose.

But in spite of its bareness the wardroom is very snug and comfortable. It is particularly inviting on returning from a spell at sea, when one goes below from the wet and chilly upper deck, to find everybody talking at the top of their voices, and pipes, cigarettes, and the stove all going full blast together. If it is after sunset and the ship is "darkened" the scuttles will all have their deadlights down, and the place will be very, what we may call "frowsty." The atmosphere, indeed, what with tobacco smoke and various unnameable but pungent odours from the pantry outside, might well be cut with a knife; but nobody seems to mind. It is warm, at any rate, and is ten thousand times better than the piercing wind and bitter cold on deck.

At sea it is not always pleasant. In heavy weather the stern of the ship has an unwholesome knack of jumping into the air and shaking itself like the tail of a dog. It is disconcerting, to say the least of it, particularly when the water sweeps

its way aft along the upper deck in solid masses which no so-called watertight ventilator can keep out.

When the helm goes over suddenly, too, and the ship slaps her stern into the heart of an advancing wave, a miniature Niagara comes pouring down the after-hatch, unless it happens to be shut. It rarely is. As a consequence the mess is sometimes inches deep in water, while the violent motion unships every moveable fitting in the place and flings it to the deck.

At times the dog Cuthbert, in his basket, the gramophone, many broken records, chairs, tumblers, apples and bananas, books, magazines, papers, knives and forks, a tinned tongue, and the cheese play a riotous game of leapfrog on the deck, with the dirty water sluicing after them.

From outside in the pantry come the crashing sounds of our rapidly disintegrating stock of crockery, and, if we dared to poke our noses inside this chamber of horrors, we should see a pale-faced officer's steward seated on a bench with his head held in his hands. A joint of cold beef, a loaf of bread, an empty pickle jar, and cups, saucers, and plates are probably playing touch-last in the sink. The floor is a noisome kedgeree of broken china and glass, sea water, pickles, chutney, condensed milk, and other articles of food. But the steward, poor wight, is past caring. He does not mind whether it is Christmas or Easter.

A good many of the others are sea-sick as well, for a destroyer in really bad weather is worse than a nightmare, while it is practically impossible to keep dry or to get proper food even if one wanted it. But yet there is a rumour going round that, through reasons of economy, we are shortly to be docked of our "hard-lying" money! But a word as to the inhabitants.

First comes the commander or lieutenant-commander in command. His cabin—which in heavy weather sometimes suffers the same fate as the wardroom, except that the litter on the deck is limited to water, clothes, books, and papers—is a good-sized apartment in the flat just forward of the wardroom. At sea he spends all his hours on the bridge or in the charthouse, and is only seen below for odd ten minutes at a time. In harbour, however, he has his meals in the wardroom with the other officers, but spends no small portion of his day at his writing-table in his cabin answering official conundrums as to why, for instance, two tablespoons and a napkin have been "lost overboard by accident in heavy weather" in the middle of a notoriously fine summer. He also grinds out official

letters and reports by the sweat of his brow, and is gradually becoming a pastmaster in the art of "having the honour to be" somebody else's "obedient servant."

Living in the wardroom and knowing all the members of the ship's company by name brings him into very intimate touch with the men and their affairs. He knows of everything that goes on on board, and as most of the official correspondence of the ship is done by him he is a very busy man even in harbour. At one time he also had to write and thank those good-hearted people who sent mufflers, mittens, cigarettes, balaclava helmets, and peppermints to the "dear sailors."

Next comes the engineer-lieutenant-commander, or the "chief," as we call him. He, too, has his hands full, for besides being in charge of the turbines, boilers, and all the machinery on board, he is also responsible for practically all the stores except provisions. They range in variety from what his store books call prenolphthaline, solution of; cans, iron, tinned, 4 galls.; bits, brace, carpenter's, centre, 1 1/4 inches; to flags, hand, nainsook, white, with dark blue stripe, 2 ft. by 2 ft.; watches, stop; bolts, steel, screwed, bright, hexagonal-headed, 1 in. by 2 in.; sealing wax, foolscap, paper fasteners, and pencils; and paint, green, Brunswick, middling, whatever that may be. This is just a small selection of the articles he keeps and has to account for at stocktaking, and if you turned out his various storerooms you would find he had sufficient articles to set up a combined ironmongery, ship chandlery, and stationery emporium.

Occasionally he also is bothered with conundrums. For instance, the naval store officer at one of the dockyard ports has a cheerful habit of forwarding a communication to the effect that "brushes, paint, three in number, and broomsticks, bundle of, one, demanded" on such and such a date "are in No. 8 store awaiting removal. Kindly send for them as soon as possible, or if ship has sailed kindly say where these articles should be sent." The ship always has sailed, and by the time the letter is received is usually hundreds of miles away in Scotland, Ireland, or Timbuctoo. Moreover, as the censorship regulations strictly forbid the ship's location to be mentioned, the chief curses.

His dilemma rather reminds us of the young and giddy naval officer who, after a riotous night in London forgot whether he had been appointed to H.M.S. Chatham at Dublin or H.M.S. Dublin at Chatham!

Then we have the first lieutenant, the executive officer of the ship and the skipper's right-hand man. He is the go-between betwixt officers and men, is responsible for the ship's interior economy, cleanliness, and organisation, and has to be pretty shrewd and levelheaded. Energetic as well, for though a destroyer is a small vessel and carries under a hundred men all told, there is always something going on. In addition to his other duties, too, he takes turns in keeping watch at sea with the sub-lieutenant and gunner.

Next the sub-lieutenant. He is the veteran of our little party so far as this war is concerned, for before he came to us he was in a battleship in the Dardanelles. He is now the custodian of the charts, and has to keep them up to date, no easy matter in these strenuous times of Hun minefields. He also runs the ship's football team, which goes ashore and disports itself in green jerseys whenever it gets the opportunity. This, in itself, entails some work and an infinite amount of tact, particularly as fully half the ship's company wish to play.

Next the gunner (T), responsible for the torpedo armament, electrical fittings, and the actual mechanism and mountings of the guns. He is a very busy man, for his torpedoes, like children, always seem to have something the matter with their insides.

Then comes the surgeon probationer. He is not a fully qualified medical man, but a student from one of the large London hospitals temporarily enrolled in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. He gives hygiene lectures to the ship's company, attends to their cuts, contusions, and minor ailments, and packs them off to hospital or to the mother ship if necessary. After an action he would be more useful still.

Lastly the "Snotty" of the Royal Naval Reserve, who does odd jobs of all kinds and generally assists the first lieutenant and the sub.

"Cuthbert," our dog, is a Sealyham terrier. He lives either in the wardroom or the skipper's cabin. He has bad dreams sometimes, and makes strange noises in his sleep, but is the only member of our community who is really cheerful in bad weather, and is always ready for his food.

"Bo," or "Hobo," to give him his full name—somebody was reading Jack London's "The Road" when he came aboard as a tiny kitten—is a black-and-white tom-cat of plebeian origin. He is an honorary member of our mess and

occasionally pays us visits at meal-times, and after nourishment sometimes condescends to occupy the armchair in front of the stove. He is very friendly with Cuthbert.

The first steward we had was an ex-valet. He suffered from a swollen head and what he was pleased to call a "college education." He may have been an excellent valet, but was no earthly good as the steward of a destroyer, and soon departed. His sins would fill a book. He used our expensive damask table napkins as dish cloths, involving us in endless complications with the Victualling Yard authorities, who objected to their being used for such a purpose. He produced cold ham, biscuits, and pickles for breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner. Excellent in their way, no doubt, but rather monotonous in the depths of winter. On one occasion he skinned a pheasant to save himself the trouble of plucking it—we will draw a veil over what happened.

The next caterer we had was an able seaman who re-entered the Navy as a volunteer for the war. He, during his time out of the Service, had been a sort of general factotum to some dark-skinned South American potentate. He is a real treasure—the A. B. I mean, not necessarily the potentate. He feeds us liberally and well, though it is true that he speedily discovered the virtues of tinned salmon. In fact we don't know what he would do without it, and the ubiquitous pig. Sometimes we have tinned salmon fish cakes and bacon for breakfast, tinned salmon kedgeree, cold ham, and pig brawn for lunch, and roast pork as a joint for dinner. By rights we should have grown cloven hooves and salmon scales, but we always have a pleasant feeling of repletion after meals and have no cause for real complaint.

Our amusements are simple. We talk a great deal of "shop" and argue a lot, read a great deal—some of us get through two "seven-pennies" a day—listen to the gramophone, write letters, play with the doctor's Meccano set, and try to persuade Cuthbert to strafe the cat.

Our arguments are of the usual naval variety. Positive assertion, followed by flat contradiction and personal abuse, terminating in a babel in which everybody shouts and no one listens.

Sometimes, before breakfast, we have our early morning "hates," and are fractious and peevish. We long to strafe someone or something, and if, like the soldiers in the trenches, we had the Huns always with us, we might vent our

spleen on them. But we can't, worse luck!

But please do not imagine that we are unhappy, because we aren't. Our mouldiness in the mornings is merely temporary. If we could but catch a Hun before breakfast!

BLOODLESS SURGERY

The climb had been a stiff one. The day was very hot, and, rather purple about the face and breathing heavily, the sailor relapsed on the springy, scented turf close to the cliff's edge and gazed pensively at the vista of shimmering sea spread out before him.

He was a massive, rotund, bull-necked individual, with a face the colour of a ripe tomato, and wore on the sleeves of his jumper two red good conduct badges and the single gun and star of an able seaman, seaman gunner, of His Majesty's Navy. His name was Smith, I discovered, and he was home on seven days' leave. I had met him halfway up the hill ten minutes before, toiling laboriously to the summit like an asthmatic cart-horse, and with his crimson face shining and beady with perspiration. A mutual glance and a casual remark about the excessive heat had led to conversation.

He now sat on the turf mopping his heated countenance with a mottled blue and white handkerchief; but a few minutes later, having recovered himself sufficiently to smoke, produced a pipe, tobacco box, and matches from the interior of his cap.

"You 'aint got a fill o' 'bacca abart you, I suppose, sir?" he queried, exploring the inner recesses of his brass tobacco box with a horny forefinger.

"I'm afraid it's rather weaker stuff than you're used to," I remarked deprecatingly, handing my pouch across.

"Yus," he agreed, examining its contents and proceeding to fill his pipe. "It do look a bit like 'ay, don't it? 'Owever, seein' as 'ow I can't git no more I'm werry much obliged, sir, I'm sure."

"It's expensive hay," I said weakly, as he handed my property back and lit his pipe. "It costs well over ten shillings a pound."

The ungrateful old sinner puffed out a cloud of smoke. "'Arf a Bradbury[1]!" he grunted unsympathetically. "You're jokin', sir."

I shook my head.

"But we pays a bob a pound fur 'bacca on board o' the ship," he expostulated. "It's something like 'bacca; grips you by the neck, like."

Evidently the delicate flavour of my best John Cotton did not sufficiently tickle his brazen palate.

For a moment or two there was silence between us as we watched the gulls screaming and wheeling over some object in the water far beneath us.

"Well," I asked, merely to start a conversation, "how d'you like the Navy?"

"Suits me all right, sir," he said, "seein' as 'ow I've bin in it a matter o' fifteen year. But between you an' me, sir," he hastened to add, "it ain't like wot it wus when I fust jined. It's full o' noo-fangled notions an' sichlike."

"What d'you mean?" I asked in some amazement.

"Carn't say no more, sir. Afore we wus sent on leaf we wus all cautioned special not to git talkin' abart the Service wi' civvies."

I suppose I did look rather unlike a member of His Majesty's land forces, for I was wearing plain clothes and had only come out of hospital four days before, after being wounded for the second time on the western front. (I am speaking of the fighting line in France, not anatomically.) I hastened to explain who I was.

"Sorry I spoke, sir," he apologised. "I thought you wus one o' these 'ere la-de-dah blokes out fur an arrin'. Wot did you say your corpse wus?"

"Corpse! What corpse?"

"Corpse, sir. Rig'mint."

"Oh, I see. I'm only a doctor, a Lieutenant in the R.A.M.C. I'm on sick leave, and crawled up here to-day to get some fresh air and to ... er, meet someone I know."

I looked at my wrist watch and glanced over my shoulder.

"Young lady, sir?" he queried in a husky, confidential whisper.

I nodded.

"I'm on the same lay meself," he told me, with a throaty sigh and a lovelorn look in his blue eyes. "Expectin' 'er any minit now, seein' as 'ow it's 'er arternoon art. 'Er name's Hamelia, an' I don't come up 'ere to look at the perishin' sea, not 'arf I don't. I gits fair sick o' lookin' at it on board o' the ship."

I was not in the mood for exchanging confidences as to my prospective matrimonial affairs, and my silence must have said as much.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir; but seein' as 'ow you're a doctor, I wonder if you 'appens to know our bloke in the *Jackass*?"

"Who, your doctor?"

"Yessir. Tall orficer 'e is, close on six foot 'igh, wi' black 'air, wot jined the Navy special fur the war. Name o' Brown."

"I'm afraid I don't know him," I said, puzzling my brains to fit any medical man of my acquaintance to his very loose description.

"'E's a fair corker, sir," my companion grinned.

"In what way?"

"The way 'e gits 'is leg pulled, sir."

I scented a story, and as there was still no flutter of a white skirt down the slope to our right, I desired him to continue.

"Well, sir," he started, "it wus like this 'ere. The *Jackass* is one o' these 'ere light cruisers, and one mornin' at 'arf parst nine, arter the fust lootenant,—Number One, as we calls 'im,—arter 'e 'ad finished tellin' off the 'ands for their work arter divisions, the doctor 'appened to be standin' close alongside 'im, Number One beckons to the chief buffer..."

"I beg your pardon," I put in, rather mystified. "I'm afraid I don't know very much about the Navy. What's a chief buffer?"

"Chief Bos'un's Mate, wot looks arter the upper deck, sir. Name o' Scroggins. Well, sir, Number One sez to 'im, 'Scroggins,' 'e sez. 'You knows them buoys we was usin' yesterday?'—'Yessir,' I 'ears the chief buffer say. 'You means them wot we 'ad fur that there boat racin' yesterday?'—'Yes,' sez Jimmy the One.[2] 'I wants 'em all bled before seven bells this mornin'.'—'Aye, aye, sir,' sez Scroggins, and goes off to see abart it."

"Bleed the boys!" I murmured in surprise. "Do you mean to tell me they still have these archaic methods in the Navy?"

"Course they does, sir," answered the A. B. "They won't float else."

"What, in case the ship is torpedoed or sunk by a mine?" I asked innocently, very perplexed. "I'm a medical man myself; but I never knew that bleeding people made them more buoyant!"

"If you arks me these 'ere questions, sir, I carn't spin no yarn," the sailor interrupted with a twinkle in his eye. "Well, sir, the fust lootenant tells the chief buffer to 'ave the buoys bled, but it so 'appens that the doctor 'eard wot 'e said, so up 'e comes.—'Did I 'ear you tellin' the Chief Bos'un's Mate to 'ave the boys bled?' he arks.—'You did indeed, Sawbones,' Number One tells 'im.—'But surely that's my bizness?' sez the doctor.—'Your bizness!' sez Number One, frownin' like. "Ow in 'ell d'you make that art?'—"Cos I'm the medical orficer o' this 'ere ship.'—'Ah,' sez Number One, slow like and grinnin' all over 'is face and tappin' 'is nose. 'You means, doc., that I've no right to order the boys to be bled, wot?'—'That's just 'xactly wot I does mean,' sez the doctor, gittin' a bit rattled like."

"I quite agree with him," I put in. "The First Lieutenant had no business at all to order the boys to be bled. Besides, bleeding is hopelessly..."

"Is it me wot's spinnin' this 'ere yarn or is it you, sir?" interrupted the narrator. "'Cos if it's me, I loses the thread o' wot I'm sayin' if you gits arskin' questions."

"I'm sorry," I sighed. "Please go on."

"Well, sir, Number One and the doctor 'as a reg'lar hargument and bargain' match

on the quarterdeck, though I see'd Number One was larfin' to 'isself the 'ole time. The doctor sez to 'im as 'ow they'd best refer the matter to the skipper; but the fust lootenant sez they can't do that 'cos the skipper's attendin' a court-martial and won't be back till the arternoon. Then the doc. wants to know if Number One'll give 'im an order in writin' to bleed the boys; but Number One larfs and sez 'e won't be such a fool, and sez that in 'is opinion the buoys should be bled. The doctor then sez the boys don't want bleedin', and arsk Number One if 'e's prepared to haccept 'is advice as a medical orficer. The fust lootenant sez of course 'e will, and sez as 'ow 'e'll arrange to 'ave all the buoys mustered in the sick bay at six bells, and that they needn't be bled if the doctor sez they don't want it."

"It wus all I could do to stop meself larfin', 'specially when Number One sings art fur the chief buffer. 'Scroggins,' 'e sez, "ave all o' them there buoys wot I wus talkin' abart in the sick bay by eleven o'clock punctual.'—Scroggins seems a bit startled. 'In the sick bay, sir?' 'e arsk.—'Yus,' sez Number One, grinnin' to 'isself and winkin' at the chief buffer. 'In the sick bay by six bells sharp.'—'Werry good, sir,' sez Scroggins, tumblin' to wot wus up, 'cos 'e saw the doctor standin' there. I 'eard all o' wot 'appened, and I tells all my pals. The chief buffer does the same, and so does Number One, so at six bells, when the sick bay stooard 'ad bin sent by Jimmy the One to tell the doctor as 'ow the buoys wus ready for bleedin', almost all the orficers and abart 'arf the ship's company 'ad mustered artside the sick bay under the fo'c'sle to see wot 'appened.

"Presently the doctor comes along, sees the crowd, but goes inside without sayin' nothin'. But soon we 'ears 'im lettin' go at the sick bay stooard inside. 'Wot the devil's the meanin' o' this?' 'e wants to know.—'Fust lootenant's orders, sir,' sez the stooard.—'Fust lootenant be damned,' the doctor sings art. 'I'll report 'im to the captain. S'welp me, I will!—And wi' that 'e comes artside werry rattled and walks aft without sayin' a word to no one. I feels a bit sorry for 'im, sir," the story teller went on, "'cos Number One 'ad bin pullin' 'is leg agen."

"Pulling his leg?" I echoed.

"Yes, sir," said the seaman, bursting with merriment. "'Cos the sick bay, and it weren't none too large, was all but filled up wi' six 'efty great casks, wi' flagstuffs and sinkers complete. They wus the buoys Number One 'ad bin talkin' abart all along."

I could not help laughing.

"I see," I said. "The First Lieutenant meant BUOYS and the doctor the ship's BOYS, what?"

He nodded.

"But tell me," I asked. "What about the bleeding?"

"Bleedin', sir! Why, d'you mean to tell me you don't know wot bleedin' a buoy is?"

"I'm afraid my nautical knowledge is very limited," I apologised.

"It's surprisin' wot some shoregoin' blokes don't know abart th' Navy, sir," said the burly one with some contempt, chuckling away to himself. "But if you reely wants to know, bleedin' a buoy means borin' a small 'ole in 'im to let the water art, 'cos they all leaks a bit arter they've bin in the sea. But I must say good artnoon, sir," he added hurriedly, glancing over his shoulder and rising to his feet. "'Ere's my gal comin', and there's another abart 'arf a cable astern of 'er wot I expec's is yourn. Good artnoon, sir, and don't git stoppin' no more o' them there bullets." He touched his forelock.

"But tell me?" I said. "Did the first lieutenant and doctor make it up all right?"

"Bet your life they did, sir," he said with a laugh, moving off. "Them haffairs wus almost o' daily hoccurrence."

"Good luck to you," I called out after him, "and thank you for a most instructive twenty minutes!"

He looked back over his shoulder; his bright red face broadened into a huge smile, and he deliberately winked twice.

I had to hurry away, for already the sailor nearly had his arm round his housemaid's waist, while my Anne, at least half an hour late, was panting wearily towards where I stood.

"Who is your sailor friend?" was her first question.

"Ananias the Second," I answered, for at the back of my mind I had a vague suspicion that the first lieutenant of the *Jackass* was not the only member of her ship's company who delighted in pulling people's legs.

[1] A "Bradbury" is one of the new £1 notes. So called from the signature at the bottom.

[2] "Jimmy the One," a lower-deck nickname for the First Lieutenant.

"BUNTING"

He was a short, thick-set, ruddy-faced, shrewd-eyed little person, who wore on the left sleeve of his blue jumper two good-conduct badges and the single anchor denoting his "Leading" rate, and on his right the crossed flags denoting his calling, together with a star above and below which signified that he was something of an expert at his job. In short, he was a Leading Signaller of His Majesty's Navy. His name I need not mention. To his friends he sometimes answered to "Nutty," but more often to "Buntin'."

It was always a mystery to me why he had not come to wear the crossed anchors and crown of a Yeoman of Signals, for his qualifications certainly seemed to fit him for promotion to petty-officer's rank, while his habits and character in the last ship in which I knew him were all that could be desired.

It was on board a destroyer that I came to know him really well, and here his work was onerous and responsible. He had his mate, a callow youth who was usually sea-sick in bad weather, and at sea they took 4 hours' turn and turn about on the bridge, each keeping 12 hours' watch out of the twenty-four. But the elder man always seemed to be within sight and hearing, even in his watch below; and the moment anything unusual happened, the moment flags started flapping in the breeze, semaphores started to talk, the younger man became rattled and helpless, and things generally started to go wrong, all at the same moment, "Nutty" came clambering up the ladder to the assistance of his bewildered colleague.

"Call yerself a signaller!" he would growl ferociously. "Give us the glass, an' look sharp an' 'oist the answerin' pendant. You ain't fit to be trusted up 'ere!"

It is to be feared that the youthful one sometimes found his life a misery and a burden, for his mentor was a strict disciplinarian and did not hesitate to bully and goad him into a state of proper activity. But the youngster needed it badly.

"Nutty" seemed to be blessed with the eyes of a lynx, the dexterity of a conjurer,

and the tentacles of a decapod. He invariably saw a floating mine, a buoy, or a lightship long before the man whose proper work it was to see it, and at sea, with a telescope to his eye, I often saw him apparently taking in two signals from opposite points of the compass at one and the same moment, with the ship rolling heavily and sheets of spray flying over the bridge.

Somewhere at Portsmouth he had a wife and two children, whom he saw, if he was lucky, for perhaps seven days every six months. Of his domestic affairs I knew little; but, judging from his letters, which were frequent and voluminous and had to pass through the hands of the ship's censor, he was devoted to his wife and family. I hope they loved him.

Why he was not a Yeoman of Signals I never discovered. Perhaps he had a lurid past. But conjecture is useless. Promotion now would come too late to be of any use to him.

* * * * *

"Butter, Monkey, Nuts," he rattled off as a light cruiser two miles away suddenly wreathed herself in flags. "Zebra, Charlie, Fanny—Ethel, Donkey, Tommy—Ginger, Percy, Lizzie—— Got that, Bill?"

An Able Seaman, busy with a pencil and a signal pad, signified that he had.

"'Arf a mo', though," resumed the expert, re-levelling his telescope. "I ain't quite certain about that first 'oist. Why on earth they can't 'oist the things clear I dunno!" he grumbled bitterly, for some of the distant flags, as is often the case when the wind is light and uncertain, had coyly wrapped themselves round the halliards and refused to be seen.

Someone on the bridge of the distant cruiser might almost have heard his remark, for as he spoke the halliards began agitatedly to jerk up and down to allow the bunting to flutter clear.

"Ah!" he murmured. "Now we'll get 'em.... Lord!" in a piercing undertone as some misguided humorist in the cruiser's stokehold inconsiderately allowed a puff of black smoke to issue forth from the foremost funnel, completely to obliterate the strings of flags.

The Leading Signalman, not being a thought reader as well as a conjurer, put

down his telescope with a grunt until the pall cleared away. "In the first 'oist," he said when the atmosphere had cleared, "in the first 'oist, 'stead o' Fanny put 'Arry.' 'H' for 'Arry."

The A.B. sucked his pencil and acquiesced, while his friend, darting to the after side of the small bridge, hoisted the white and red "Answering Pendant" to show that the signal had been seen and read. He then handed the pad across, on which, in large sprawling capital letters, he had laboriously traced "BMN—ZCF—EDT—GPL."

The "Butter, Monkey, Nuts" business, incomprehensible and startling as it might have been to any outsider, merely emphasised the difference in sound between various letters. B, C, D, E, P, and T; J and K; M and N, among others, are very much alike when pronounced by themselves; but "butter" could not well be mistaken for "Charlie," neither could "monkey" be confounded with "nuts."

The Leading Signaller looked out the meaning of the different groups of letters in the book provided for the purpose and showed the result to his commanding officer. Its purport was comparatively unimportant, something about oil-fuel on arrival in harbour.

* * * * *

But finding out the meaning of those flag signals which he did not know by heart—and he knew most of them—was only a tithe of his duty. He was equally expert at taking in a message spelt out by the whirling arms of a semaphore, arms which waved so rapidly, and whose giddy gyrations were so often well-nigh invisible against a bad background, that his performance savoured of the miraculous. At night, too, he was just as good, for then the frenzied winking of a dim light would convey its meaning just the same. It was a point of honour with him always to get a signal correctly the first time it was made. I never saw him ask for a repetition.

Only twice did I know him to laugh on the bridge, and the first time that occurred was when, through a series of circumstances which need not be entered into here, we nearly came into contact with the next ahead. Such things do happen.

Then it was that the next ahead—he was several years senior to us and a humorist—turned in his wrath and quoted the Bible. "Your attention," his

semaphore said, "is drawn to the Gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 16, verse 23."

We sent for the Bible, looked up the reference, and read: "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

The quotation was apt and the Leading Signalman's eyes twinkled. Then I noticed his mouth expanding into a grin, and presently he laughed, a short, explosive sort of laugh rather like the bark of a dog.

But we had our revenge a week later, when our next ahead—he was our friend as well as our senior—nearly collided with a buoy at the entrance to a certain harbour.

"What about the Book of Proverbs?" our semaphore asked. "Chapter 22, verse 28."

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set," he must have read. I cannot remember the reply, but the Leading Signalman had laughed once more.

* * * * *

But "Bunting" will never smile again. He went down with his ship on May 31, 1916. The North Sea is his grave and the curling whitecap his tombstone. His epitaph may be written across the sky in a trail of smoke from some passing steamer.

THE LOST SHEEP

The glass had gone down with a thump during the afternoon, and all through the night the destroyer had been steaming home against a rapidly rising gale.

Of how she came to be alone and parted from her flotilla the less said the better. It was due to a variety of circumstances, among them being a blinding rain squall after dark the evening before, in which the officer of the watch was unable to see more than twenty yards, and some temporary trouble with an air pump which necessitated stopping to put it right.

The sea, as is usual with the wind from the south-west, had risen fast, and by midnight it was heavy and steep, while the little ship, punching against it, had pitched, rolled, thumped and thudded as only a destroyer can. The motion was dizzy and maddening—a combined pitch and heavy roll which was the very acme of discomfort. Sometimes the bows fell into the heart of an advancing, white-topped hillock of grey water with a sickening downward plunge, and the breaking sea came surging and crashing over the forecastle to dash itself against the chart-house and bridge with a shock which made the whole ship quiver and tremble. Then, with

[Transcriber's note: pages 41 and 42 missing from source book.]

edged volumes with unerring accuracy on to his long-suffering head.

The only person who really did not mind the motion at all was the wireless operator in his little cubby-bole abaft the chart-house. He, with a pair of telephone receivers clipped on over his ears ready to catch stray snatches of conversation from invisible ships and distant shore stations, sat enthroned in a chair bolted to the deck. His den was hermetically sealed to keep out the water. The smell and the heat were indescribable; but he was reading a week-old periodical with every symptom of enjoyment and calmly smoked a foul and very wheezy pipe filled with the strongest and most evil-smelling ship's tobacco. But

"Buzzer," as he was known to his friends, had the constitution of an ox and an interior like the exterior of an armadillo. He could stand anything.

* * * * *

An oil-skinned apparition, dripping with wet, appeared at the chart-house door. "The orficer of the watch says it's daylight, sir," it reported. "There's nothin' in sight, but 'e thinks as 'ow the sea's goin' down a bit."

The skipper, who had actually been asleep for forty consecutive minutes, sat up with a grunt, rubbed his eyes, and yawned. Then, in the dull grey light of the dawn, he surveyed the unsavoury mixture on the floor with his nose wrinkled and an expression of intense disgust on his face. But the sight of the broken cup reminded him of something, and reaching his hand underneath the cushion he extracted a vacuum flask, applied it to his lips, and swallowed what remained of the cocoa inside it. He was hungry, poor wight, for his dinner the night before had consisted of two corned-beef sandwiches and a biscuit. Next, with a little sigh of satisfaction, he produced a pipe, tobacco, and matches from an inner pocket and lit up, examined the chart with the ship's track marked upon it, and glanced at the aneroid on the bulkhead and noticed it was rising slowly.

Two minutes later, with his pipe bowl carefully inverted, he clambered up the iron ladder to the bridge.

"Hail, smiling morn!" he remarked sarcastically, ducking his head as a sheet of spray came driving over the forecastle and across the bridge. "Well, 'Sub,' how goes it?"

"Pretty rotten, sir," answered the sub-lieutenant, whose watch it was. "The wind shows no signs of going down, but I think the sea's a little less than it was. We're not bumping quite so badly as we were."

* * * * *

The motion certainly was less violent, and after looking for a moment at the angry sea and the grey, cloud-wrapped sky streaked with its wisps of flying white scud, the skipper nodded slowly. "You're right," he said. "It has gone down a bit. We're beginning to feel the lee of the land. Work her up gradually to twelve knots and see how she takes it."

The "Sub" did so, and though the increase in speed brought heavier spray and more of it, the movement of the ship no longer synchronised with the period of the waves, and she became steadier.

Before long the sea had gone down even more and the speed was increased to twenty knots. Then, on the grey horizon ahead, appeared the smoke of many steamers, and a quarter of an hour later the destroyer was threading her way through a sea-lane so densely populated with shipping that it reminded one of dodging the traffic in Piccadilly.

The next thing which hove in sight was a red-painted lightship, and half an hour later the destroyer, her funnels white with dried salt, was steaming into the harbour where the remainder of the flotilla were lying. They, having escaped the really bad weather, had arrived the evening before, and one of them made a facetious signal to this effect as the destroyer secured to the tank steamer to replenish her supply of oil-fuel.

The lost sheep had returned to its fold.

A NAVAL MENAGERIE

Denis was a pig, a very special sort of pig, a pig of German origin, and perhaps the only animal of his species in whose favour a special dispensation was made by the Board of Agriculture. He originally belonged to the German light cruiser *Dresden*, and, after the destruction of that vessel at Juan Fernandez by the *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Orama*, was seen swimming about in the water close to the *Glasgow*. A blue-jacket promptly jumped overboard and rescued him from a watery grave, and Denis, instead of being converted into pork or sausages, became a prisoner of war and a pet. He did not seem the least dismayed by his change of nationality, and, being an adaptable creature of robust constitution, thrived on a miscellaneous and indiscriminate diet of ships' provisions, eked out by tobacco, cigarette ends, and coal. Moreover, within a month, so history relates, he was quite accustomed to sleeping in a hammock, where he snored exactly like a human being.

But the regulations as to the importation of animals into Great Britain are necessarily stringent, and on the *Glasgow's* arrival in home waters there were complications as to the disposal of Denis. He could not be landed in the ordinary way, but eventually, after some correspondence, the Board of Agriculture solved the momentous question by giving special permission for him to be put ashore at Whale Island, the naval gunnery school in Portsmouth harbour. There, so far as I know, he still remains as a naturalised Briton.

But a pig is by no means the strangest animal which has made its home on board a man-of-war. In a small gunboat in China some years ago the ship's company acquired a so-called tame alligator. Algernon, as they christened him, came on board as a youngster a few weeks old and about four feet long, and soon developed a habit of appearing when the decks were being scrubbed in the mornings, when he revelled in having the hose played upon him and in having his scaly back well scrubbed with a hard broom. He devoured a tame rabbit and two cats, but the crux came when he taught himself a trick of waiting until some

unsuspecting person had his back turned, of making a sudden rush at his victim and capsizing him with a well-placed whisk of his horny tail, and then running in with a good-humoured smile and a ferocious snapping and gnashing of his yellow teeth. It was all very funny, but so many innocent persons were wrought almost to the verge of nervous prostration by Algernon's ideas of sport, that at last the fiat went forth that he must die. He was shot at dawn, and, less lucky than Denis, reached England in a stuffed and rather moth-eaten condition.

Goats are comparatively common as pets in the Navy, but the goat of all the goats was a white creature rejoicing in the unromantic name of William who lived on board a cruiser. His staple articles of food seemed to consist of tobacco, cigarettes, stray rope-yarns, bristles of brooms, and odds and ends of old canvas, while he was not averse to licking the galvanised compound off the newly painted quarter-deck stanchions whenever an opportunity of doing so presented itself. He was a healthy goat of voracious appetite. His gastric juices would have dissolved a marline-spike, and he even made short work of the greater portion of a pair of ammunition boots belonging to the Sergeant-Major of Royal Marines, and devoured with every symptom of relish a sheaf of official and highly important documents lying on the writing-table in the navigator's cabin.

William, in spite of his varied diet, always looked well-nourished and in the rudest of health, and on Sundays was wont to appear at divisions with his hair and beard parted in the middle, wearing an elaborate brass collar, and with gilded horns and hooves. He had charming manners, and even condescended to drink an occasional glass of sherry in the wardroom on guest nights. Of his ultimate fate I have no knowledge, but, with the very miscellaneous contents of his interior, he would have provided a most interesting subject for a *post-mortem* examination.

Several ships have had bears as pets, but one in particular, which was the mascot of a cruiser on the Mediterranean station, was a bear with a pronounced sense of humour. On one occasion it so happened that the vessel to which he belonged was lying alongside the mole at Gibraltar, while another cruiser, fresh from England, was made fast just astern of her. It was Sunday afternoon, and all hands and the cook, except those on duty, followed the usual custom of the Service by selecting sunny spots on deck and then composing themselves to peaceful slumber. At about 2.30 p.m. Master Bruin, freeing himself from his chain, landed, ambled along the jetty, and approached the newly arrived vessel on a tour of investigation. The sentry, not liking the look of the animal, found

something important to do at the other end of his beat, while the bear proceeding on board unmolested, frightened nearly out of his wits a burly petty officer doing duty as quartermaster, and then followed up his moral victory by chasing him round and round the upper deck. The petty officer, a well covered man, nearly dropped from heat and exhaustion, but just managed to barricade himself in the galley before being overtaken and fondly hugged. The sleepers, meanwhile, hearing unusual sounds of revelry, woke up to see a wild-looking animal seeking another victim, and thinking that Bostock's menagerie had broken loose, rose from their couches and stampeded for the mess-deck.

The bear then waddled aft in search of further recreation, and seeing the curtained doorway of one of the upper deck cabins, promptly elbowed his way in. Inside was an officer fast asleep on the bunk, who, hearing the sound of heavy breathing, opened his eyes to see the shaggy bulk of his huge visitor interposed between him and the doorway. For a moment he was non-plussed, and, keeping quite still, endeavoured to mesmerise the animal by looking him full in the eyes. But the ferocious look on the bear's face, a pair of fierce twinkling eyes, an open mouth with its rows of sharp teeth, and a long red tongue dripping with saliva, warned him that mere mesmerism would be useless if he were to avoid a tussle. There was only one other exit besides the door, so without further ado he sprang for ... the open scuttle. He wormed his way successfully through the small orifice with some loss of dignity and greatly to the detriment of his Sunday trousers, flopped gracefully into the water with a splash, and, swimming to the gangway, clambered back on board again. Then, rushing to his cabin, he slammed the door and imprisoned his unwelcome visitor inside.

Next, seeking out the sentry, he desired him to eject the intruder. But the marine, a wise man, firmly but politely intimated that he had joined his corps to fight the King's enemies, not bears of unknown origin and ferocious aspect, and added that the only conditions on which he would undertake the job was with the assistance of his rifle, a fixed bayonet, and some ball ammunition. The bear, meanwhile, locked in the cabin, was thoroughly enjoying himself in clawing and tearing to ribbons everything within reach, and by the time his breathless keeper from the other ship arrived upon the scene to conduct his charge home in disgrace, the cabin was in a state of utter desolation. A bull in a china shop is nothing to an unwieldy brute of a bear in a small apartment measuring ten feet by eight. All's well that ends well, but the officer's best trousers were completely ruined, and he himself never heard the end of his Sabbath afternoon adventure.

The bear received six strokes with a cane for his share in the proceedings.

The last escapade of his that I heard of was when he hugged and removed most of the clothes from a low class Spanish workman from the dockyard at Gibraltar. The man had baited him, eventually releasing the terrified, half-naked wretch, and chasing him at full speed for nearly half a mile. A crowd of excited, laughing blue-jackets went in pursuit of the bear, but the faster they ran, the faster went the animal and his quarry. Bruin enjoyed it hugely. Not so the Spanish workman.

Dogs and cats are as common in the Navy as they are elsewhere, and it is surprising how soon they become accustomed to naval routine. The cats never go ashore unless their ship happens to be lying alongside a dockyard wall, when they usually desert *en bloc* and attach themselves to some other ship, a fresh detachment coming on board in their stead. The dogs are more faithful, and their wisdom becomes positively uncanny, for always at the routine times for boats going ashore they will be found waiting ready at the top of the gangway.

"Ginger" was an Irish terrier of plebeian origin belonging to a battleship. He invariably landed in the postman's boat at 6.45 a.m., and once ashore went off on his own business. Nobody ever took the trouble to discover what he did, but punctually at eight o'clock he used to reappear at the landing place and return to the ship in the boat which took off the married officers. On one occasion, however, he was badly sold, for though the postman landed at the usual time, the ship sailed at 7.30 to carry out target practice. Half an hour later, therefore, there was no boat for Ginger, and his ship was a mere speck on the horizon; but nothing daunted, the wise hound proceeded to the Sailors' Home and spent the day there. He was discovered the same afternoon when the ship returned into harbour, and his admirers always averred that his temporary absence was the result of a carefully thought out plan to avoid the sounds of gunfire, which he detested.

There must be many officers and men in the Navy who remember "North Corner Bob," another red-haired Irish terrier, who used to frequent the landing place at North Corner in Portsmouth dockyard. He was not a large dog, as terriers go, but was a ferocious creature of wild and bedraggled appearance, who seemed to regard North Corner as his own especial domain. He fought every other animal who dared to venture near the place, and many a naval dog bore the marks of Bob's teeth to his dying day.

He even boarded strange ships lying alongside and carried on his campaign of frightfulness there. In fact he terrorised all the dogs in Portsmouth dockyard, including two spaniels belonging to the Admiral Superintendent. But an officer in a certain ship whose wire-haired terrier Cuthbert had been badly beaten by Bob some days before, conceived a brilliant idea for having his revenge. Early one morning, at Bob's usual time for passing by the ship on his way to North Corner, Cuthbert, wearing a brand new muzzle, was taking his morning constitutional on deck. Bob, punctual to the minute, came trotting by in his usual don't-care-a-damn-for-anyone manner, but the sight of Cuthbert putting on an equal amount of side on board his own ship was too much for him, and rushing up the brow connecting the ship with the shore he came on board licking his lips in joyful anticipation and the lust of battle shining in his eye.

Cuthbert, a naturally good-natured dog, hurried forward to meet him, but Bob, spurning his friendly advances, circled round on tip-toe, with his teeth bared and hair bristling. Cuthbert, seeing that a fight was inevitable, adopted similar tactics, and for some moments the two animals padded softly round and round nosing each other and preparing to spring in to the attack. Then, quite suddenly and for no apparent reason, there came a shrill yelp of pain from Bob, and before anyone realised what had happened his tail went down, he rushed madly over the gangway, and shot along the jetty like a flash of greased lightning.

"What the devil's the matter with him?" queried the officer of the watch, staring in amazement after the rapidly disappearing figure of the well-known fighter.

"Matter!" spluttered Cuthbert's owner, weak with laughter. "Lord! I've never seen anything like it! Did you see the way he skipped?"

"Did I not!" answered the O.O.W., laughing himself. "But what on earth made him streak off like that?"

"Come here, Cuthbert," said his master.

The dog came forward, wagging his tail, and had his muzzle removed.

"D'you see that?" asked his owner, pointing to the end of it. 'That' was a long and very sharp-pointed pin firmly soldered to the business end of Cuthbert's headgear.

North Corner Bob never visited that particular ship again.

THE "MUCKLE FLUGGA" HUSSARS

She was a member of that gallant and distinguished corps after which this article is named. You will not find her regiment mentioned in any British Army List, nor, so far as I am aware, and for all the foreign sound of it, in the Army List of His Imperial Majesty the Czar of All the Russias. The name does not appear in any Army List at all, for the Hussars to which she belonged are a sea regiment, pure and simple.

Her uniform of dull grey, with no facings or trimmings of any sort or description, was strictly in keeping with her surroundings, for her favourite habitat was anywhere in the wild waste of waters lying between Greenland, the North Cape, the Naze, and the Orkneys.

Some people with a libellous sense of humour referred to her as a member of "Harry Tate's Own," while others, most unkindly, said she belonged to the "Ragtime Navy." But she did not seem to mind. She knew in her heart of hearts that her work was of paramount importance, and, complacent in the knowledge, smiled sweetly as a well-conducted lady should when jibes and insults are hurled at her long-suffering head.

She had a great deal to put up with in one way and another. Thanks to her enormous fuel capacity she spent a long time at sea and had very brief spells in harbour. Her work, though important, was always dull and monotonous, while in bad weather it was even worse. She had no prospect of sharing in the excitement of a big sea battle like her more warlike sisters, though, with them, she ran the chance of encountering hostile submarines and of having an altercation with an armed raider. But, taking it all round, she had comparatively little to hope for in the way of honour and glory; she merely had to be at sea for many weeks at a time to prevent money-grabbing neutrals from reaping a rich harvest by supplying munitions of war and articles of contraband to an impoverished Hun who could not be trusted to put those commodities to any gentlemanly purpose.

Muckle Flugga, I believe, is a remote headland in the Shetlands, and she, a member of the corps called after it, flew the White Ensign of the British Navy and was an armed merchant cruiser.

* * * * *

Before the war she was a crack passenger liner. On her upper deck, and expressly designed for the use of potentates and plutocrats, she had regular suites of apartments. Gorgeous suites they were, furnished like the rooms in a mansion ashore. The sleeping cabins had white enamelled panels and comfortable brass bedsteads. The day cabins or sitting-rooms, panelled in bird's-eye maple, oak, walnut, or mahogany, had large square windows, regular fireplaces, and were fresh with flowered chintzes, while the tiled bathrooms were fitted with all the different appliances for hot baths, tepid baths, cold baths, needle baths, shower baths, and douches. One simply turned a handle and the water came. A telephone in each sitting-room communicated with a central exchange somewhere deep down in the bowels of the ship, and one could summon a barber to trim one's hair, a manicure expert to attend to one's hands, a tobacconist with samples of cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco, or the presiding genius of a haberdashery establishment with quite the latest things in shirts, collars, socks, and neckties. In fact, living in one of the expensive suites was exactly like being in a large and luxurious hotel, except that it was vastly more comfortable.

Lower down in the ship were the single, double, and treble-berthed cabins for the first and second-class passengers. They, though small, were very comfortable, and were fitted with telephones through which one could summon a stewardess with a basin or a steward with a whisky and soda. Down below, too, were the saloons, huge apartments with carved panels, ornamental pillars, glass-pictured domes, coloured frescoes, and dozens of small tables. There was also the Louis XIV. restaurant, if one preferred a simple beefsteak to the more formal dinner, and smoking-rooms, reading-rooms, libraries, drawing-rooms, writing-rooms, not to mention the swimming bath and the children's nursery.

We can imagine the great liner, spick and span in her spotless paint and gleaming brasswork, steaming through a placid summer sea. Her long promenade decks would be plastered with deck-chairs filled with recumbent passengers, some dozing, others smoking and talking. Some energetic enthusiast would be passing from group to group to collect sufficient people to play deck cricket, quoits, or bull-board, while yet another, armed with a notebook and a pencil, would be

endeavouring to inveigle recalcitrant ladies with strict notions as to the sins of gambling into taking tickets for a sweepstake on the next day's mileage.

One would hear the laughter of children as they chased each other round the decks, and the sotto-voce remarks of some old gentleman roused from his afternoon nap by the sudden impact of a podgy infant of four tripping heavily over his outstretched feet.

After dark in some secluded corner one might happen upon a man and a girl. They would be sitting very close together, and behaving... well, as men and maidens sometimes do, to beguile the tedium of voyages at sea.

Everything would be calm and peaceful. Everybody would be happy, even the young gentleman with no prospects travelling second class, who having won the sweepstake on the day's run and suddenly finding himself £20 the richer, celebrated his luck with his friends in the smoking-room.

* * * * *

But then the war came and changed everything.

The Admiralty requisitioned the ship and armed her with guns. They painted her a dull grey all over, and tore down all her polished woodwork to lessen the chances of fire in action, leaving nothing but the bare steel walls. Most of the cabins were stripped of their furniture and fittings, only enough being left intact to provide accommodation for the officers.

The carved woodwork and most of the tables and chairs in the saloons were taken away, and though the painted frescoes and glass domes still remained, they were dusty and neglected.

In one corner of the first-class saloon was the wardroom, a space partitioned off by painted canvas screens to provide messing accommodation for the more senior officers. Opposite to it was the gunroom, a similar enclosure for the juniors.

They manned her with a crew of between three and four hundred Royal Navy Reserve men, with a leavening of Royal Navy ratings and a few Marines. They appointed a Captain R.N. in command and two or three other naval officers, but by far the greater proportion of officers and crew belonged to the Reserve, and

excellent fellows they were.

Certain of the men had served on board in peace-time, and had elected to remain on, but the majority came to her for the first time when she commissioned as a man-of-war. Some were Scots fishermen, men from trawlers and drifters, excellent, hardy creatures used to small craft, bad weather, and boat work. Others, having served their time in the Navy, had taken to some shore employment, and in August 1914 had been recalled to their old Service.

Nearly every imaginable trade was represented. In one of the first-class cabins was the barber's shop, presided over by a man who in pre-war days had worked in a hair-cutting establishment not far from Victoria Station. Next door lived another man who had been a bootmaker, and he, bringing all the appurtenances of his trade to sea with him, carried on a roaring business as a "snob." There was also a haberdashery emporium kept by a seaman who had been employed in some linen-draper's shop in his native town, while a professional tailor in blue-jacket's uniform spent all his spare time in making and repairing the garments of his shipmates. Even the ship's electric laundry was manned by folk who were well acquainted with starching and ironing.

Most of the cooks and stewards had left, but sufficient remained to provide for the needs of the officers and men. The catering was still run by the company to which the vessel belonged, and, as she had roomy kitchens and all manner of labour-saving devices in the way of electric dish-washers and potato-peelers, the messing was even better than that on board a battleship.

Gone were the troops of laughing children and the passengers. A pile of wicked-looking shell and boxes of cartridges for the guns lay ready to hand in the nursery, while the promenade decks resounded to the tramp of men being initiated into the mysteries of the squad and rifle drill and the work at their guns.

* * * * *

They have been at it for two years; two years of strenuous naval routine and discipline which have transformed the passenger liner into no mean man-of-war.

THE "PIRATES"

"It is not possible to prevent the occasional appearance of enemy submarines within the range of our shores, but I can give an assurance that the measures which have been and will be taken are such as to render proceedings of this sort increasingly dangerous to the submarines."—DR. MACNAMARA, *Financial Secretary to the Admiralty*.

They looked an orderly little squadron of six as they steamed jauntily out towards the open sea in single line ahead through the grey-green, tide-ripped waters of the most thickly populated river estuary in the world.

They were prosaic, snub-nosed-looking little craft, short and squat, with high, upstanding bows, prominent wheelhouses, and stumpy mizzen-masts abaft all. They hailed from many ports and still bore the letters and numbers of their peace-time vocation: F.D. for Fleetwood, G.Y. for Grimsby, B.F. for Banff, and P.D. for Peterhead. They were steam herring drifters in the ordinary, common, or garden, piping times of peace; little vessels which went to sea for days on end to pitch, wallow, and roll at the end of a mile or a mile and a half of buoyed drift-net, in the meshes of which unwary herring, in endeavouring to force a way through, presently found themselves caught by the gills.

But now, each one of them flew the tattered, smoke-stained apology for a once White Ensign, and they were men-of-war, very much men-of-war. They had been at the game for nearly twenty-four months, and, through long practice, they elbowed their way in and out of the traffic with all the fussy, devil-may-care assertiveness of His Majesty's destroyers.

Their admiral, a Royal Naval Reserve lieutenant, who, in peaceful 1914, was still the immaculate third officer of a crack Western Ocean passenger liner, looked out of his wheelhouse windows and surveyed the potbellied, lumbering cargo carriers steaming by with all the kindly tolerance of the regular man-of-

war's man. He, though he did not look it, for they had been coaling an hour before and he was still grimy about the face, was the only commissioned officer in the squadron, fleet, flotilla, or whatever you like to call it. All the other craft were commanded by skippers, ex-peacetime-captains of the fishing craft, who were used to the sea and its vicissitudes, and knew the ins and cuts of their vessels far better than they could tell you. The men, for the greater part, were also fishermen enrolled in the Reserve, with here and there an ex-naval rating in the shape of a seaman gunner or signalman.

They may have lacked polish. They knew little about springing smartly to attention and nothing whatsoever about the interior economy of a 6-inch gun. Their attire was sketchy, to say the least of it. Even the admiral wore grey flannel trousers, a once white sweater, and coloured muffler, and it is to be feared that an officer from a battleship might have referred to them collectively as a "something lot of pirates." Pirates they may have been, but at the best of times a strict adherence to the uniform regulations is not a fetish of those serving on board the vessels of the Auxiliary Patrol. They are, it is perfectly true, granted a sum of money by a paternal Government wherewith to purchase their kit, but brass buttons and best serge suits do not blend with life on board a herring drifter at sea in all weathers. Sea-boots, oilskins, jerseys, and any old thing in the way of trousers and headgear are far more fashionable. Indeed, one may occasionally happen upon a skipper wearing an ancient bowler hat when well out in the North Sea and away from the haunts of senior officers who might possibly take exception to his battered tile.

But they all took their job seriously, though, like most sailor folk, light-heartedly. They were inured to the sea and its hardships; many of them were part owners of their own craft, even the man in the red Salvation Army jersey tittivating the six-pounder gun in the last little ship of the line.

Exactly how they "strafed" the immoral and ubiquitous Hun submarine it is inexpedient to say. They had their little guns, of course, but were full of other 'gilguys' evolved for the same laudable purpose during a period of nearly two years of war. Moreover, the men were experts in their use, and that their 'gadgets' often worked to the detriment of Fritz may be deduced from that gentleman's extreme unwillingness to be seen in their vicinity, and a casual inspection of the records of the Auxiliary Patrol probably locked up somewhere in Whitehall. Some day these records may be made public, and then we shall read of happenings which will cause us to hold our breath, and our hair to bristle like a

nail-brush. Who has not heard the story of the unarmed fishing boat which attacked a hostile periscope with nothing more formidable than a coal hammer, or the ex-fisherman who attempted to cloud Fritz's vision with a tar brush?

Striving to encompass the destruction of the wily submarine is by no means a one-sided game. Our small craft generally manage to have a credit balance on their side, but Fritz is no fool, and is not the sort of person to go nosing round an obvious trap, or to walk blindfold into a snare. Sometimes he mounts larger and heavier guns than his antagonists, and may come to the surface out of range of their weapons and bombard them at his leisure. In such cases the hunters may become the hunted, and may perchance be 'strafed' themselves. Then there are always mines, contact with one of which may pulverise an ordinary wooden drifter into mere matchwood.

The work is fraught with risk. It is every bit as dangerous as that of the mine-sweepers, and casualties, both in men and in ships, are simply bound to occur. But little is made of them. A few more names will appear in the Roll of Honour, and in some obscure newspaper paragraph we may read that "on Thursday last the armed patrol vessel ——— was blown up by a mine" or was "sunk by gunfire from a hostile submarine," and that "— members of her crew escaped in their small boat and landed at ———." That is all; no details whatsoever, nothing but the bare statement.

But the game still goes on.

The men who cheerfully undergo these risks in their anxiety to serve their country, were not professional fighters before the war: they are now; but in the palmy days of peace they were fishermen, seamen through and through, who, year in and year out, fair weather or foul, were at sea in their little craft, reaping the ocean's harvest. Their life was ever a hard and a dangerous one, and the hazards and chances of war have made it doubly so.

They have none of the excitement of a fight in the open. Much of their work in protecting the coastwise traffic is deadly in its monotony, and, as we have become used to it, has come to be looked upon as a matter of course.

Their gallant deeds are rarely the subjects of laudatory paragraphs in the newspapers, and the great majority go unrewarded. Even if we do happen to meet a man wearing a little strip of blue and white ribbon on his coat or jumper

and ask him why he was decorated, he merely laughs, wags his head, and says
—— nothing.

It is very unsatisfactory of him.

A MINOR AFFAIR

H.M.S. —————
c/o G.P.O., LONDON.
June 30th, 1916.

MY DEAR DANIEL,

You ask me for a more elaborate account of a certain little affair which took place some time ago. It was merely an episode of a few light cruisers, anything up to a score of destroyers, and some seaplanes; quite a minor and a comparatively unimportant little business which elicited a brief announcement from the Secretary of the Admiralty, and must have proved rather a Godsend to those newspapers whose readers were anxious for naval news in any shape or form.

They made a certain amount of fuss about it, and the naval correspondents were soon hard at work elaborating the simple statement according to their usual habit. Indeed, the nautical expert of *Earth and Sea*, with the very best intentions in the world, even went so far as to devote the greater part of a column to the business. It is to be hoped that his readers were duly edified; but we, who had taken part in the affair, were merely rather amused.

And so, for perhaps a week, and before being banished to the limbo of forgotten and unconsidered trifles, the business was a subject for intermittent conversation and a certain amount of conjecture. Then it was forgotten, and it is doubtful if it will ever be resurrected in any naval history of the war.

We had quite a good passage across the North Sea, and at dawn on the day of the operation we arrived in the vicinity of the Danish coast not far from the German frontier. The weather was good for the time of year. Bitterly cold, of course, besides which there were frequent low-lying snow flurries which came sweeping

down across the sea and made it barely possible to see more than a quarter of a mile; while our decks, except where the heat of the engine and boiler rooms melted the snow as it fell, were soon covered. But in between the squalls the sky was blue, the sea was flat calm, and there was hardly any wind. Moreover, there was not a sign or a vestige of a Hun anywhere, not even a Zeppelin; nothing in sight except a few Danish fishing craft.

The seaplanes were soon hoisted out and started off on their job. They all seemed to get away without the slightest hitch, and it was a fine sight watching them taxi-ing along the calm water to get up speed, and then rising in the air one by one to disappear in the faint haze towards the horizon. What they were to do, exactly, I cannot say, but within ten minutes they had all disappeared and the squadron steamed to and fro waiting for their return. They were expected back in about an hour.

The full hour passed, and nothing happened. Another quarter of an hour; but still no signs of the 'planes. On board the ships people began to get rather anxious, thinking that they had been brought down by the Huns, and everybody with glasses was looking to the south-eastward for signs of them. But at last, when they had almost been given up, the first one suddenly reappeared in the midst of a snow squall. He was hoisted in, and within the next ten minutes the whole covey, except two, had returned.

How their business had gone off was never divulged. A story did get about afterwards,—I saw it mentioned in some of the newspapers,—to the effect that one of them had arrived within two hundred feet immediately over the object he wanted to drop his bombs on, and then found he could not let them go because the releasing gear was clogged up with frozen snow. Whether or not the yarn is true it is impossible to say, but imagine the fellow's feelings when, after planing down to two hundred feet with all the anti-aircraft guns in the place going full blast, he found he could not drop a single egg! Poor devil!

The seaplanes that did return were soon hoisted in, but in the meanwhile eight destroyers and a couple of other craft had been sent on to steam down the coast in line abreast to see if by any chance the two missing ones had come down on the water. We were with this lot, and after an hour's steaming at 20 knots, by which time the island of Sylt was plainly visible about nine or ten miles dead ahead and no trace of the lost sheep had been seen, the search had to be abandoned.

It was then that the three destroyers to seaward sighted two steam trawlers some way off to the south-westward. They were flying no colours so far as we could see, but seemed to be in single line ahead, and as they were going straight for Sylt it was pretty obvious that they were mine-sweepers or patrol boats, and not mere fishermen.

The three outer destroyers,—we happened to be one of them,—promptly altered course to cut them off from the coast, and before very long we were buzzing along at something like 30 knots with an enormous mountain of water piled up in our wake, the water being rather shallow.

The trawlers, poor chaps, hadn't a dog's chance of getting away or of doing anything; but I must say we all admired them for their pluck. They had got into line abreast, and soon, when we were within about 5,000 yards, our leading craft hoisted some signal. We had no time to look it up in the book, but took it to be a signal asking if they would surrender. But not a bit of it. They were patrol boats, and each of them had a small gun, and presently there came a flash and a little cloud of brown smoke from the nearer one of the two. The shell fell some distance short.

We had all held our fire up till then, for it was mere baby killing and we did not want to do the dirty on them if it could be avoided, but as they started the game of firing on us, we had no alternative but to reply. The sea round about the nearer craft was soon spouting with shell splashes, and between the fountains of spray and clouds of dense smoke in which she tried to hide herself, we could see the red flashes of some of our shell as they hit and burst, and the spurt of flame from her own little gun as she fired at us. Only three or four of her projectiles came anywhere near, while the havoc on board her must have been indescribable. It was a hateful business to have to fire at her at all, but what else could we do as she would not surrender?

It was all over very soon. The nearer trawler was almost hidden in smoke, and presently, when we got ahead of her and to windward at a range of about 1,500 yards, we noticed a white thing fluttering in her mizzen rigging. It was a shirt, as we discovered afterwards, and a signal of surrender, so we ceased firing at once and ran down to her to pick up the survivors.

The further trawler, meanwhile, had been sunk by the destroyer ahead of us, the crew having abandoned her beforehand in two boats.

We steamed fairly close to our fellow and lowered a boat, for we could see all the survivors standing up with their hands above their heads. The ship herself was in a deplorable state. Shell seemed to have burst everywhere, and one of the first which struck her had cut a steam pipe in the engine-room and had stopped the engines. Clouds of steam were coming from aft, her upper deck was a shambles, and she was badly holed and on fire. She was still afloat, though sinking fast.

Our boat went across and brought back those that remained of her crew. There were thirteen of them all told, including the skipper, and of the men one was badly, and four more slightly, wounded. Nine had been killed outright.

Then occurred rather a pleasing incident. Our men, a long time before, were going to do all sorts of desperate things to any Germans they got hold of. They were full of the Lusitania business, bomb dropping from Zeppelins, and the treatment of our prisoners. But when the time came there was a complete revulsion of feeling. They were kindness itself, and when the prisoners came on board the seamen met the seamen and escorted them forward like honoured guests, while our stokers did the same for their opposite numbers.

We took all necessary precautions, of course, but the Germans were very well behaved and gave us no trouble at all. They were a particularly fine and intelligent-looking lot of men, and presently, when the wounded had been attended to, our fellows were filling them up with food and cocoa on the mess-deck. They seemed very pleased to get it, and judging from what one heard afterwards, they had evidently expected to be manacled, leg-ironed, and fed on biscuit and water. But our men did the best they could for them; gave them food, clothes, and cigarettes. The Germans were profoundly grateful, but couldn't quite understand it.

Their skipper, a reserve officer who spoke English like a native, had served as an officer in British ships, and seemed a good fellow. He was pleased to be congratulated on his plucky fight; but it was rather pathetic all the same, for he had been cut off practically at his own front door.

"You came upon us so suddenly and so near home," he said, looking at Sylt which was only six or seven miles away. "We had not a chance to do anything."

He told us that he had been in the wheelhouse of his trawler when the show

started. One of our first shell passed through the glass windows within a foot of his head without bursting, and the very next did the damage in the engine-room. He ran down there to see what could be done, and this must have saved his life, for while he was away another shell burst in the wheelhouse and put about twenty holes in his greatcoat which was lying on the settee. I saw the coat and the holes when he came on board, and noticed it had the ribbon of the Iron Cross and that of some other decoration in the button-hole. He showed me his Iron Cross and was very proud of it, but what he got it for I did not gather. He seemed rather secretive about it. The other decoration, with a red-and-white ribbon, was the "Hamburg Cross," which is given to all officers and men belonging to the town who get the Iron Cross. I believe the other Hansa towns follow the same custom with their braves.

One thing about the skipper which struck me favourably was that he seemed very keen on the welfare of his men. The poor fellow who was badly wounded had been hit in the back, and three or four pieces of shell were still inside him. He must have been in terrible agony, but was very brave and did not utter a sound. An operation was quite out of the question, and as the poor chap was obviously in great pain our Surgeon-Probationer put him in a hammock on the mess-deck and gave him morphia. Soon afterwards the skipper asked to be allowed to visit him, and when the Doc. next went forward he found him swabbing the patient's brow with icy cold water to bring him to! The Doc. was rather peevish about it.

But to get on with the story of what happened. The trawler was sinking, but not quite fast enough, so we finished her off with a couple of lyddite shell on the waterline. In the meanwhile, as you probably know, for it was officially announced at the time, two destroyers had been in collision. The rammer crumpled her bows up a bit, but could still steam, but the ship rammed was rather badly damaged, and had to be taken in tow. It was in the middle of this operation that many hostile seaplanes, stirred up like a wasps' nest by our 'planes earlier in the morning, came out and started dropping bombs. None of them came very close to us,—the bombs, I mean,—but we saw a string of five fall and explode practically alongside one destroyer, and heard afterwards that there had been a free fight on her upper deck to secure as trophies the splinters which dropped on board. We were all using our A.-A. guns, and though we did not actually hit any of them so far as we could see, we made them keep up to a height from which accurate bomb-dropping was an impossibility, so nobody was hit. But nevertheless it was unpleasant, for no sooner had they let go one

consignment than they went home again, filled up afresh, and came back for another go. They were bombing us off and on for four or five hours, so far as I can remember, and we counted seven or eight of the blighters in sight at once, so it was "embarras de richesse" so far as targets went.

We weren't going very fast, for the damaged destroyer could not be towed at a respectable speed on account of her injuries, and at about five o'clock in the afternoon the glass had gone down a lot, and the wind and sea started to get up from the westward. The prospect was not altogether joyful. We had heard the two trawlers shouting for help by wireless before we sank them, and knew that the German seaplanes had probably seen and reported an injured ship being taken in tow. (This afterwards turned out to be the case, though, according to their communiqué, the seaplanes claimed to have bagged her with a bomb, which was not so.) Moreover, Heligoland was a bare sixty miles away under our lee, so the chances were £100 to 1/2d. that the Huns would come out during the night and try to scupper the lot of us. It was with some joy, then, that we found there was a pretty strong supporting force within easy distance. In fact, we actually sighted them at about 6 p.m.

The weather grew steadily worse, and by sunset there was a pretty big sea and a fresh breeze, both of which were increasing every minute. The poor old ship in tow was making very heavy weather of it, while even we were pretty lively. But things got worse, for by ten o'clock, and a pitch dark night it was, it was blowing nearly a full gale. The sea, too, had got up to such an extent that there was nothing for it but to abandon the damaged destroyer. It was easier said than done, for the sea was too big for lowering boats, and the only other alternative was for some other craft to go alongside her and to take the men on. I did not see the business myself, but believe another destroyer put her stem up against the side of the one sinking and kept it there by going slow ahead, while the men hopped out one by one over the bows.

It was a most excellent bit of work on the part of the salvor, for with the two ships rolling, pitching, and grinding in the sea, and in utter darkness, it required a very good head and cool judgment to know how much speed was necessary to keep the bows just touching, and no more. If they had come into violent contact the rescuing ship might have been very badly damaged. I believe they had to have several shots at it, before they got every man away, but though two fell overboard in jumping across, they pulled it off all right without losing a single life. The only damage to the rescuing ship was a little bit of a bulge on the stem

just below the forecastle, but this did not make a leak or impair her efficiency in any way, and she went about for months afterwards without having it straightened. They had every right to be proud of their honourable scar!

The poor old ship which had to be abandoned was then left to her fate, and nobody saw the end of her.

It must have been at about this time, though we did not see it, that some hostile destroyers came upon our light cruisers, or rather, our cruisers happened upon them. What took place I don't quite know, but the Huns were apparently sighted quite close, and our leading ship, jamming her helm over and increasing speed, rammed one full in the middle and cut her in halves. It must have been an awful moment for the poor wretches, for the stern portion of the destroyer sank one side, and the bow part went rushing on into the darkness at about thirty knots. The men on board her could be heard yelling, but it was quite impossible to do anything to save them as other enemy destroyers were in the neighbourhood and the sea was far too bad for lowering boats.

Nothing else of interest took place during the night, except that the weather got worse and worse. The next morning, when we were steaming against it, we were having a terrible doing, and it lasted for about twenty-four hours, until we got under the lee of the coast. The sea was one of the worst we had ever experienced, short and very steep, and we couldn't steam more than about eight knots against it. The motion was very bad, the ship crashing and bumping about in a most unholy manner, and we were all wet through and rather miserable. No hot food, either, for the galley fire had been put out.

The prisoner who had been badly wounded died early next morning. The Doctor said he might have lived if the weather had been good, but the motion finished him, poor fellow. He was buried at sea, the German officer reading the burial service.

We eventually got back into harbour and disembarked the prisoners, and never was I more pleased to get a decent meal and a little sleep. Aunt Maria, having so many nephews, has just sent me another fountain pen, the third since the war started. Also a pair of crimson socks knitted by her cook. The pen will be useful.

Do you want any more cigarettes? You never acknowledged the last lot I sent, you ungrateful blighter, and at any rate I think it's high time you wrote me a

letter. Your last one was a postcard.

Forgive this letter of mine if it is a bit disconnected, but it's the best I can do at present.

Well, the best of luck and may you not stop a Hun bullet or a bit of shrapnel.

Yours always,

T.

THE FOG

The *Rapier* was an old destroyer, one of the 370-ton "thirty-knotters" completed in about 1901. She burnt coal and was driven by reciprocating engines, instead of using oil fuel and being propelled by new-fangled turbines, while 23 to 24 knots were all she could be relied upon to travel in the best of weather. She had a low, sharp bow and the old-fashioned turtle-back forward instead of the high, weatherly forecastle of the later destroyers, and in anything more than a moderate breeze or a little popple of a sea she was like a half-tide rock in a gale o' wind. In fact, except in the very calmest weather, she was a regular hog, for she rolled, pitched, and wallowed to her heart's content, varying the monotony at odd moments by burying herself in green seas or deluging herself in masses of spray.

Her small bridge, with its 12-pounder gun, steering wheel, compass, and engine-room telegraphs, was placed on the top of the turtle-back and about 25 feet from the bows. It acted as a most excellent breakwater and took the brunt of the heavier seas, and how often the *Rapier* came back into harbour with her bridge rails flattened down and her deck fittings washed overboard, I really do not know. It was a fairly frequent occurrence, for war is war, and they kept the little ship out at sea in practically all weathers.

Even in harbour, when her officers and men were endeavouring to obtain a little well-earned sleep, she sometimes had an exasperating habit of rolling her rails under and slopping the water over her deck, and then it was that Langdon, her lieutenant in command, wedged in the bunk in his little cabin in the stern, and driven nearly frantic by the irregular thump, thump, crash of the loosely hung rudder swinging from side to side as the ship rolled, rose in his wrath and cursed the day he was born.

But whatever he thought in his heart of hearts, he would not hear a bad word against his old *Rapier* in public. She might be ancient; but then she had done "a

jolly sight more steaming" than any other craft of her age and class. She might burn coal in her furnaces instead of oil-fuel, and every ounce of coal had to be shovelled on board from a collier by manual labour, whereas, in an oil-driven destroyer, one simply went alongside a jetty or an "oiler," connected up a hose, and went to bed while a pump did all the work. But Langdon never could endure "the ghastly stink" of crude petroleum, while coal, though dirty, was clean dirt. The *Rapier* might have old-fashioned engines, but with them one ran no chance of developing that affliction of turbine craft: water in the casing, the consequent stripping of blades off the turbine rotors, and a month or so in a dockyard as a natural concomitant. Moreover, everybody knew that destroyers with reciprocating engines were far and away the easiest to handle.

So, from what Langdon said, though it is true that he may have been rather prejudiced by the fact that she was his first independent command, the fifteen-year-old *Rapier* was a jewel of fair price. The powers that be perhaps did not regard her with such rose-tinted optimism, but for all that, were evidently of the opinion that she was still capable of useful work, and kept her constantly at sea accordingly.

Exactly what her function was I had better not say, but she always seemed to be on the spot when things happened, and had assisted at the "strafing" of Hun submarines, and had been under fire a great many more times than some of her younger sisters, many of whom were craft at least three times her size, eight knots more speed, and infinitely better armed and more seaworthy.

So it was not to be imagined that the *Rapier*, ancient though she was, suffered from senile decay.

* * * * *

"Curse this weather," the Lieutenant muttered, wrinkling his eyes in a vain endeavour to see through the murk. "We've been forty-eight hours on patrol, and now we're due to go into harbour this beastly fog comes down and delays us. It IS the limit!"

Pettigrew, the Sub-Lieutenant, agreed. "We shall have to coal when we arrive," he observed mournfully. "That'll take us two hours, and by the time we've finished, made fast to the buoy, had our baths, and made ourselves fairly presentable, it'll be two o'clock. I take it we go to sea at the usual time this

evening, sir?"

Langdon nodded. "Bet your life!" he said with a sigh. "We shall be off again at eight p.m. I was looking forward to having a decent lunch ashore for once," he added regretfully, "but now this beastly fog's gone and put the hat on it. Lord! I'm fed up to the neck with the grub on board!"

"Tinned salmon fish-cakes for breakfast," murmured the Sub. "Curried salmon for lunch, and tinned rabbit pie for dinner. My sainted aunt! The Ritz and Carlton aren't in it!"

The skipper laughed.

The fog had come down at dawn, and now, halfway through the forenoon, the weather was still as thick as ever; so thick, indeed, that it was barely possible to see more than a hundred yards through the white, cotton-wool-like pall. It was one of those breathless, steamy days in mid-July. The sea was glassily calm, while the sun, a mere molten blot in the haze overhead, whose heat was unmitigated by the least suspicion of a breeze, was still sufficiently powerful to make it most uncomfortably warm. Altogether the torrid clamminess of the atmosphere, and its distinct earthy flavour, reminded one irresistibly of the interior of a greenhouse.

It was the sun who had been guilty of causing the fog at all. His rays had saturated the earth with warmth the day before, heat which had been given off during the cooler hours of darkness in a mass of invisible vapour. Impelled slowly seaward during the night, the heat wave, if one can so call it, had eventually come into contact with the colder atmosphere over the water, where, following the invariable law of nature, it had condensed into an infinite number of tiny particles of moisture. These, mingling and coalescing, had formed the dense masses of vapour which hung so impalpably over the dangerous, thickly populated sea-areas in the closer vicinity of the coast. Further afield, seven or eight miles away from the shore, there was nothing but a haze. More distant still the sun shone undimmed, and there were no signs of fog at all.

* * * * *

Thick weather at sea is always exasperating, and to avoid the chance of colliding with something they could not possibly avoid at any greater speed, Langdon had been forced to ease to the leisurely speed of eight knots, and eight knots to a

T.B.D., even a relic of the *Rapier's* age, is just about as irritating as being wedged in a narrow lane in a 40-horse power Daimler behind a horse pantehnicon.

They had a man on the forecandle keeping a lookout. The automatic sounding machine was being used at regular intervals to give them some sort of an idea as to their position by a comparison of the depths obtained with those shown on the chart, but even then the eccentricity of the tidal currents and, let it be said, the erratic and most unladylike behaviour of the *Rapier's* standard compass, made navigation a matter of some conjecture and a good deal of guesswork.

Somewhere ahead, veiled in its pall of fog, lay the coast. Ahead, and to the right, was a large area of shoal water, portions of which uncovered at low tide. It had already proved the graveyard of many fine ships whose bones still showed when the water fell, and Langdon had no wish to leave his ship there as an everlasting monument to his memory, while he, probably court-martialled, and at any rate having "incurred their Lordships' severe displeasure," left the destroyer service under a cloud which would never disperse.

Added to which there was always the chance of a collision, for the sea seemed full of ships. Time and tide wait for no man, and, Hun submarines or not, mines or no mines, fog or no fog, merchant vessels must run. To-day they seemed to be running in battalions and brigades, judging from the howling, yelping, and snorting of their steam whistles here, there, and everywhere.

But the *Rapier* managed to avoid them somehow, and, shortly before noon, having heard the explosive fog signal on the end of the breakwater, she slid slowly past the lighthouse at the entrance and groped her way into the harbour. It was still as thick as it possibly could be, but she found the collier, and, after completing with coal, secured to her buoy.

Ten minutes later Langdon and the Sub were talking together in the little wardroom when there came a knock at the door.

"Signal just come through, sir," the signalman announced with a smile on his face. "*Rapier* will proceed to Portsmouth at daylight to-morrow to refit. She will not be required for patrol to-night."

The ship was long overdue for the dockyard, but the skipper and Pettigrew looked at each other, hardly able to believe their ears.

"Lord!" muttered the former. "That means a week's leave, Sub. D'you realise that?"

"Do I not, sir!" answered the Sub-Lieutenant, as the signalman retired with a grin.

THE TRADERS

We were steaming to the westward, towards the spot where the sun, glowing like a disc of molten copper, was slowly nearing the horizon. It had been one of those hot, breathless sort of days with no breeze; and now, near sunset, nothing but an occasional cat's-paw stole gently across the sea to ruffle its glassy surface in irregular-shaped patches. Elsewhere, the water, shining like a mirror, reflected the blazing glory of the sky.

Some distance off lay the coast, its familiar outline dim, purple, and mysterious in the evening mist. But it was neither the sunset, glorious as it was, nor the scenery which held our imagination. It was the shipping.

All manner of craft there were. First came the *Spurt*, of Tromsö, a Norwegian tramp of dissolute and chastened appearance, whose deliberate, plodding gait and general air of senility belied her name, or at any rate the English meaning of it. Her rusty black hull was decorated with three large squares painted in her national colours, red, with a vertical white-edged stripe of blue in the centre. Next a bulbous, prosperous-looking Dutchman, who seemed to waddle in her, or his, stride. She was slightly faster than the ancient *Spurt*, but was no flyer, and boasted a canary-yellow hull bearing her name in fifteen-foot letters, and enormous painted tricolours striped horizontally in red, white, and blue.

Then two Swedes with unpronounceable names who, by their embellishments, informed the world that they hailed respectively from Göteborg and Helsingborg. They also sported large rectangles, painted in vertical stripes of yellow and blue, while close behind them, a Dane, with an absurdly attenuated funnel and long ventilators sticking at all angles out of her hull like pins from a pincushion, ambled stolidly along like a weary cart-horse. She, scorning other decoration, merely showed the scarlet white-crossed emblem of her country. Some of the neutrals carried signs bearing their names which could be illuminated at night, and all seemed equally determined not to afford any

prowling Hun submarine a legitimate excuse for torpedoing them on sight.

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But the craft which outnumbered the others by more than four to one were the British. They bore no distinctive marks or colouring on their sides, and their travel-stained and weather-beaten appearance, their rusty hulls, discoloured funnels, and the generally dingy and unpretentious look about them showed that they were kept far too busy to trouble about external appearances. The only token of their nationality was the wisp of tattered red bunting fluttering at the stern of each; the gallant old Red Ensign which, war or no war, still dances triumphantly on practically every sea, except the Baltic.

Many of the passing vessels looked out of date and old-fashioned. Some veterans of the 'eighties or 'nineties, fit only to sail under a foreign flag according to pre-war standards, may have been dug out of their obscurity to play their part in the war. And a very important part it is. Ships must run, and, at a time when the Admiralty have levied a heavy toll for war purposes upon all classes of ships belonging to the Mercantile Marine, every vessel which will float and can steam can be utilised many times over for the equally important work of carrying cargo. It is not peaceful work, either, in these days of promiscuous mine-laying and enemy submarines armed with guns and torpedoes ready to sink without warning.

The important work of the yachts, pleasure steamers, trawlers, and drifters used for mine-sweeping, patrol work, and other naval purposes need not be entered into here; but the Mercantile Marine proper, what, for want of a better term, we may call "the deep sea service," has supplied the Royal Navy with many thousands of splendid officers and men who are now serving their country in fighting ships as members of the Royal Naval Reserve. Moreover, numbers of its ships of all classes are employed for war purposes as armed merchant cruisers, transports, oil fuel vessels, colliers, ammunition ships, storeships, and the like. But the function of those ships which are left for their legitimate purpose of cargo carrying is of equal importance to the country, of inestimable value, in fact, since we could not exist without them. Their duty is fraught with constant peril. Submarines may be lurking and mines may have been laid upon the routes they have to traverse, but never have there been the least signs of unreadiness or unwillingness to proceed to sea when ordered to do so.

Most of the officers and men of the Mercantile Marine are not trained to war like their comrades of the Royal Navy. They are not paid, and their ships are not built, to fight; but yet, time and time again, their natural pluck and intrepidity has shown itself in the face of an entirely new danger.

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Instances are so numerous that it is impossible to mention them all. Remember the gallant fight of the *Clan MacTavish*, with her single gun, against the heavily-armed German raider *Moewe*. Take the case of the "Blue Funneller" *Laertes*, Captain Probert, which was ordered to stop by an enemy submarine, but, disregarding the summons, proceeded at full speed, steering a zigzag course, and so escaped, Remember the little *Thordis*, Captain Bell, which, after having a torpedo fired at her, actually rammed and sank the submarine which fired it.

Again, there was the transport *Mercian*, Captain Walker, which was attacked by gunfire from a hostile submarine in the Mediterranean. Some of the troops on board were killed, others were wounded, and nobody could have blamed the captain if he had surrendered. But what did he do? He endured a bombardment lasting for an hour and a half, and, thanks to the bravery and skill of all on board, the ship escaped.

There was also Captain Palmer, of the *Blue Jacket*, who, though his ship had actually been torpedoed, stood by her in his boats, reboarded her, and, in spite of her damage, steamed her to a place of safety. Recollect Captain Clopert, whose vessel, the *Southport*, was captured by a German man-of-war, was taken to the island of Kusaie, and was there disabled by the removal of certain important parts of her machinery. She was evidently to be utilised as a collier, but no sooner had the enemy left than the master, officers, and men set to work to effect repairs. How they did it with the meagre appliances at their disposal only they themselves can say, but the fact remains that the ship escaped.

These cases are only typical. Whole volumes might be written round the warlike deeds of our "peaceful" merchantmen, and from the many instances of gallantry we read of and the still greater number which do not achieve publicity it is evident that on every occasion of encountering the enemy the master of the ship, backed up most nobly by his officers and crew, has not only done everything possible to save his ship from capture in the first instance, but has never hesitated to defend his vessel in accordance with the generally accepted tenets of

International Law, which state that a merchant ship can defend herself when attacked.

Courage in the face of the enemy when one can return shot for shot is one thing, but heroism of the same kind in an unarmed ship is on rather a different plane.

The work of the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine is largely interdependent. The two great sea services of the country must ever work hand in hand and side by side, and let us never forget what we owe to the latter.

POTVIN OF THE *PUFFIN*

"Well, I'm damned!" ejaculated the first lieutenant, looking up from his breakfast as a barefooted signalman held a slate under his nose. "Just as I'm in the middle of painting ship!"

The navigator, doctor, and assistant paymaster looked up from their plates. "What's up, Number One?" queried the former.

"Only that the new skipper's arrived in the English mail," said the first lieutenant glumly.

"He's coming on board at nine o'clock in the *Spartan's* steamboat!"

"Good Lord!" protested Cutting, the doctor. "So soon? It was only a week ago we saw his appointment!"

"Can't help that," No. One growled. "He's arrived, and he'll be on board in exactly three quarters of an hour's time. Lord help us! You'd better put on a clean tunic and your best society manners, Doc. You'll want 'em both."

"Why the deuce can't he leave us in peace a bit longer?" complained Falland, the lieutenant (N).

"And why the devil does he want to come just at the end of the quarter when I'm busy with my accounts?" grumbled Augustus Shilling, the assistant paymaster, blinking behind his spectacles. "I know jolly well what it'll be. For the next week I shan't be able to call my soul my own, and he'll be sending for me morning, noon, and night to explain things. The writer's gone sick, too. Oh, it IS the limit!"

"It is, indeed," echoed the doctor despondently. "Farewell to a quiet life. By

George! I haven't written up the wine books for the last fortnight. Have I got time to do 'em before he comes?"

The first lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. "You'd better make an effort, old man," he said. "He's a rabid teetotaler, and he's sure to ask to see 'em first thing."

"Heaven help us!" cried the medical officer, rising hastily from his chair and disappearing into his cabin.

"What sort of a chap did you say he was, Number One?" Falland queried, with traces of anxiety in his voice.

"I only know him by reputation," the first lieutenant answered lugubriously. "But he's got the name of being rather ... er, peculiar. At any rate, he hates navigators, so you'd better mind your P's and Q's, my giddy young friend."

"And I haven't corrected my charts for three weeks or written up the compass journal for a month!" Falland wailed. "Oh, Lor!"

From all of which it will be understood that the wardroom officers of H.M. Gunboat *Puffin* were not overjoyed at the advent of their new Captain.[1]

The date was some time during the last five years of the reign of Queen Victoria; the month, September, and though at this season of the year the climate of Hong-Kong is far too moist and too steamy to be pleasant, the *Puffin's* officers, adapting themselves to circumstances, had had plenty of shore leave and had managed to enjoy themselves. So had the men.

Their ship, an ancient, barque-rigged vessel of 1,000 odd tons; auxiliary engines capable of pushing her along at 9.35 knots with the safety valves lifting; and armed with I forget how many bottle-nosed, 5-inch, B.-L. guns and a Nordenfeldt or two, was swinging peacefully round her buoy in the harbour. She had swung there for precisely two months without raising steam, ever since her late commander had been promoted and had gone home to England, leaving the ship in temporary charge of Pardoe, the first lieutenant.

Captain Prato had been an easy-going man of serene disposition who allowed little or nothing to worry him, not even the Commander-in-Chief himself. As a

consequence the wardroom officers swore by him, and so did Mr. Tompion, the gunner, and Mr. Slice, the artificer engineer. The ship's company were of the same opinion, so the little *Puffin* was what is generally known as a "happy ship."

But Commander Peter Potvin, R.N., Captain Prato's successor, was the direct antithesis of the former commanding officer, for he had the reputation in the Service of being a veritable little firebrand, and an eccentric little firebrand at that. He was small and thin, and possessed a pair of fierce blue eyes and a short, aggressive red beard, and was even reputed to insist on naval discipline being carried on in his own house ashore. At any rate, it is quite certain that his wife frequently appeared at church with red eyes after her lord and master had held his usual Sunday forenoon inspection of the house, and had discovered a cockroach in the kitchen or a dish-clout in the scullery, while it was true that he permitted his three children to wear good conduct badges, each carrying with them the sum of 1d. per week, after three months' exemplary behaviour. But only one of them, Tony, aged 18 months, had ever worn a badge for more than a fortnight.

It was also said, with what truth I do not know, that his servants frequently had their leave stopped for not being "dressed in the rig of the day," and for omitting to wear hideous caps and aprons of an uniform pattern designed by Commander Potvin himself without the assistance of his wife. It was bruited about that the cook, housemaid, and parlourmaid,—the nurse alone being excused,—were turned out of their beds at the unearthly hour of 5.30 a.m. and that, as a punishment for "being found asleep in their hammocks after the hands had been called," they were roused out at 4 a.m. to chop firewood.

The Potvin ménage was not a happy one, and as a consequence his retainers usually gave notice en masse directly they heard the gallant commander was about to come home on leave. Even the gardener and boot boy followed the general example, so it was lucky for Mrs. Potvin that she had an uncle at the Admiralty who generally managed to send, "dear Peter" to a foreign station. He was rarely at home, or his wife would have been wrought to the verge of lunacy.

No wonder the *Puffin's* were not pleased at their future prospects, for the milk of human kindness evidently did not enter into the composition of their new commanding officer.

For twenty-four hours after his arrival on board Commander Potvin was too busy

paying official calls and unpacking his belongings to make his presence really felt. The fun began the next morning, when, after divisions, he sent for Pardoe to come and see him in his cabin.

"You may have heard, First Lieutenant," he began, very pompously, "that I am a very observant man, and that I notice everything that goes on board my ship?"

"Indeed, sir," said Pardoe politely, wondering what on earth was coming next.

"Yes," said the commander. "I am unnaturally observant, and though some people may think I am a faddist, there is very little that escapes my notice. To start with, I always insist that my officers shall wear strict uniform, and at the present moment I am grieved to see that you are wearing white socks."

"I'm sorry, sir. I didn't know you would mind. The officers in the flagship wear them with white clothing."

"I was not aware that I had asked you a question, Lieutenant Pardoe," interrupted the skipper, his beard bristling. "Moreover, what they do or do not do in the flagship is no affair of mine. The uniform regulations lay down that socks are to be black or dark blue, and I expect my officers to wear them. I also observed just now that the Surgeon was wearing a watch strap across the front of his tunic, which is in strict defiance of the regulation which says that watch chains and trinkets are not to be worn outside the coat. I do not wish to have to take steps in the matter, but kindly bear it in mind yourself, and inform your messmates, that I insist on strict uniform."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"There are several more matters I wish to discuss," the captain resumed, twiddling his moustaches. "You will doubtless have heard that I like to keep my ship's companies happy and contented, eh?" He looked up enquiringly.

"Er—yes, sir. Of course, sir," said the first lieutenant lamely, having heard precisely the opposite.

"Very good. To keep the men happy and contented one has to keep them employed, so in future there will be no leave to either officers or men until four o'clock in the afternoon. We shall doubtless be able to find plenty for them to do on board."

Number One opened his mouth to expostulate, but thought better of it. "I like the men to feel that their ship is their home," continued the skipper, "and to encourage them to stay on board in the afternoons and evenings instead of spending their money and their substance in these terrible grog shops ashore, these low and vicious haunts of iniquity," he rolled his tongue round the words, "I propose that the officers shall prepare and deliver a series of lectures on interesting topics. I have," he added, "brought a magic lantern and a good stock of slides out from England, and some evening next week I propose to deliver the first lecture myself. The subject is a most instructive one, 'The effects of alcohol on the human body and mind,' and to illustrate it I have prepared a number of most excellent charts showing the increase in the consumption of spirits and malt liquor between 1873 and the present time. The charts, compiled from the most reliable data, are drawn up for most of the best known professions, sailors, soldiers, labourers, policemen, clergymen, and so on, and I can safely promise you a most interesting evening."

Pardoe, quite convinced that he had to deal with a lunatic, gasped and began to wonder how on earth he could leave the ship unostentatiously without damaging his subsequent career. "I'm afraid I'm not much of a hand at lecturing, sir," he said with a forced smile. "In fact there's hardly a subject I know enough about to ——."

"Pooh, pooh," laughed the commander. "With due diligence in your spare time you will be able to learn up quite a lot of subjects, and as for the actual lecturing," he shrugged his shoulders, "practice makes perfect, and I have no doubt that before very long we shall find you quite an orator." He smiled benignly.

"We will have the lectures once a week, at 8 p.m., say on Thursdays," he went on, "and on Sundays I will conduct an evening service at 6.0., at which, of course, all officers will attend. You will read the lessons and collect the offertory, Mr. Pardoe. That will leave us five clear evenings a week for other harmless occupations, and I propose that on one of them we have readings for the men from the works of well-known authors. Something light and amusing from Dickens or Dumas to start with, and then, as we get on, we might try the more learned writers like Darwin, or—er—Confucius."

The wretched first lieutenant grew red about the face and started to breathe heavily.

"Then on another evening we might encourage the men to play progressive games like draughts, halma, picture lotto, spillikins, ping-pong, and beggar-my-neighbour. My sole object in doing all this, you will understand, is to keep the men amused and instructed, to divert their minds and, therefore, to keep them happy and contented. After a few weeks or so they will all be so anxious to come to our entertainments, that they will have lost all desire to go ashore at all. It is a good idea, is it not?"

The first lieutenant nodded grimly. The idea may have been excellent, but he could hardly imagine Petty Officer Timothy Carey, the horny captain of the forecabin, listening to Confucius; nor Baxter, the Sergeant of Marines, sitting down to a quiet game of spillikins with Scully, the cook's mate. In fact, he foresaw that when he informed the men of the arrangements about to be made for their welfare, he would have all his work cut out to repress the inevitable rebellion. Darwin, Confucius, picture lotto, and beggar-my-neighbour for the hardened ship's company of the *Puffin*! The *Police Gazette*, *Reynolds' Weekly*, pots of beer, and the games known as "Shove ha'penny" and "Crown and Anchor" were far more to their liking.

"Well," said Commander Potvin, "that is all I have to say at present; but I am gratified, very gratified indeed, that you agree with my ideas. I will draw up and issue detailed rules for our evening entertainments, but, meanwhile, I should be obliged if you would cause these to be distributed amongst the men. They will pave the way," he added, smiling as pleasantly as he was able, and handing Pardoe a neat brown paper parcel. "They will pave the way with good intentions, and I have no doubt that within a few weeks we shall have the happiest ship's company in the whole of the British Navy."

The first lieutenant, too astonished to reply, clutched the parcel and retired to the wardroom, where, flinging his cap on to the settee, he relapsed into the one armchair. "Lord!" he muttered, holding his head, "I believe the man's as mad as a hatter!"

He opened the package to find therein a quantity of bound sheets. He selected one of the pamphlets at random and examined it with a sigh. "Drink and Depravity," he read. "Pots of beer cost many a tear. Be warned in time or you'll repine."

"Great Caesar's ghost!" he ejaculated. "The man IS mad! To think that it should

come to this. Poor, poor old *Puffin*!"

A few minutes later Falland, on his way aft to visit the captain, glanced into the wardroom. Pardoe still sat in the armchair muttering softly to himself with his head bowed down between his hands. The floor, the table, and the chair were littered with tracts of all the colours of the rainbow. "Saints preserve us!" the navigator murmured. The next really interesting incidents occurred on Sunday morning, when the commanding officer made his usual rounds of the ship and inspected the men. So far nothing had officially been said about the new *régime*; but, in some mysterious way, the ship's company had an inkling of the happy days in store for them, while, through a lavish distribution of tracts, literature which, I am sorry to relate, they solemnly burnt in the galley fire, they were fully aware of their new captain's notions on the engrossing subject of drink.

Accordingly, to please him, and to show that they were not the hardened sinners, seasoned reprobates, and generally idle and dissolute characters he perhaps might take them for, they fell in at divisions on that Sabbath morn wearing their most cherubic and innocent expressions, and their newest and most immaculate raiment.

The *Puffin* had always been a clean ship, but on this particular occasion she surpassed herself, for all hands and the cook had done their very utmost to uphold her reputation. Her burnished guns and freshly scoured brass-work shone dazzlingly in the sun; her topmasts and blocks had been newly scraped and varnished, while the running rigging, boat's falls, and other ropes about the deck were neatly coiled down and flemished. The decks themselves were as white as holystones, sand, and much elbow grease could make them, and, with her white hull with its encircling green riband and cherry-red waterline, her yellow lower masts and funnel, and a brand-new pendant flying from the main-truck and large White Ensign flapping lazily from its staff on the poop, the *Puffin* looked more like a yacht than a man-o'-war. But Commander Potvin also had a reputation to keep up, and he would not be Commander Potvin if he could not find fault somewhere.

"Seaman's division—'shun!" shouted Falland, the officer in charge, as the commander and first lieutenant made their appearance from under the poop. "Off—caps!"

The men clicked their heels punctiliously and removed their headgear, and the captain, passing down the front rank with his sword trailing on the deck behind

him, began his inspection.

"What is your name, my man?" he inquired condescendingly, halting opposite to a burly bearded able seaman.

"Joseph Smith, sir."

"I seem to remember your face," said the commander.

"Yes, sir. I served along 'o you in th' *Bulldorg* five year ago."

"Indeed. That is most interesting. Well, Smith," eyeing him up and down, "I am always most pleased to see my old shipmates again."

"Yes, sir," answered the burly one, trying hard to look pleased himself, and turning rather red in the effort. As a matter of fact he was wondering if his commanding officer was blessed, or cursed, with a good memory, and if, by any chance, he remembered the occasion when he—Joseph Smith—had last stood before him on the quarterdeck of H.M.S. *Bulldog*. He had stood there as a defaulter, to be punished with ten days' cells and the loss of a hardly-earned good conduct badge, for returning from leave in a state of partial insobriety, and for having indulged in a heated and more than acrimonious discussion with the local constabulary. It had happened several years before, and since then he had turned over a new leaf, but he grew quite nervous at the recollection.

But the skipper, apparently, had quite forgotten it, for he went on speaking. "I am sorry to see, Smith, that, although you have served with me before, you have forgotten what I must have taken the greatest pains to teach you. Your hair is too long, and your beard is not trimmed in the proper service manner. Your trousers are at least two inches too tight round the knee, and six inches too slack round the ankle, while the rows of tape on your collar are too close together. It will not do," he added, glaring unpleasantly. "The uniform regulations are made to be strictly adhered to. Mr. Falland!"

"Sir."

"Have this man's bag inspected in the dinner hour every day for a fortnight. See that his hair is properly cut by next Sunday, and see that he either shaves himself clean, or that he does not use a razor at all, according to the regulations. I am surprised that you should have allowed him to come to divisions in this

condition."

"Very good, sir."

The Commander passed on, leaving the delinquent with his mouth wide open in astonishment and righteous indignation. Smith was firmly of the opinion that his beard was everything that a beard should be, while, quite rightly, he had always prided himself on being one of the best dressed men in the ship. Any little irregularities in his attire, irregularities not countenanced by the regulations, were merely introduced for the purpose of making himself smarter than ever. It was a sad blow to his pride.

But many others suffered in the same way, for hardly a man in the division was dressed according to the strict letter of the law. Some had the tapes on their jumpers too high or too low; others had the V-shaped openings in front a trifle too deep; many, in their endeavours to make their loose trousers still more rakish, wore them in too flowing a manner over their feet, and still more, in their anxiety not to spoil the set of their jumpers, carried no 'pusser's daggers,' or knives, attached to their lanyards. Altogether the first Sunday was a regular débâcle for the *Puffin's* but an undoubted triumph for Commander Potvin.

"Mr. Falland," he said, having walked round the ranks. "I am sorry to find all this laxity in the important matter of dress, and I rely upon you to take immediate steps to have it rectified."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And," the skipper continued, "I notice that you fall your men in according to size. I know that some commanding officers like to inspect the men in this way, but personally I prefer to have them grouped according to appearance. For instance, tall men together, short men together, and the same thing with the fat and the thin, the bearded and the clean-shaven."

"Very good, sir. But—" the navigator hesitated.

"But what, Mr. Falland?"

"Suppose a man is tall, thin, and bearded, sir?" asked Falland, in utter perplexity.

"Seize upon his predominant feature, Mr. Falland, and use your own discretion in the matter," said the Captain, half suspecting that his subordinate was trying to make fun of him, but knowing full well that, whatever the navigator did, he could always find fault with it.

He marched forward to continue his rounds, leaving the astonished divisional officer wondering if he was also to form special detachments of red-faced sailors, white-faced sailors, snub-nosed sailors, and bandy-legged sailors.

The inspection of the upper-deck and mess-deck passed without much comment, the Captain even saying that he was glad to see that the ship was 'quite clean,' a term which made the zealous Pardoe writhe with annoyance; but the next thing which caught his attention was a small hencoop containing eight or nine miserable, bedraggled-looking fowls.

"Bless my soul, First Lieutenant!" said he. "Look at these fowls!" They were sorry looking birds, it is true, but Chinese chickens are not renowned for their beauty and sprightliness of appearance at the best of times.

"They seem quite healthy, sir," the First Lieutenant answered, putting his head on one side in a most judicial manner.

"Yes, yes," murmured the Commander. "But they are all the colours of the rainbow. White, yellow, brown, grey, and black."

"So they are, sir," said Pardoe, as if he had observed the astounding fact for the first time.

"Who do they belong to?"

"They're yours, sir. Your steward looks after them."

"Does he, indeed?" said the skipper, rather nonplussed. "Well, send for my steward."

The portly and dignified Ah Fong presently appeared.

"Is it not possible for you to buy fowls of all the same colour?" the "Owner" wanted to know.

Ah Fong stared in hopeless bewilderment, trying to grasp his master's meaning. "My no savvy, sah," he said, shaking his head.

"Can you not buy your chickens, or my chickens, rather, all one colour? White, for preference, as the weather is hot."

"I savvy, sah," exclaimed the Chinaman, with a beatific smile slowly spreading over his countenance. "You no likee black piecee hen, sah?"

"No, no, that's not what I mean at all," said Potvin, going off into a long explanation.

At last Ah Fong began to understand what was wanted. "No can do, sah!" he expostulated. "S'pose I go 'shore catch piecee hen. I say to one man, I wanchee plentee fat piecee hen, no wanchee olo piecee, wanchee young plenty big piecee hen for capten...."

"I really cannot waste my time listening to this senseless conversation!" interrupted the Captain, with some petulance. "Mr. Pardoe, you will kindly explain to him that in future all the fowls on board are to be white in the summer, and blue... 'er, I mean black, in the winter. I will have them in the proper dress of the day like the ship's company, do you understand?"

"I do, sir," said the wretched Pardoe with an inaudible sigh, as the little procession moved on.

He did explain to the steward what was required, and Ah Fong was confronted with a dilemma. However, he had his wits about him, and the next Sunday morning, to Number One's intense astonishment, every wretched fowl in the coop, black, grey, or brown, had been freshly whitewashed. Their feathers were all plastered together, and they looked supremely unhappy and more bedraggled than ever, but the captain's aesthetic eye was apparently satisfied, for he passed them by with a glance and made no adverse remarks.

After the ordeal of divisions the mess-stools, chairs for the officers, and reading desk were brought up and placed on deck under the awnings, and at 10.30, when church had been "rigged," the tolling of the bell summoned the officers and ship's company to divine service. Pardoe, after satisfying himself that everything was ready, went aft to report to the Captain, and, somewhat to the surprise of everyone, Commander Potvin presently appeared without his tunic, advanced to the reading desk, and started the service.

At first people thought that he had discarded his jacket merely for the sake of coolness, and, as the day was unusually hot, some of the other officers were half inclined to follow his sensible example. But when at last church was over and Pardoe had occasion to see the Captain again, he discovered the real reason for the "Owner's" removal of his outer garment.

"You may have noticed, Lieutenant Pardoe, that I took the precaution to remove my tunic before reading the Church service," said the skipper.

"I did, sir," answered the First Lieutenant. "In fact, it was so hot, that I nearly followed your example."

Potvin glared. "I hardly understand what you mean, Mr. Pardoe?" he said with asperity. "The fact of its being hot or cold does not effect my religious ideas."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I thought that..."

"Kindly do not impute these motives to me," the Commander went on to say. "I consider that we should all attend divine service in a state of the utmost humility, and I removed my tunic so that I should appear before the Almighty in the same simple garb as the men, not as their commanding officer!" He puffed out his

chest with importance.

Pardoe merely gasped, for the idea that the Almighty might be unduly influenced by the sight of the three gold stripes and curl on his captain's shoulder-straps was quite beyond his comprehension. Nevertheless, Commander Potvin was quite serious, and on leaving his presence Pardoe repaired to his cabin, and wrote a fervent appeal to a former captain of his, asking that officer to use his influence to have him removed from his present appointment. He loved his little *Puffin*, it is true. He would be very sorry to leave her; but anything was better than serving in a ship commanded by a lunatic.

For a week the gunboat's officers and men endured the new routine with what fortitude they could muster. On Monday they had their progressive games, when the watch on board,—the watch whose turn it was to go on leave had gone ashore to a man,—were compelled, much to their disgust, to squat round on the upper deck with draughts, halma, and picture-lotto boards spread out before them. The proceedings were not exactly jovial, for the men looked, and were, frankly bored, while a party of four able seamen, finding the innocent attractions of Happy Families hardly exciting enough, were subsequently brought up before the First Lieutenant on a charge of gambling.

Half an hour after the games started, moreover, two other men, one a marine and the other the ship's steward's assistant, fell in to see him.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Well, sir," the marine explained. "It's like this 'ere. I was told off to play draughts along o' this man, an' all goes well until I makes two o' my men kings an' starts takin' all 'is. Then 'e says as 'ow I've been cheatin', so I says to 'im, polite like, as 'ow I 'adn't done no such thing, an' wi' that 'e ups an' 'its me in the eye, sir, which isn't fair."

"He hit you in the eye?" asked Number One.

"Yes, sir," said the sea-soldier, exhibiting a rapidly swelling cheek.

"What have you to say?" the First Lieutenant asked the alleged assailant.

"What he says isn't true, sir. I did say he had been cheatin', becos he had, becos he was movin' all his other pieces over the board how he liked. I says he mustn't

do that, becous it isn't the game, but he says that as he's been told off to play, he'll play how he bloomin' well likes. I says it's cheatin', and he hits me on the nose, so I hits him back, and we has a bit of a dust up." He exhibited a gory handkerchief as proof of his injuries.

"Do either of you men bear any grudge against the other?" asked Pardoe, knowing that they had often been ashore together.

"No, sir," came the immediate reply.

"Well, go away, and don't make such fools of yourselves again. We can't have all this bickering and fighting over a simple game of draughts."

The two combatants retired grinning, and Pardoe, sighing deeply, walked up and down the deck wrapped in thought. One fact was quite patent, and that was that if the innocent amusements for the ship's company were suffered to continue, he would require the wisdom and patience of a Solomon to arbitrate between the disputants.

On Tuesday they had a reading from Shakespeare, conducted by the Captain, and, to judge from the *sotto-voce* remarks of the audience, they were neither amused nor instructed.

"'E must be wet if 'e thinks we liken listenin' to this 'ere stuff!" muttered Able Seaman McSweeny dismally. "'E talks abart 'is ruddy merchant o' Venice, but I doesn't want to 'ear nothin' abart a.... Eyetalian shopkeeper. I expec's 'e was one o' these 'ere blokes wot wheeled an ice-cream barrer. S'welp me I do!"

A loud titter greeted his utterance, and Commander Potvin stopped reading for a moment, and glanced round with a fierce expression, without being able to see whence the sounds of merriment emanated.

No, judging from the trite remarks from the men, the reading from the works of England's most famous poet and playwright was not an unqualified success.

On Thursday came the Captain's lecture on the effects of alcohol, at which, to Pardoe's great astonishment, there was an unusually full attendance. Even men belonging to the watch ashore were present, some of them bringing friends from other ships with them.

The audience, suspicious at first, eventually became strangely enthusiastic, loud cheering, much stamping on the deck, and even shrieks and cat-calls completely drowning the lecturer's voice for moments at a time. The applause became more vociferous still when the man attending the magic lantern inadvertently placed his hand on its almost red-hot top, and interrupted the proceedings with a loud and very startled: "Ow! The bloomin' thing's burnt me!"

Anyone but the Commander might have detected something sarcastic and ironical in the excessive applause, but he, the possessor of a skin like unto that of an armadillo, was very pleased with the reception of his discourse.

"I told you I had an interesting subject," he said afterwards to the First Lieutenant. "The hearty applause was very gratifying, and it is wonderful how a little straight talk goes down with the men."

"I only hope my lecture will be an equal success, sir," answered Pardoe, rather at a loss what to say.

His subject was "Cities of Ancient Greece."

But at last came the time when the *Puffin* was ordered to sea, and at 8.30 on that fateful morning the gunboat, with her gallant commander standing on the poop in the attitude of Sir Francis Drake starting on his circumnavigation of the world, paddled gently down the crowded harbour and out through the Lye-mun pass. It was in this narrow passage that they had their altercation with a lumbering Chinese junk tacking slowly to and fro against the tide.

"Hard a-port!" ordered Falland, who was conning the ship.

"Hard a-starboard!" contradicted the Commander excitedly. "What are you thinking about, Mr. Falland?"

The Navigator's order would have taken the ship well clear, but the helmsman, perplexed by having two diametrically opposite commands hurled at his head simultaneously, and not knowing which to obey, did nothing.

There came a howl from the gunboat's fore-castle and a frantic, blasphemous yelling from a party of Chinamen clustered on the junk's high poop.

"Full speed astern!" roared Potvin.

But it was too late, for a moment afterwards the *Puffin's* flying jib-boom slid neatly through the very centre of the matting sail on the junk's mizzen mast. More shrill cursing and strident execration from the junk, followed by a series of bumps and crashes as the two vessels collided, bow to stern. A large pig, suspended, according to the pleasant habit of the Chinese, in a wicker-work basket over the junk's quarter, also two similar baskets filled with fowls, became detached from their moorings and fell overboard. Then the junk's mizzen-mast began to bend ominously, and before long, amidst more shrieks and yells, it snapped off short and collapsed on the poop, knocking one elderly Chinaman and two children into the water as it fell. It was followed almost immediately afterwards by the *Puffin's* flying jib-boom.

The gunboat's engines were stopped and the two vessels drifted together side by side, while a party with axes set to work to clear away the wreckage.

"Why on earth don't you look where you're going?" the Commander bawled at the junkmaster.

"Yah me ping wi taow!" howled the Chinaman, which, being interpreted, means, "You tailless son of a devil," the greatest possible insult.

It was followed by more mutual abuse and recrimination, but the gentleman in the junk, since Commander Potvin could not understand a word he said, was popularly supposed to have got the best of the wordy encounter.

But the skipper was quite determined to have somebody's blood, and seeing he could make no impression on the junk, vented his spleen on the Navigator.

"Mr. Falland!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing and his heart full of rage. "The collision was entirely your fault. I shall report the matter to the Admiral, and meanwhile you will remain in your cabin under arrest!"

"But, sir. I really——"

"I require no explanations, sir. You are guilty of gross neglect and carelessness!"

Falland left the poop.

The damage was not sufficiently serious to delay the ship, and, having chopped herself free, she proceeded on her journey, her Commander taking upon himself

the duties of the deposed Navigator.

It was unfortunate that, in calculating the course to be steered, he applied 3° deviation the wrong way. It was equally unfortunate that he miscalculated the set of the current, since it was these two things which, at 11.53 a.m. precisely, caused the gunboat to come into violent contact with a ledge of rocks with barely six feet of water over them at high water.

"Good heavens! What's that?" shouted the skipper, as there came a series of muffled, grinding crashes under water and the ship stopped dead.

"We've hit something, sir," said Pardoe, who was on the poop. They had, and for some hours remained stuck fast. In fact, the *Puffin's* bones would have been there to this day if she had not been steaming at her leisurely, economical speed of 7 1/2 knots, and it was only by sheer good luck, and with the assistance of salvage tugs and appliances from Hong-Kong, that she was ever got off at all. As it was she was merely badly damaged, and came back into harbour in tow of one tug, while a couple of others, with their pumps working at full speed and gushing forth streams of water, were lashed alongside her.

Falland was not court-martialled, but a week later Commander Potvin, after an interview with the Admiral and certain medical officers, found that the climate of Hong-Kong was too rigorous for his constitution, and embarked on board a P. and O. steamer for passage home to England *en route* for Yarmouth.

The gunboat's officers watched her until she was out of sight, and then repaired to the wardroom and indulged in cocktails.

"I'm sorry for him," said No. One, lifting his glass with a grin.

"Here's luck to him, and to us."

"Salve," nodded the doctor, swallowing his potion at a gulp.

The Royal Naval Hospital for mental cases is situated at Yarmouth.

[1] The commanding officer of a man-of-war, whatever his rank, is always "the captain." More familiarly he may be referred to "the owner," "skipper," or "old

man."

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