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STRANGE TALES
FROM THE FLEET

STRANGE TALES FROM THE FLEET

BY
"ETIENNE"

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STRANGE TALES FROM THE FLEET

DAVID AND GOLIATH

CAPTAIN HENRY SCUDD, of the British Mercantile Marine, sat in my wardroom and smoked Royal Naval tobacco with evident pleasure.

Stress of weather had forced me and the destroyer under my command into Dartmouth, and the King's Harbour-master had directed me to anchor in a billet unpleasantly close to the *s.s. Rosebank*, likewise weather-bound, awaiting convoy to the Western Atlantic.

In the middle watch the two ships had swung contrariwise, and our sterns had touched.

This contretemps led to much business with fenders and bad language on our part, but the *s.s. Rosebank* had taken no notice of the affair—her plates were not the sort to be dented with a boathook.

Captain Henry Scudd, being a model of courtesy, had come across in state, in a whaler manned by a steward, two firemen and a boy, to inquire solicitously as to our well-being—and to smoke Naval tobacco in the duty-free shadow of the White Ensign.

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He had stayed to lunch, and after the meal we had discussed German submarines, a question which interested us both from different points of view, for whereas it was my pleasant duty to hunt them, Captain Scudd was liable to find himself the hunted.

Not that he worried—he had been torpedoed twice, and he reckoned the *Rosebank* a fast ship—for had not his Chief Engineer squeezed eleven knots and a kick out of her ?

When he said this I felt a great humbleness, for a week previously I had complained that my speed had dropped to 31 knots, and what were destroyers' engines coming to, etc., etc.

Captain Henry Scudd gazed round the ward-room.

" Smart pictures, though I don't know that Mrs Scudd would pass them," he remarked, indicating our Kirchners with the stem of his pipe.

I agreed that they were charming, and mentally wondered what Mrs Scudd's pictures were like.

" Women "—began Captain Scudd, his eyes fastened on "La Coquette."

I waited anxiously ; there was an air about the Captain that seemed to indicate he had seen life in the course of the last twenty-five years, but it was not to be, evidently he did not feel that he knew me well enough, for he suddenly remarked:

" Damned rummy for me to be sitting in a Royal Navy mess."

"How's that," said I.

"Well, Lieutenant Fitz Price, there was a day when I hated the R.N.—you stunk in my nostrils, as the Book says." .

I expressed my sorrow that this should have been so, and demanded further details.

"It was in '01 that the trouble started," replied the Captain. "I was skipper of a decent little craft called the——well, call her the *David*."

"Yes, that's a good name, call her the *David*," and Captain Scudd chuckled to himself.

"I was in the Black Sea trade," he continued, "and one December morning I fetched up off Gibraltar. Due to go in for orders, I was."

"As I turned up for the Breakwater I saw a blasted great battleship, guns dotted about her like barnacles, and five hundred sailors to make her look pretty, standing up for the same entrance. I had her abaft me starboard beam—right oh! you say I had to give way."

"I'm sure I never . . ."

Captain Scudd did not allow me to continue.

"No, sir! I maintain she was an overtaking ship. Howmsoever, we both drew near the entrance, and a bicycle-maker from Birmingham could see it was-going to be a near thing."

"The battleship I'm going to call the *Goliath*" continued Captain Scudd, "blew her syren, and hoisted international flags, which, when I had time to look 'em up next day, meant '*Stand out of my course.*'"

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" Now I had my pride then just as I have now, so I held on. Nearer and nearer we got to the hole in the wall, and nearer we got to each other. My quartermaster—we had dagoes in those days—tried to put the helm over without orders. I knocked him down and took the wheel myself. Well, the whole of Gib. would have seen two ships with a combined beam of no feet trying to get through an entrance 120 feet wide, if the *Goliath*, by a turn of speed, hadn't got past us and got there first. We were so close his torpedo booms carried away my sea boat, but it was a neat bit of work with a ship that size, and I could have forgiven him if a gilded young popinjay, in a suit of white ducks with brass buttons, hadn't sung out from her fore-bridge with a megaphone: ' Noah ahoy! I'll send you a copy of the rules "of the road when we've anchored,'

"And all these blinkin' sailors laughing like a pack of jackasses at ME, a man with twenty years' sailing in those days, and an extra master's certificate. I can assure you I said a thing or two; I hadn't met Mrs Scudd then."

There was a long pause.

" Was that the end ? " I ventured to remark.

" By no means, Lieutenant Fitz Price," replied the Captain, " for in March '02 I was plugging through the Bay, homeward bound, wind force seven, sea ditto, when whom should I meet rolling her guts out, but my old friend the

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Goliath. I had a look at her through glasses, and saw a crowd of sailors vomiting good and hearty over her lee side. That gave me an idea.

"I routed out some flags, and hoisted, '*Please close me. I have urgent question to ask.*'"

"Round came the *Goliath*. Lord, how she rolled when she got in the trough, then as she wallowed about just off my beam, I ran up with me own hands: '*Have you any sick on board? I can supply medical assistance.*'" I'd have given a month's pay to be on her bridge.

"After a long pause she ran up a four-letter signal."

"What was it?" I asked.

"*You win*" replied Captain Scudd with relish.

"Thank you," said the Captain, "à whisky water, please." Then as he sipped his drink:

"But now, Mr Fitz Price, things are different. This war has taught us both. This convoy work has changed my ideas. As for you gentlemen in destroyers, well—you're grand."

"The war has shown us, Captain," said I, "that those that sail the sea are of two kinds. 'The Hun and the others'; and as far as your service and mine are concerned they are both one, and long may they remain so."

"Hear, hear," said the Captain.

As we went on deck and awaited his boat, I said:

"May I offer you a couple of pounds of Naval tobacco, Captain Scudd?"

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The Captain grinned.

" Well, as you rightly said, we're both one, and I hate these Customs officers. Thank you, I shall be obliged, Mr Fitz Price."

PINCHING

IT was at 9.30 a.m. one day in the smoking-room of a submarine depot ship. Several first lieutenants of submarines were disposed in as many arm-chairs; theoretically these officers should have been in their boats, which lay in serried ranks of four submarines in each group, alongside the depot ship—but this is a true story.

The morning papers had been finished and cast on the deck, and conversation ranged from Foch's latest move to the awful flavour of the margarine at breakfast.

Lamp-post John—6 ft. 5 in his socks—was just saying: "Of all the muck I've ever tasted, that axle grease this morning was the worst," when the Second Torpedo Lieutenant of the depot came into the room and joined the group. He was an officer of some twenty-five summers, and, like nearly all Naval officers, going slightly bald on top. He loved his stomach, and, quickly grasping the situation, remarked :

"As for the so-called milk, it nearly made me vomit."

"Muck," tersely agreed Maurice Black.

"*I* daresay the Germans wouldn't call it a bad breakfast," mildly remarked the Padre.

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" Bosh," exclaimed the Second Torpedo Lieutenant? " Do you suppose Hindenburg sits down and pours a mixture of sour milk and cheese over his porridge ? "

Then with bewildering rapidity he changed the subject.

" By the way, you blokes, do you know E 57 is going to Chatham this evening to pay off ? " This simple announcement had a most curious effect on the assembled officers, for with one accord they rose, and each murmuring something about " getting on with the day's work," they left the mess.

The Second Torpedo Lieutenant smiled sardonically and, sinking into one of the vacant chairs, said to the Padre, " Where the carcass is, there also shall the vultures be found."

" Explain yourself," replied the priest.

The Second Torpedo Lieutenant laughed.

" You see," he said, " I heard this morning from certain sources of information that had the tip which is straight, from the Captain's office, that E 57 was going to pay off, so I straightway sent for my gunner, and, speaking in the vernacular, I said to him, ' Mr Tovey, E 57 goes to Chatham to pay off—get busy.'

" Mr Tovey, a splendid fellow, reported to me just now that he had secured: ' Boxes of torpedo tools, one in number. Ammeters, two in number. Pressure gauges, one in number, and a miscellaneous collection of battery thermometers, two ventilating fans, and other sundries."

" But surely you don't mean Mr Tovey has purloined these articles, do you ? " said the parson in a scandalized voice.

" My dear Padre, since you only joined up to save souls for the duration I will explain further. You must savce that in a boat all the fixtures and stores are either consumable or non-consumable ; in the latter case they are said to be on charge. Now, when a boat goes to the dockyard to pay off, if she has got three fans or two tool-boxes on her charge sheet, her crew have got to produce these fans or boxes of tools, or else pay miserably for them. But it doesn't matter what condition the gear is in—consequently, if E 57 has a lovely tool-box full of beautiful tools, and I have one, which by reason of much use is full of broken spanners, I pinch her box and give her mine; in fact one does the ' New lamp for old ' stunt reversed, right through the boat. As for consumable stores, of course one pinches every blinkin' thing one can lay one's hands on. She needn't arrive with any of those on board at Chatham, and you can lay your last Bradbury E 57 won't take much away, now that I've combed her out myself and told the secret to those first lieutenants. They'd pinch her engines, saddle tanks and conning-tower if they could. Have you got the idea ? "

The Padre declared that he had, and mentally docketed another story for his parishioners when he went back to civil life.

"An hour later the Second Torpedo Lieutenant

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strolled along the jetty to where E 57 was lying. A number of first lieutenants were entering the boat through the after-hatch. Each was accompanied by a sailor from his boat. At regular intervals one of these henchmen appeared at E 57's foremost hatch, laden with loot, which he would spirit away to his boat and return for more.

Val Sepping, the first lieutenant of E 57, moodily surveyed the scene from the conning-tower, as he kept a sharp eye open and demanded categorical assurance that a substitute had been brought into the boat for each piece of stuff taken out.

Lamp-post John suddenly uncoiled himself, and, stretching up through the foremost hatch, shouted:

" I say, Val, do you want your small magnetic compass ? We'll give you one instead, of course.

" What's wrong with it ? " asked Val.

" Well, the magnets have dropped off the card/" admitted John.

" Well, there's nothing doing," announced Val.

" We might need a magnetic compass going round to Chatham, that's to say if there's a boat left by 8 p.m. to go in, and we aren't going to run aground for your sake."

" Right-O," replied John, as undeterred by his failure he vanished into the boat.

Inside E 57 all was animation. First lieutenants, armed with tools, conscientiously worked up and down the length of the boat, removing

lockers, switches, light shades, etc., etc. In the central room Maurice Black loudly raised his voice in some bitter complaint.

After lunch that day a group of lieutenants, in command of submarines, were discussing the impending departure of E 57. Her past career was reviewed, as were also the careers of the notable men who in turn had shepherded her into the dangerous waters of the Bight, until after four years the old junk was to be repaired and almost rebuilt.

" Well, anyhow, my Second Dickie¹ pinched some useful gear out of her this morning," said Colin, Captain of E —.

" So did mine," remarked J——, Captain of E—.

" What about yours, B. ? " inquired Colin. " Was he one of the foolish virgins. Hasn't your boat got a memento of E 57 ? "

Lieutenant Bladder looked up and replied, "That silly fool Maurice came to me this morning and told me the looting party was starting, and could he borrow my long screw-driver. I lent——"

" Not that good-looking one you pinched from a pew in church on Intercession Day, was it ? " anxiously inquired J——.

" The very one," gloomily remarked Blackler. " Well, I lent it to him, and he put it down on a bunk in E 57 whilst he was trying to find the best way to unscrew a box full of accumulators.

¹ First Lieutenant, or Second in Command.

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When he turned round the driver had gone. Whilst he was looking for that, some shark came along and took out the accumulators and put back a set with broken containers. In fact, one way and another, we positively went down the spout over E57."

The Second Torpedo Lieutenant, who had been listening in silence to this recital of failure, beckoned to his messenger, " Go and tell Chief Petty Officer Hemp to muster all our screw-drivers, and warn him that Lieutenant Maurice Black has lost one and may look for it in the torpedo shed."

ONE OF THE R.N.Ds.

“**N**OW on the rammer number of this 'ere gun becoming a casualty or in any hother manner renderin' 'imself unfit fer dooty, number 5 will smartly take his place and perform 'is dooties as before de-tailed. Gun's crew—close up!”

Petty Officer Bates, the perspiring and somewhat loquacious gunner's mate, wiped his brow and surveyed the bewildered crowd of men who clumsily scrambled to obey his order and close up round the 6-inch gun, the drill of which they were learning.

These men were the Kitchener's Army of the Navy, the R.N.Ds., or "Winston's Brigade," as they are often nick-named.

Straight from the Crystal Palace the draft had been sent for training to a light cruiser. Small wonder if ship life seemed strange to men who a few months earlier had toiled in the hum-drum trades of civil life.

The gunner's mate, when taking a class, had a habit of prefacing his extracts from the drill book with a few choice remarks on life in general, for in the depths of his heart he rather imagined himself an orator. The gun's crew took up

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their stations round the gun and expectantly awaited their instructor's inevitable criticism.

Petty Officer Bates began as follows: " Now, becos you are kitted up as seamen and wearin' yer number fives, don't any of yer go fer to himagine that ye're bluejackets, 'cos yer ain't, in any manner o' speakin'. It his hestimated that hupwards o' eleven years' continuous training " —the class shuddered—"is required to make a fully qualified able seaman, 'oldin' badges, and a ratin' of gunlayer, second class. Hexceptional men"—there was an impressive pause—" 'ave been known to become gunner's mate hafter honly nine years' hexperience. 'Avin' told yer this—Class, pay attention !

" Hon the 'orizon, range 5000, deflection 20 right, hindependent fire. Commence."

The class feverishly went through the motions of loading and firing and again loading the gun, while the gunner's mate poured forth a torrent of criticism and correction.

Suddenly he roared:

" Rammer number, fall out."

Ordinary Seaman Packwith (late piano player at a kinematograph theatre), grinned sheepishly, dropped his rammer, and thankfully retired to one side.

No. 4 pretended to insert a projectile into the breech, and then ensued a dreadful pause. The rammer was still on the deck. Instinctively the class turned to look at Petty Officer Bates—all save No. 5. He was gazing at the distant High-

lands and wondering whether from the top of the most distant purple peak a clear-sighted man would be able to see the western coast, and more especially the kirk tower of Portnamuchree.

At last Petty Officer Bates marshalled up his forces and the volcano erupted. "Num-ber five, will you wake up? What the 'ell's the good of me a-givin' you the detail an' you 'alf asleep?"

No. 5—otherwise Ordinary Seaman Strong, R.N.D.; place of residence, Portnamuchree; trade or occupation, crofter—started violently, seized the rammer and wildly plunged it into the breech of the gun. Unfortunately he did so wrong end first.

The oratorical soul of Petty Officer Bates delighted in such an opportunity. For full five minutes the admiring if somewhat nervous class listened to the gunner's mate's opinion as to the intellect and general intelligence of R.N.Ds. in general, and of No. 5 in particular. The address concluded with an eloquent appeal to the gods of battle that they might be pleased to ordain that Ordinary Seaman Strong should never find himself rammer number of PI gun when that weapon was discharging lyddite at the Germans.

"I dout me I would have no verra great deeficulty with yon rammer if ah was fetchin' the Germans," quietly remarked No. 5 at the conclusion of the gunner's mate's remarks. This latter individual snorted, and the drill was resumed.

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This little incident took place in February 1916.

On May 31st of the same year a shell burst on the boat deck of the same light cruiser. It burst close behind P I gun.

A hundred vicious fragments lashed the surroundings, including the gun's crew. Ordinary Seaman Strong, of His Majesty's R.N. Division, found himself on the deck amid a heap of wounded and dead men.

At the moment he felt no pain and did not really know that his left arm had been almost severed at the shoulder. He did observe that the gun was standing idle, with a projectile lying just inside the breech. The rammer was on the deck; its master, burnt to death by the flash of the shell, lay by its side.

Something about the rammer number becoming a casualty and the duties of No. 5 under such circumstances must have passed through Strong's mind; he was seen to stagger to his feet, pick up the rammer with his right hand and, holding its shaft against his chest, he applied the rammer head to the projectile and lurched forward. The impetus of his body served to ram the shell home. Some one pushed him up against the inside of the gun shield, threw out the rammer, and inserted a cordite charge. The same hand shut the breech, and a voice hoarsely shouted: " Ready! "

Petty Officer Bates, sitting on the deck with

his back up against the funnel casing and his life-blood streaming out at each breath from a hole in his chest, had the inexpressible satisfaction, a few Seconds before his senses left him, of seeing the gun fire.

Strong, practically unconscious from pain and loss of blood, rocked drunkenly to the discharge of P I gun ; then quite slowly his legs slid forward and his back moved down the smooth surface of the shield till he collapsed on to the deck like an empty accordion. A minute or two later there was a lull in the action. The stretcher parties hastened up the batteries, and both Bates and Strong were picked up and taken below. They each made a brief visit to the stokers' bathroom, where the doctors were doing what they could. From there they were carried into the wardroom and laid on mattresses placed on the table.

Twenty-four hours later I had a moment to spare and, armed with a tin of cigarettes, I went into the wardroom and walked around among the seriously wounded whom we had placed in there.

Strong was lying flat on his back, his face was icy white, and it was difficult to believe that life still remained. The sick berth steward told me that he had never recovered consciousness since the action, and that there was no hope, as the shock and loss of blood had been tremendous. On the next mattress to String, and lying almost alongside him, Petty Officer Bates was slowly dying. It needed no doctor to tell me that in

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this case the end could not be far. The man's face was drawn with pain, and little sweat drops clustered on the forehead told of the agony of his passing. He was quite conscious and recognized me as I bent over him. Rolling over on one side he let his gaze rest on the statue-like form of Ordinary Seaman Strong.

Slowly nodding in his head, he whispered reflectively, "'E did remember his rammer drill, an' that's a fact."

At first I was at a loss to understand what Bates was driving at. Then I remembered that a month ago before I had been officer of the watch one afternoon. A class of R.N.Ds. were being drilled, and when the drill was over I pointed out to Petty Officer Bates that perhaps he expected rather a lot from the class. I had mentioned the rammer incident as an example, and said that I thought it quite possible that Ordinary Seaman Strong might be right when he said that he would remember his drill in action.

It was not till some days later that I heard from an eye-witness how Strong had rammed home the waiting projectile. Then I fully understood Bates's last remark.

They both died within an hour of each other and we buried them together in the North Sea.

THE STUNT

"**R**AISE steam with all despatch and report when ready to proceed." The Commander read the signal aloud and added, "Rather cramps your style, Pay. Weren't you due to meet the widow in the 'Burgh to-morrow afternoon?"

"Men must work and women must weep," loftily quoted the Paymaster. A general laugh from the occupants of the *Porthampton's* smoking-room greeted this retort.

"When will you be ready, Chief?" inquired the Commander. The Engineer Commander looked at his watch; it was 8 p.m. He knew that he could be ready to go at 10 p.m., though officially he was supposed to have four hours' notice. Being a Scotchman and canny, and realizing the desirability of "Clearing his yard-arm" in case of unforeseen delay, he replied, "Well, I'll get both watches of stoker boys down there, and with luck we ought to have 22 knots by 10.45 P-m«"

A signalman entered and handed the pad to the Commander, who read out, "Rear-Admiral to Twelfth Light Cruiser Squadron. Report estimated time when you will be ready to proceed."

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" Any replies through yet from the other three ships ? " demanded the Commander.

" Yes, sir, as I left the bridge the *Westingham* had 10.30 p.m. flying/

" Did I say 10.45 p.m.," interrupted the Chief. " I've just been working it out, and I cancel that estimate and substitute 10.15 p.m." He looked aggressively round the smoking-room, but no one deemed it wise to comment on this remarkable change of opinion. A few minutes later the smoking-room was empty, and the shrill whistle of the boatswain's pipe, mingling with the tramp of many feet, showed that both watches of the hands were preparing the ship for sea.

In the wardroom the Paymaster, the Assistant Paymaster, the Clerk, and the Chaplain were having an animated discussion.

" Well, as far as I can make out, I have the forenoon watch to-morrow, which gives me a night in," announced the Pay, consulting a small and dirty piece of paper.

" Surely that is hardly correct, Pay," protested the Padre. " Last time we were out I had the first watch the night we left harbour, the middle the next, and the morning the night after,"

" Ah, that was because the Clerk was on the sick list," cryptically remarked the Assistant Pay, one Jones by name.

The Clerk looked apologetic.

" Well, anyhow," said the Pay, " we shall not

be getting cypher signals through until midnight, so there will only be the middle and morning decoding watches to be kept."

"Quite so," said the Padre, "and even if I am not entitled to a night in, it would be my turn for the 8 to 12 watch to-night,"

"But there ain't an 8 to 12 watch, as you call it, oh, turbulent Priest," retorted the Assistant Paymaster.

"I wouldn't mind the watches so much," replied the man of God, "if only your worthless assistant would relieve me within—well—say—half an hour of the appointed time. I notice he always follows me on the list. Why does he never follow you?"

"I know his disgusting habits too well," laughingly retorted the Pay, but meanwhile, *mes enfants*, we must fix up these watches—the middle is the worst so the Clerk will keep that."

"Sir, I——"

"You were about to say, Cleric?" inquired the Paymaster with a paternal smile.

"I said, Yes, sir," answered the Clerk with praiseworthy presence of mind.

"Well, that one is settled," remarked the Pay. "As to the morning, we three will gamble with cards as to whom is the lucky little boy."

"My conscience——" began the Padre, still clinging to the hope of a night in.

"How you can have the face to say that you've got a conscience, after the way you

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rooked me at Bridge last night, defeats my simple mind," reproved Jones, as he produced a pack.

" Now lads, cut the cards, ace high, lowest one lurked," announced the Pay.

The Padre drew an ace and at once left the mess to avoid all further discussion. The Paymaster drew a queen, his Assistant drew a knave, much to the dismay of the Clerk, who foresaw with accuracy that his first watch would be prolonged to 1 a.m. owing to the impossibility of getting Jones to turn out of his bunk in time to relieve him punctually. The Paymaster called for refreshment on the strength of his success, and the drinks were just being served when two lieutenants R.N., one lieutenant R.N.R., and a Sub., known as the " Marquis " came into the mess. They were all dressed in old clothes, with sweaters and scarfs, the Marquis living up to his name with a magnificent pair of fur-lined gloves.

The four officers did not appear to be on speaking terms, nor were they on such terms at the moment, for they constituted the deck watch-keepers of the ship and had just had a furious argument as to who was to keep the middle watch. The pack of cards, and the expression on the Assistant Paymaster's face, acted in a remarkable manner on the watch-keepers.

" Hullo," said Lieutenant Johnson to the R.N.R. " Unless appearance' are deceptive the

coding brigade have had a difference of opinion *re* watches. I've never met such a crowd for 'kagging.' "

" We never have any trouble in fixing our watches up in this Trades Union," remarked the Marquis.

" They should do a few months in the Merchant Service," said the R.N.R., "then they'd know what watch-keeping was. *I* remember going from Callao to Quebec in a seven-knot packet with a cracked connecting rod. I was——"

" On the bridge the whole time and never sober once," interrupted the Paymaster. " That reminds me that on one occasion when in the *Valetta*, up the Straits, I typed incessantly in German characters for ninety-five hours on a Blick. On another occasion I remember, way back in the 'oughts—no, it was in the nineties—at a Court of Inquiry. I——"

Further reminiscences were interrupted by the entrance of-the Commander's messenger.

" Commander, 'e sez, sir, 'e sez, 'e sez, 'e——"

" Well, what does the Commander say, boy ? " demanded Johnson.

" Well, sir, Commander, 'e sez to me, 'e sez, sir. Where the 'ell's all the lootenants—find 'em, boy—'e sez, sir, so I comes to the wardroom, sir, and Commander, 'e sez to me, 'e sez——"

What further remarks passed the Commander's lips were never repeated, as with one accord, with a sarcastic farewell from the Paymaster,

¹ Kagging, arguing.

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the four officers hastily made their way to the upper deck and added their voices to the uproar that is inevitable when preparing a ship for sea in total darkness. A spot of light from an electric torch marked the rapid movements of the Commander as he dashed up and down the boat deck, damning everything and every one, including himself, with nice impartiality.

In a surprisingly short time the boats were secured for sea, life-lines rove, guns tested and cleaned away, and the upper deck was deserted save for a group of figures indistinct in the gloom, bunched together on the forecastle.

The measured clank of the cable, link by link, indicated that the anchor was coming home. For an instant the cable-holder stopped; the ship seemed to stiffen momentarily, then relax, upon which the cable rattled noisily, and a tiny signalling torch winked its message from the officer on the forecastle to the upper bridge—the anchor had been broken out and was away.

Far down in the brilliantly illuminated engine-room a bell rang, and the turbines began to add to the many millions of revolutions they had done since 1914. The ship rapidly gained speed, and the rest of the squadron, making their way delicately and with perfect precision into station astern, the vague and shadowy line of ships moved towards the protecting boom. As the light cruisers passed the Fleet flagship, speed was reduced and a panting motor launch dashed

alongside; a seaman dangling in a bowline was lowered and received a sealed envelope, and the motor launch disappeared into the darkness. The operation orders were taken to the bridge and delivered to the Admiral, who, after perusing them, consulted a large scale chart of the North Sea, and decided on his dispositions for the night. Five minutes later a series of cryptic numerals were flashed from ship to ship down the line astern; ten minutes afterwards each Captain knew the Admiral's instructions as certainly as if they had spoken to him in person.

Just before the *Porthampton* reached the boom, a picquet boat in command of some light-hearted snottie nipped across her knife-edged ram, avoiding destruction by yards. The infuriated Admiral seized a megaphone and shouted:

" You———young fool. What ship do you come from ? "

Needless to say there was no reply. On top of the cabin of the picquet boat lay a life-buoy, with a lantern standing inside. The Admiral, not wishing to be balked of his lawful prey, ordered every one on the bridge to read the name on the life-buoy. Six pairs of night glasses were levelled at the retreating boat, but, as if by intuition, some one in the boat simultaneously threw a large coat completely over the lantern and the buoy. The Admiral acted at once, for, seizing his megaphone, he shouted:

" You may be a fool, but you aren't such a

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——fool as I thought. Good boy that," he remarked to the Flag Captain. "I wish I did know his name, we'd ask him to dinner."

Somewhere away on the beam a snottie was wishing he had been able to hear what had been shouted at him, and wondering whether he had better put on thick underclothing on the off chance of an interview with the Sub. next morning.

Outside the harbour there was more discreet flashing, and a covey of destroyers, invisible save for the splash of their bow waves, tailed on to the line.

Next morning, at dawn, the destroyers were flung out ahead and wide on the wings, as scouts. It was evident to all that the squadron was searching for something. At 1 p.m. "Stand by for instant action" was signalled, and scarcely had the flags fluttered down from the foremast of the *Porthampton* than the complete guns' crews, control parties, stretcher parties, etc., etc., in each ship of the squadron were at their battle stations. The guns' crews resembled monks of some ancient and secret order in their masks, baggy clothes and white hoods of anti-flashproof material. At 2 p.m. a floating mine was passed, an ancient relic of some long-forgotten mining stunt in 1914. Half an hour later several German ones, of later manufacture, were sighted and destroyed by one of the destroyers. As tea was being served out a periscope was sighted 2000 yards on the beam of the wing light cruiser. Three

destroyers raced madly to the spot, and as the squadron swept on to the eastward, dull detonations from astern indicated that the U-boat was being heavily depth charged, and dealt with according to her fortune. Experienced gentlemen stated that indications were promising, and that oft disappointed hopes might be realized this time; the event of the day being when the Secretary in the *Porthampton*, who was deciphering in the wireless cabinet, was suddenly seen to be sprinting vigorously up to the bridge, a signal in his hand; this unusual spectacle roused every one to the greatest excitement, and the eastern horizon was ardently scanned by hundreds of eyes.

At 6.30 p.m. long wisps of smoke, as from fast moving ships, were seen ahead. Unfortunately there lay between the Twelfth Light Cruiser Squadron and those distant ships certain hidden obstacles beneath the calm sea, which it would have been madness to attempt to pass. Two miles from the edge of the minefield the squadron turned sixteen points and headed west. The "stunt" was over, and two brief hours had prevented the Twelfth Light Cruiser Squadron from cutting off the enemy light forces.

As the squadron steamed west a seaplane droned up from the eastward, and made several fruitless attempts to bomb the squadron, which retaliated viciously with every high-angle gun that would, bear, but without causing the Hun 'plane any damage.

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The return journey was marked by one curious incident. It happened during the afternoon of the following day, when about eighty miles from her base, that H.M.S. *Porthampton* passed within 800 yards of a British trawler. As the cruiser went by, the whole crew of the trawler lined up on deck, gesticulated wildly and shouted something, but no one could make out what they had said. Fearing to miss information of value the Admiral signalled to the squadron to disregard his movements, and ordered his Captain to put his helm over and pass the trawler again. Once more the fishermen waved their arms and shouted something that sounded like "Waow—Yaow—Wow—Waow—Bow—Bis."

Going at twenty knots the *Porthampton* swept past them before they could repeat their shouts. Fuming at the delay, the Admiral, though fearing he would miss his tide at the base, decided that the only way to hear what they had to say was to ease speed. The necessary orders were given, and at ten knots the cruiser slowly turned and came practically alongside the trawler. As the two ships came together, with startling clearness these words came over the water, "Do you want to buy some fish, Captain?" The scene on the bridge can be more easily imagined than described, for by this time the rest of the squadron were hull down on the horizon.

At i a.m. the squadron, still led by the *Porthampton*, thanks to an extra knot the Chief

had knocked out of her, glided into the base and noisily dropped their anchors.

At 5 a.m. all four ships were endeavouring for the " umteenth " time to establish a new coaling record.

By noon they were ready for the next " stunt."

THE CLASSICS AFLOAT

AT a certain Naval technical school on the northern coast of England, the officers thereof were collected together in one place. They were in the smoking-room, and it was 11.30 on a Sunday morning. Church had just finished, and the mind of man turned naturally to higher things. The Electric Light Lieutenant was endeavouring to ensnare the Torpedo Officer into an admission that a recent development in the torpedo would entail an addition to the daily tests of that weapon. The Whitehead Officer, mindful of previous traps, was cautiously making a few rapid sketches on the back of an envelope before committing himself to a reply. It was the newly-joined R.N.V.R. Lieutenant, sometime Professor of Electro-magnetics at a famous University, who startled the assembly by remarking:

"I say, No. I, what's the motto of this place?"

The First Lieutenant, who was mentally considering the case of Stoker Georgeland—defaulter—in that he did apply for five days' leave to plant peas in his allotment, investigation establishing that:

(a) He had no allotment.

(b) The pea-planting season was over, looked up and remarked :

" What's that you said, most learned Professor ? "

" I ask," replied the latter, " what is the motto of this famous establishment ? "

" Motter," repeated the First Lieutenant with an air of bewilderment, then after a moment's thought, he added, " I don't believe we've got one."

" Well, I must say that is a lamentable admission," replied the man of electro-magnetics.

" I thought there was nothing we could not do in the Navy," complacently continued one of its latest recruits, as he cleaned his pince-nez.

" No more there ain't, professor!" ungrammatically retorted the First Lieutenant, all his *esprit de corps* roused by the taunt.

" Wilkins, be so good as to agitate the bell and summon the marine sentry to my presence."

' A moment later the sentry entered, and saluted with the mechanical rigidity which leads one to suppose that the sockets of arms, as supplied to the Royal Marines, are not as those supplied to lesser mortals.

" Ask Mr Watt to speak to me," said the First Lieutenant.

The sentry withdrew.

A few minutes elapsed whereupon Mr Watt, Gunner (T), of some twenty years' service, entered the smoking-room.

" You sent for me, sir ? "

" Ah, yes, Mr Watt, a small matter requires

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attention. Sit down, won't you? Will you have a——"

"Been a member of the Third Naval Lodge of Independent Order of Good Templars ever since your father, as Captain of this 'ere establishment, founded same in '79, sir."

"Ah, yes, of course, Mr Watt, I had quite forgotten. Well now, it's like this. Mr Smith has just pointed out to me that, strange to say, we have no motto in this establishment/'

"I always tells them young E.As. wot jines up 'ere we 'as a motto, sir. I tells 'em 'Work like Helen—b—Happy,' " expostulated Mr Watt.

"Quite so, quite so, Mr Watt—and a very excellent motto too, I'm sure, but what we need is something classical—something to inscribe on the mess silver, paint on the quarter-deck screen, and so on."

"Yessir."

"Well, I have decided that as you are the oldest officer on the establishment, it is only right that you should have a share in this effort."

Mr Watt swelled with pride, and a noise as of wind whistling through hollow teeth rose on the air.

"Now, what are your ideas on the subject, Mr Watt?"

"Can't say as how I have any touttee de sweetee, as they say abroad, sir."

"Well, of course, it is a bit sudden, but I see from your conversation we have come to the

right shop—classical education and all the rest of it."

"Well, I won't say as how I haven't done a bit of schoolin' in my day, sir," admitted Mr Watt.

"The general idea," continued the First Lieutenant, "is that it should be a well-turned phrase in Latin, containing some sentiment characteristic of the school—something like 'Zealous for work, and working through zeal.' That's only a little extempore work of my own," concluded the First Lieutenant, "but it outlines the idea. Now what do you say?"

There was a lengthy pause. Finally, Mr Watt, clearing his throat, spoke :

"Well, sir, I ain't got no Latin drill book in the ship, but over at my 'ome I think I could figger out something wot would be a credit to the Service, so I respectfully arsts for a day's leaf for that werry purpose "

"Certainly, Mr Watt, by all means. Of course you will be excused all other duty whilst engaged on this job."

A few minutes later Mr Watt was explaining to a startled gathering of his mess-mates in the Warrant Officers' mess, that for the time being, whilst engaged on hexperimental work for the fust lootenant, he would be prevented from taking his turn at "duty officer of the day."

An hour later, in the solitude of the parlour of "Trafalgar"—semi-detached villa—Mr Watt

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wrestled with the problem. Outside the locked door Thomas Watt, schoolboy, wondered greatly what his father could be doing with his Latin Primer. Actually, Mr Watt was making his first acquaintance with the Classics. For an hour he searched the book industriously in an effort to discover some well-turned phrase, which, by a stretch of imagination, might be considered applicable to a torpedo school. His industry was in vain. The whole book seemed to hinge on *mensa*, a table; *puella*, a girl, etc., etc.

Mr Watt tried a new tack. He first wrote down a motto in English, and then endeavoured to translate it into Latin. From many flights of fancy he eventually eliminated, all save one, which was "Renowned for experimental work,"

He knew this to be true of the establishment, for many instruments in the Fleet and improvements in the torpedo had originated in the Northern School. Next followed the task of putting it into Latin. This accomplished, Mr Watt wiped his brow, and, opening a cupboard, withdrew from it a small bottle, on which was a label marked "POISON." Its contents represented that amount of rum, which scientists have assured the victualling department may reasonably be expected to evaporate from a ten-gallon cask in one calendar month.

It is only necessary to add that Mrs Watt was own sister to the establishment's ship steward, and that the latter dined *en famitte* with the

Watts on the first of each month. The label was for the benefit of chance visitors. Having absorbed a generous tot, Mr Watt opened the door, shouted in his best quarter-deck voice, "Annie—good shake at seven bells," and forthwith began his afternoon's shut-eye, usually obtainable only on the Sabbath.

The next morning Mr Watt interviewed the First Lieutenant.

"What luck, Mr Watt?"

"Well, sir, I don't think as how you'll think it so bad, sir," and he handed No. I a piece of paper on which was written these words: "Laborum Experimentum Bonum Plenum," meaning in English, "Good experimental work—plenty of it."

"Hm," said the First Lieutenant. "The sentiments are Mark I. Laborum Experimentum Bonum Plenum." He rolled it off his tongue. "And it sounds all right. Got a nice metre and all that sort of thing—in fact I think it will do very well."

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Nine years later—in 1918 to be exact—a young lieutenant on the Staff at the Northern School was much struck by the straightforward simplicity of their Latin motto. He inquired as to its origin, but no one could enlighten him. Persistent research led his footsteps to a semi-detached villa, recently renamed "Jutland Bank," and it was from the lips of Mr Watt, Gunner (T),

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retired, that most of the foregoing material was gleaned.

Mr Thomas Watt, Mate, R.N., a nice-looking young man of twenty-four or twenty-five, on short leave from the Grand Fleet, supplied a little of the local colour.

AS FICTION, NOT AS FACT ?

U. D. 66 blew her ballast and rose to the surface, the water streaming off her hog-back in foaming cataracts.

A hatch was thrown open and seamen tumbled out and manned her 4-inch gun, which, in this particular type, remains up, covered with grease when the boat dives.

Eight hundred yards on the beam His Majesty's patrol boat, *Crimson Rambler*, suddenly cocked her fast-sinking bows into the air and wobbled to the bottom in fifteen fathoms.

She left on the surface Lieutenant Vaughan, R.N.V.R., her commanding officer, and Ordinary Seaman Monel, Royal Naval Division.

Lieutenant Vaughan could swim after a fashion. Ordinary Seaman Monel made no pretence to have acquired the art during his training at Crystal Palace, consequently there was a slight commotion in the water, a choking cry of "Look out for yourself, sir !" a brief struggle, and Ordinary Seaman Monel went to the bottom where ten of his mess-mates lay in the wreck of the *Crimson Rambler*.

Lieutenant Vaughan was still on the surface, though considerably exhausted by his well-meant but fruitless effort to support Monel.

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He would doubtless shortly have followed his ship had not the U.D. 66, by a skilful piece of seamanship, edged over towards him in such a manner that he found himself lying on her foremost port hydroplane. A big seaman stretched down and, catching him by the collar, jerked him up on to the foredeck.

As he steadied himself on a stanchion he heard a click, and looking up saw that a bespectacled officer was photographing him from the top of the conning-tower. This individual was the propaganda expert, and his duty was to take cinematograph pictures and photographs of the work of the U-boats.

Lieutenant Vaughan was taken into the boat and brought before the Captain, who introduced himself as Commander Rudelstein, and added the unnecessary words, "You are my prisoner."

"So it would seem," replied Vaughan in perfect German.

"You speak German admirably," politely remarked the Commander in the same language.

"Well, I was at Heidelberg University for three years," replied the Englishman.

"Ach so! my native city," exclaimed the Commander, much interested, "but excuse me, I must see to the boat, or we shall have some of your confounded patrols on top of us. You sent off a wireless message without a doubt?"

"Possibly yes; again, possibly no!" answered

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Vaughan. " Meanwhile, I should like to point out *I'm* soaking wet. May I dry my clothes ? "

" Of course; I'm sorry I forgot. Here, Hans—my first lieutenant—have this officer's clothes dried and fit him out meanwhile with some of mine."

" Boat's crew : 'Achtung!' Diving stations."

The crew were well trained, and in a few minutes the boat was down to thirty feet and travelling slowly away from the scene of her exploit.

Lieutenant Vaughan was accommodated in a small screened-off compartment containing a camp bed, next to the Captain's cabin.

An armed sentry mounted guard outside. At tea-time Commander Rudelstein visited his prisoner and asked whether he might join him in a cigar.

Vaughan, thoroughly bored with being cooped up, gladly assented, and the two sat together on the bed.

" I fear all your crew were lost," remarked the Commander.

" Yes, I'm afraid so," replied Vaughan. " After all one must expect to lose patrol boats."

" Truly, your losses in patrols must be very high."

" Not incommensurate with our results, I think," parried Vaughan.

" Yes, a certain number of U-boats fail to return," agreed the German. " If it were not

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asking too much, may I inquire if you have any information concerning U.B. 15 ? "

" I am afraid I can hardly answer that question, Commander."

" Ah well! I thought perhaps that in return for any slight service I may have been able to do for you, that you could stretch a point. You see I have special reasons. My brother-in-law is her first lieutenant."

Vaughan felt moved by the appeal in the man's voice, and it so happened that he knew U.B. 15 had gone. He decided to tell the German.

" I fear, Herr Commander, from what I know, your brother-in-law has given his life for the Fatherland."

There was a moment's pause, then Commander Rudelstein said in a low voice: " A great death, Lieutenant! One to wish for, but Adolf was young, only twenty-one, was my brother-in-law. It will be a cruel blow to my Minna—it is the women, Herr Lieutenant, that suffer the most in war, but perhaps you are not married."

" I have a mother," said Vaughan.

" Well, she will be glad to hear you are alive."

" I'm certainly alive now, but I don't know that I'd gamble heavily on my chances of getting back to Wilhelmshaven, or wherever you eventually take me to."

" You mean—? " queried the German.

" I was just running over in my mind one or two facts in connexion with local patrols," explained Vaughan.

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" I suppose you wouldn't care——"

" Under no circumstances whatsoever I" indignantly ejaculated Vaughan, divining the other's meaning.

" Accept my apologies," interposed the Commander. " I appreciate your feelings. We are both officers, but it was my duty to make the suggestion."

" Tell me," said Vaughan, "what do you think of the U-boat warfare ? "

" Oh well," replied the Commander, with a shrug of his shoulders. " Shall we call it an unpleasant but necessary duty. I have sunk ninety-five thousand tons of your shipping," he concluded with a touch of vanity.

" Any lives lost ? "

" Unfortunately yes! one cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs, as one of your expressions runs."

" And the *Lusitania* ? " remarked the Englishman.

A frown appeared on the German's face.

" Herr Lieutenant, there are some things better not discussed."

After this remark conversation languished, and the German soon excused himself, explaining that he intended to lie on the surface and charge his batteries as soon as it became dark, should no ships be in sight.

The night was cloudless, and the sea calm, when at midnight the U.D. 66 rose cautiously to the surface, and throwing open her hatch began to

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drive her motors as dynamos and recharge her storage batteries.

Her crew, glad to get away from the tinned air below and the nerve-shattering roar of the Diesel engines, were allowed to come up on deck three or four at a time.

On top of her conning-tower two look outs, provided with night glasses, sat back to back and swept the sea.

A young moon low in the east gave a visibility of about two thousand yards, and every member of the crew had been well impressed with the fact that a British destroyer will cover a thousand yards in precisely fifty-three seconds. And perhaps a little under if a U-boat is at the other end of her rush.

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Commander Vaughan, Senior Naval Officer of Patrols, in or around the area adjoining Cantaloup Bay, was burning midnight oil in his small corrugated iron office.

The walls were hung with charts, marked with strangely-shaped areas in red ink. On one of these charts some humourist had neatly sketched in three little iron crosses at three spots on the surface of the sea. A date was written against each.

Commander Vaughan tore up his third attempt at writing a letter, threw the pieces into the fire, lit his pipe, and rising to his feet paced up and down his office; at length he opened the door

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and gazed over the calm sea that splashed gently on the rocks 200 feet below.

For several minutes he looked out to the eastward, then abruptly closing the door he returned to his desk and once more took up his pen.

" *Dearest Mother* (he wrote). *Be brave, for Jack has gone. The Crimson Rambler was done in this morning——*"

The telephone bell at his side tinkled sharply; with a muttered curse he picked up the receiver and listened.

Crisply, and as one habituated to quick decisions, he issued his orders.

" The second subdivision will sail in five minutes' time. I will take passage in the *Bonny Maid*.

A minute later, as he was leaving the office, his eye was caught by the unfinished letter; seizing it he placed it in his coat pocket.

Within five minutes, six ships, led by the *Bonny Maid*, slipped their moorings and headed at full speed to the eastward.

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The U 66 had been charging for two hours when one of her look-outs nudged his companion. Both stared in the same direction for a few moments, then with a hoarse shout of " Ach-tung" one dashed below to warn the Captain, the other, acting on his own initiative, shouted " Diving stations ! "

In an instant the crew were at their stations, and " flooding " was in full swing. With rudders

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at maximum "dive" the U 66 slowly descended at a steep angle.

The noise and excitement woke Vaughan from an uneasy sleep, and he could not help admiring the perfect drill that seemed to prevail.

A seaman was intoning the depth of submersion from a gauge, and he had just announced twenty metres, when a tremendous external explosion shook the boat from bow to stern. Every lamp was smashed to atoms, but before any confusion could ensue, the Captain's level voice rang through the boat:

"Secondary lighting illumination!"

Though a marked contrast to the previous brilliant illumination of the boat, the accumulator lights sufficiently lit the boat for practical purposes.

A rapid inspection was made by the first lieutenant, who reported no material damage.

The U 66 came to an even keel and slowly proceeded from the scene of her narrow escape.

At irregular intervals dull blows on the side indicated that depth charges were being expended with prodigality near the spot where she had dived. Turning over to the first lieutenant, Commander Rudelstein left the control room and greeted his prisoner with a smile.

"I must apologize for your friends, Herr Vaughan. One of your patrols was nearly on top of us before those rascals on look-out duty saw her. The nuisance is that we shall have to lie low all to-day, and I didn't get much of

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a charge on the batteries. Our late antagonist will be screaming by wireless now, and in an hour this bay will be stiff with craft. Don't you agree ? "

" I think, Herr Captain, that your forecast is an uncommonly accurate one," replied Vaughan.

Even as he spoke a distant drumming noise made itself heard; growing louder it roared overhead and receded into the distance.

" You see," exclaimed the German, with a grim smile, " a destroyer, I should say, doing at least thirty knots—already the vultures gather where they hope the carcass will be found. But it is still dark, nothing can spot us, and when I sit down on a little patch of seaweed I know of, which is a few miles from here, not even those damned seaplanes will see us."

And smiling with satisfaction Rudelstein passed on into his curtained cabin.

At 9 a.m. that morning a strange assortment of surface craft were laboriously trudging across Cantaloup Bay.

Two seaplanes patrolled ceaselessly overhead. The drifters, trawlers and armed yachts might have appeared to a casual observer on the cliffs as being steered by lunatics, so erratic were their courses and speeds.

In actual fact their movements were being controlled with the greatest accuracy by Commander Vaughan from the bridge of the *Bonny Maid*.

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A mighty hunter of U-boats before the Lords of Admiralty, Commander Vaughan had very special reasons of a private nature for wishing to exterminate any U-boats in Cantaloup Bay.

Suddenly the *Ernest Higgs*, armed fish carrier, fired a Very's light; instantly the whole flotilla hurried towards her.

A faint smell of oil fuel permeated her surroundings, and upon the sea an oily patch slowly grew in size.

Commander Vaughan indicated the patch to the skipper of the *Bonny Maid*. Speech was superfluous. As he passed over the oil he pulled a lever, and with a gentle splash a depth charge rolled off the stern chute.

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Eighty yards to the northward of this oil, and sixty feet below it, the U 66 was lying quietly on the bottom. Unknown to her Captain, the depth charge in the middle of the night had started a rivet in one of his emergency fuel tanks. From this leak a tiny stream of oil had percolated, and meandered up to the surface.

Caught by the set of the tide the tell-tale stream of fuel had drifted a considerable distance to the southward before accumulating on the surface.

This set of tide, for which Commander Vaughan had failed to make due allowance, saved the U 66 from instant destruction.

When his brother released the depth charge, Vaughan had just been introducing his captor

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to the subtleties of whisky poker, and arising from a point in the game the German remarked, "As in war, Lieutenant, the end is all important, the means of secondary importance. In war, life, wealth, comforts, even in certain cases honour itself, must be sacrificed to attain one's end; therein lies our strength. We have the will to conquer—so have you Englishmen, but always with your reservation, 'Let us be gentlemen.' C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas——"

A shattering explosion interrupted him.

The submarine was lifted bodily from her resting-place several feet and fell back heavily on the sea floor, becoming badly strained as a result. A hissing noise filled the air, and a score of tiny jets of water under high pressure shot in to the boat from leaky rivets on every side; acrid fumes rose from several fractured containers in the battery tank, and breathing was a painful and unsatisfying effort.

The crew were momentarily stunned by the suddenness of the catastrophe, then recovering themselves rushed to action stations—all save Carl Schmidt, ordinary seaman.

With staring eyes he deliberately pulled a small lever projecting from the side of the boat.

The next instant a shot rang and re-echoed through the boat, and Schmidt collapsed to the floor plates.

The First Lieutenant, with a smoking revolver, looked steadily round at the crew.

Not a man moved—discipline was preserved,

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but too late to save the U 66, for the " emergency release buoy and telephone," liberated by Schmidt under the influence of some mad impulse, was already on the surface.

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Commander Vaughan, having waited confidently for a shower of debris, was astonished to see a red can buoy bob to the surface.

A skiff was lowered and the buoy hauled on board. On it was written a sentence which, translated, read, "Here lies U66. Please open compartment and telephone to us, also send for assistance to the dockyard without delay."

" This is a quaint turn-out," remarked the Commander. " Do the blighters imagine they are in Kiel Bay. I've got a good mind to slip a charge down the moorings of the buoy, but I suppose I'd better give them a chance to surrender," and opening the buoy he took up the telephone.

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The U66 was helpless, her batteries out of action, she could not move, and even if she had been able to creep away, the buoy, which it was impossible to detach from inside the boat, would have revealed her position, so that when the telephone rang in the manoeuvring chamber of the conning-tower, Rudelstein answered it with alacrity as it offered him one small avenue of escape.

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" Hullo ! " said a voice. " Who is there ? "

" Korvetten Kapitan Heinrich von Rudelstein of U 66," replied the German.

" Do you surrender ? " said the voice.

" We never surrender in the Submarine Service."

" Well, that's a matter of opinion, but why have you sent this buoy up ? "

" An accident," briefly replied Rudelstein.

" WeU, look here," answered the voice, " I'll give you three minutes to come up, if not——"

" Never."

" Well, I'm sorry, but there's nothing for it. . . . Any—er—er messages. I'll see they go through the Red Cross."

" Thank you. No ! " replied the German, then in a level voice he played his trump card.

" Before you let that depth charge go, I thought you might like to know I have an English prisoner here."

" Nonsense." The voice was frankly sceptical.

" A fact—an English Naval Lieutenant, called Vaughan."

" Good heavens !—my brother—impossible," said the voice.

" Would you like to speak to him," inquired Rudelstein. " We picked him up from the *Crimson Rambler* yesterday."

" Yes, please," replied the voice very quietly.

Commander Rudelstein called Vaughan into the small compartment, closed the door, and handed him the 'phone.

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" Your brother is up there," said he. Vaughan put the receiver to his ear.

" Hullo ! HuUo ! " came the voice. " Is that you, Jack ? "

" Yes, speaking."

" This is a damnable business, Jack. Won't he surrender ? "

" Not a dog's chance, old boy. There's only one thing for it, you must slip it across us ; make it a big one."

" But I can't. I can't," said the voice in broken tones.

" But you've damn well got to," fiercely exclaimed the younger brother; "if not—well, we've got to change the subject. Commander Rudelstein here doesn't approve of my conversation."

" I say," continued the young man,

" Yes ! " replied the voice.

" You'll not tell any of 'em at home about this. Keep it out of the home circle. Savee ? "

" All right, old chap. Look here"—the voice lowered itself to a mere whisper—" if he has not got another pair of receivers on and can't overhear, cough twice."

Lieutenant Vaughan coughed twice.

" Good," continued the voice in low tones, " now your only chance is to scupper the Captain, and call on the crew to surrender. It's a thousand to one against, but it is a chance, and if nothing happens in five minutes, I'll—I'll—damn it, I can't say it. Ask him to come to the

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'phone, and do your best whilst I am talking to him. In case—in case—oh, good-bye'and God bless you ! " And the voice stopped abruptly.

" Will you come to the 'phone, Commander," said Vaughan.

The German took up the receiver. Vaughan made way and stood behind him.

Commander Vaughan was listening with straining ears to the repeated assertions of the German that he would not surrender, when the conversation ceased suddenly.

He thought he heard a muffled exclamation, but was uncertain, and waited in an agony of apprehension.

A minute passed, two minutes went by; the strain was too great. He shouted down the 'phone, and his voice sounded to him curiously high pitched.

There was no reply.

The third minute was drawing to its close when the surface of the sea moved strangely, and with a rush the U66 came to the surface like a blowing whale.

The conning-tower hatch was thrown open, and Vaughan dived into the sea, closely followed by a panic-stricken crowd of sailors. It appeared that the cast-iron discipline, like the metal, when it did break, broke suddenly and badly.

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" How on earth did you manage it, Jack ? "

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asked his brother as they steamed back to the base.

The young man, with fingers that trembled slightly, lit a cigarette, then said: "An unpleasant, but necessary act of war, as he himself would have said. You see, we were alone together in the manoeuvring chamber, a little bug-trap of a place about six feet square.

" When he went to the telephone I stood behind him, and with a sudden movement got the lower part of my right hand under his chin, the fingers across his mouth, and one knee in the small of his back.

" The poor devil never had a chance. I simply went on bending—his weight did the rest—a sickening show.

" Well, when it was over—it must have taken a full ninety seconds—I simply put the pointers of both order instruments to ' Blow all ballast.'

" I heard a bit of a scrap going on in the boat, so I guessed the crew were anxious to obey the signal, but that the First Lieutenant smelt a rat, knowing his Captain's ideas on surrendering, and he wanted to come into the manoeuvring chamber and get the order Confirmed.

" At any rate, I think they must have done him in, for they blew ballast as hard as they could—and you know the rest. I wish——" The young man bit his lip and looked away.

" I understand, Jack," said his brother, " but it was the only way,"

" You see," explained the young man, " he

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was a decent sort, and he had a wife. He told me about her—well—war is a damned funny toss up. I think a drink would do me good," he concluded as he slowly went below. Commander Vaughan put his hand in his pocket, felt a letter, pulled it out, smiled faintly, then, tearing it into small pieces, idly tossed them into the creamy wake of the *Bonny Maid*.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR

" **W**HO are yer gettin' at ? " growled the Sergeant-Major of Marines.

Gunner Ephraim Joseph Tuke, no badges, ability superior, character moderate, repeated his request.

" I wants ter put me tally in fer forty-eight hours' leaf, Sergeant."

" You, going ter apply for leaf ? " slowly repeated Sergeant Basher, dazed by the audacity of the request.

" Why, 'ow many times is it you've broken leaf this commission—four or five, I know/

" Six, Sergeant, including the accidental one at Gibraltar/" admitted Gunner Tuke.

" And yet you, an 'abitual leave-breaker, second class fer leaf——"

" Third class, Sergeant/" corrected Gunner Tuke with a sheepish grin.

The Sergeant grew a dusky red.

"The hastounding himpudence of applying fer leave in these 'ere circumstances," protested the Sergeant, who felt that the universe was about to crumble at his feet.

" Well, I got pertikler reasons, Sarge," doggedly asserted Gunner Tuke.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR 55

" Answer yer name at 9.30 to-morrow morning at Commander's requestmen," crisply snapped Sergeant Basher, anxious to terminate an interview which strained his patience to the limit.

The ship was due to sail in three days, and that Gunner Tuke, the blackest lamb in the detachment on board H.M.S. *Amiens*, if not the blackest lamb that ever left the fold of Eastney Barracks, should apply for leave, was amazing, extraordinary, epoch making. Sergeant Basher tried to imagine some reason which Gunner Tuke might be able to produce, and which would induce the Commander to grant him forty-eight hours' leave, in Malta of all places.

The Sergeant estimated that the Commander's knowledge about Tuke was equal to his own, and acting on this assumption, Basher could not imagine any combination of circumstances, deaths, marriages, or funerals included, which would obtain for Tuke forty-eight hours' leave. The whole thing seemed like a nightmare, and the Sergeant vaguely wondered whether he would get "scrubbed" for bringing the most notorious leave-breaker in the ship before the Commander on such a mission.

However, in the eyes and by the wisdom of Naval law, every man has the right to appear before Caesar and state his case, and so it came about that at 9.30 next morning the Sergeant stepped in front of the Commander, clicked his heels, saluted, and in a voice from

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which he could not entirely conceal emotion, intoned:

" Gunner Ephraim Joseph Tuke, application for forty-eight hours' leave ashore, urgent private affairs/ "

Gunner Tuke marched up to the table and looked the Commander straight in the face. There was a moment's silence, during which the marines engaged on cleaning the bright work on the after-turret, crept a little closer.

" Why do you want this leave ? " said the Commander.

Gunner Tuke swallowed hard, then gazing round at the assembled officers and men, he said:

" Like to speak to yer private, please sir,"

The Commander waved his hand, and every one fell back. Tuke and the Commander were alone.

" Well ? " said the Commander.

" I want forty-eight hours' leave, sir."

" Yes, yes, I know that, but what's the reason. Ship's under sailing orders, you know, apart from other considerations.

" Well, sir, in 'ought five I was in this 'ere 'arbour, and I got mixed up with a piece ashore. Broke me leave, sir, got took up by the patrol, never 'ad a chance to see the girl again, sir. Never 'ad a chance to do the square by 'er, sir. Want to see what I can do now, sir."

" H'm," said the Commander, fixing Gunner

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR 57

Tuke with that penetrating gaze, which had caused many a skilful liar to collapse.

" Do you realize that you have the worst record for leave of any man in the ship ? "

" Yes, sir," replied Gunner Tuke.

" And yet you apply for this special privilege ? "

" Special case, sir. I shan't break my leave."

" How do I know ? "

" Give you me word, sir. Never told the Commander a lie yet, sir. Broken me leave, sir. Never told you a lie, sir."

There was a moment's silence and then the Commander spoke:

" I take your word.

" Sergeant-Major."

The Sergeant approached.

" Forty-eight hours' leave for this man, as from noon to-day."

Sergeant Basher mechanically repeated the award; he dimly felt that he had assisted in a humble degree at a miracle.

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At noon Gunner Tuke, full of money, the accumulation of much stoppage of leave, landed at the Custom House Steps, and shaped course for Strada San Marco.

He paused irresolute outside the third house from the fruit-sellers, then pushed open the door and went in.

Eighteen stone of frowsy femininity barred

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his progress in the narrow passage. Then the lump, raising its hands to heaven, wailed, " Santa Maria El diavolo Tukey."

" Not so much of it," growled the Marine. " Glad to see I've come to the right house, though.

" Where's Maddalena ? " he added.

The lump protested by all the saints she didn't know, she couldn't say, she was dead. She had gone away, she had . . .

" Where is she ? " demanded Gunner Tuke with a menacing gesture.

" Up there," indicated the lump as she sank sobbing to the ground.

Mounting the rickety stairs, the Marine entered the first room on the landing.

It contained Maddalena. Five years had left their mark, but she still showed signs of that beauty that had once held Gunner Tuke under its spell.

The room also contained Guiseppe, the Karotzi driver.

As he noted this last fact, the gleam of joyous battle flashed in Gunner Tuke's eye, and he muttered:

" Gawd. What luck."

Without wasting time Gunner Tuke advanced and, seizing Guiseppe, shook him like a rat, upon which this conversation ensued.

" So I've found you, 'ave I ? "

(Bang, bang, against the wall.)

" Madre de Di——"

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" Didn't think I'd find yer. Thought I forgotten perhaps ? "

(Bang, bang.)

" Santa Maria, I tell you——"

" No you don't. (Bang, bang.) I'll teach you to play the devil with my girl. I'll teach you to deceive her whilst I was away."

(Bang, bang, bang.)

" Use a knife, would yer ? Take that and that. I'll make yer swallow some of yer teeth. Stand up like a mati, yer 'ound. Now, what 'ave yer got ter say ? "

Guiseppe had nothing to say, which was not surprising, he being at that moment unconscious.

Gunner Tuke pushed him to one side with his foot, and turned to the weeping Maddalena.

" Well," he remarked.

The girl wept steadily.

" Oh, fer——sake stop the water works," implored the Marine.

Maddalena brushed aside her long black hair, and raised a tear-stained face.

The heart of Gunner Tuke was softened.

" Wotcher want to do the dirty on me fer ? " he demanded in a more kindly tone. " Didn't yer think I was going to do the straight thing by yer ? Didn't I tell you I was going to marry yer, and take yer back to Pompey, when we cam' back from the eastern cruise, eh ? "

Wonderful thoughts of " what-might-have-

60 TALES FROM THE FLEET

been " crossed the mind of Maddalena, as she looked at Gunner Tuke, a man amongst men, as he stood over his prostrate rival.

But with a woman's guile she refused to discard her armour of silence.

" Well, anyhow, things can't be altered now," said Gunner Tuke.

" 'Ow does he treat you ? "

" Verra cruel sometimes, signor," sobbed Maddalena.

Gunner Tuke grunted, then indicating the child, " Whose is it ? "

The girl shrugged her shoulders and gazed steadily out of the window.

" Damn all women," muttered Gunner Tuke. Then aloud he said:

" 'Ere, Maddy, 'ere's thirty quid, keep it 'id from this 'og Guyseepe, and if 'e 'urts yer, yer ter write ter me aboard the *Amiens*. Savee ? "

" Gratia, Gratia, signor!" exclaimed Maddalena with a fresh outburst of sobbing.

" Oh, cheese it," said Tuke, and lifting her up he kissed her fiercely, then breaking from her arms he descended the stairs, stepped carefully over the lump and regained the street. Here he squared his shoulders, straightened Ms belt, and proceeded to seek solace from his sorrows.

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At 1145 a.m. on the day after the next a strange sight was seen in Malta harbour. A string of twelve " djicos," one in tow of the other, left

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR 61

the Custom House Steps, and proceeded in a long line across the harbour.

They arrived alongside the *Amiens*, and the long line stretched up her side to the forecastle.

The last boat of the tow came gently alongside the gangway.

In the stern sheets of this boat Gunner Tuke, wearing a necklet of boiled crabs, lay drunk—gloriously, incapably drunk.

On his breast was pinned a note.

He was carried up the ladder, and the O.O.W. read the label.

As Gunner Tuke was taken below, eight bells struck; he had returned from leave.

The note, written the night before, was in a shaky handwriting and ran as follows :

" I have fixed to come off in a chain of boats. I have promised Mr Beppo five pun' to do this at ate bells. Smith, Corpril knoes were I have this 'id. Please give Beppo five pun' if I come off safe. I have never told Commander ('es a gent) a lie yet.—Yours respectful,

" GUNNER TUKE."

As the *Amiens* left the Grand Harbour that evening the sound of merriment issued forth from the third house from the fruit-sellers in the Strada San Marco.

" What is this noise," demanded the fruit-seller of his wife, Mariana.

" Maddalena had an Inglese soldier there the

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other day Doubtless she has much money," spitefully exclaimed Mariana.

The fruit-seller smiled lazily.

"Fear not, Mariana, you are too ugly to be in danger—Corpo di Bacco ! I wish it were otherwise," he added, as he spat into the street.

OUR BAND

MEETING an old shipmate at the sign of Capricornus, that Zodiacal spot known only to naval officers and to a few of the very best soldiers, which bears four cables north-west of Piccadilly Circus, we refreshed ourselves, then retiring to a corner which was adorned by the flag of a defunct U-boat, we discussed the old ship and the Navy in general.

I had left the ship some months previously, but my friend was still in her, and he explained his presence in London by the fact that the old junk was at last getting a decent refit.

"Fourteen days' leave of the best and brightest," said he, with smug satisfaction. "There are rumours of strikes amongst the riveters, so we may get an extension of four days," he added quietly, as a thoroughly unpatriotic after-thought.

This last remark amused me, for, when I had last refitted in the ship and there had been labour troubles which had delayed us somewhat, I remembered my friend had fulminated for hours in front of the wardroom stove as to the iniquity of strikes in war time, and the grave danger we ran of missing an operation which a cousin of his in high places had told him was impending.

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For half an hour he told me all the local news, of how the " sub " had nearly got engaged, and that the " Pay " was suspected of designs on a Scotch widow in Edinburgh, of how they had at last wangled triplex glass out of the dock-yard, of how the engineer commander had been defeated in the quarterly auctions for back numbers of *La Vie Parisienne* by the assistant paymaster after a duel which ran the price up to two shillings a copy. He told me that the piano on which I used to make such hideous noises was still going strong, though a bit queer in the treble, as a green sea, coming down a badly battened skylight, had half-filled up the noble instrument, and the treble strings had broken, and the ship, being far from civilization at the time, the torpedo lieutenant had replaced half a dozen of the missing strings with electric fuze-wire of various sizes.

All these matters, and many others, concerning their comings and goings, what they had seen—and more especially what they had not seen—in the North Sea, my friend told me of. Until at length I asked him about that which had been as an ewe lamb to me in the ship.

" And what of our band ? " said I.

" Broken up," he replied, and I'll swear his hand trembled slightly as he lifted his glass. When I had left the ship I had turned over the Business of fathering pur band to this officer, and he had taken it over without a murmur. The stupendous and well-filled "spring-back,"

replete with bills, a few receipts, and reams of official correspondence, the endless reports of band committee meetings, all these things he had cheerfully taken on his shoulders—so I had known him to be an enthusiast.

Well, the band served its purpose, and now that its chequered career of three years has ended, it seems fitting that there should be some historical record of the " Voluntary Band of H.M.S. *Orpheus*" It originated in the very early days of the war, as the result of a brain-wave between the secretary and myself. It was then of the drum-and-fife variety.

We managed to wheedle E8 out of the wardroom by striking when the iron was hot, after a very cheery guest night. The secretary attacked the Admiral for a subscription the day he got his decoration, and touched him for E2—which shows what enormous influence secretaries have over admirals. With this capital of £10 we purchased instruments and started operations.

But the " matelot " is one of the most ambitious creatures on earth; wood-wind but ill-satisfied his desire for music, once the appetite was excited. One of our number, Able Seaman Thomas, suddenly procured a cornet, upon which instrument he proved to be a remarkably good performer. A brass band was forthwith suggested and it was enthusiastically approved.

In strict historical fact, the honourable part played by the torpedo lieutenant should come in here; but if this meets his eye, he will, I feel

66 TALES FROM THE FLEET

sure, excuse me if I show a reluctance in attempting to describe the extraordinary complicated transactions which took place before the drum-and-fifers were amalgamated with the " brassers " with a minimum of resignations from either camp. I had never fully understood the trials which theatrical managers and producers have to undergo in their dealings with the artistic temperament—I do now; all the members of our band claimed the artistic temperament, and A.B. Thomas was the greatest artist on the lower deck. His opening gambit, when brought up before the Commander on those rare occasions on which he was caught breaking the regulations, ran as follows:

" Intimately hassociated as I am with every social horganization in this 'ere ship, I begs to point out . . . "

The alternative to this opening was as follows:

" Speakin' not so much fer myself as ler those wot ain't fluent, I begs to point out . . . "

Either remark is a perfect index to a character which, though interesting to study, was a thorn in many fleshes. Early in 1915 the brass band was in full swing. A.B. Thomas was the amateur bandmaster, and undoubtedly knew his job. He played the cornet with tremendous vigour, and kept the band in good order. I remember one day, in the middle of the Japanese Anthem, he removed his cornet from his lips, and, shaking it in the direction of a panting signalman, shouted: " Blow you—, yer dirty hound."

A fearful blare from the criticized performer, who was supporting a bassoon, testified to the accuracy of the bandmaster's criticism.

The manner in which this signalman became a bandsman was typical of many of our recruits, and illustrates the average sailor's belief in his own capabilities. Signalman Bunting came to my cabin one evening and informed me that he desired to join the band. Much gratified, I inquired what instrument he played. He explained that he did not actually play any instrument, but that, noticing an advertisement which offered a second-hand bassoon for £6, and observing that he happened to possess £5, he considered that the opportunity was unique.

Although I did not feel quite so sanguine as he did, I had not the courage to damp such enthusiasm ; I had my reward, for, strange to say, as a result of daily practice in the solitude of the starboard condenser-room, Bunting became quite a good performer. Another sportsman bought a silver-plated trombone on the credit system, which was priced £12, los. On being pressed for payment he applied to me for a loan of £10.

I was weak enough to oblige him, and every month I used „to receive masses of coppers and sixpenny-bits, until at the end of a year we were square. I could never make out where he got the money from, as he was in the habit of bringing instalments at all sorts of odd times, whilst the hands, of course, are paid monthly. The secret

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was revealed upon the day on which the ship's police discovered him presiding over a crown and anchor board in the screw alley. Fortunately for me, this event took place some time after the debt was liquidated. I can still remember the anxiety with which I used to watch this gentleman on those occasions when we came under shell-fire.

As the months went by the band improved and grew in grace ; a certain town sent us music, and, more wonderful, an official letter to the School of Music eventually extracted some most interesting old orchestrated operas whose tuneful melodies must have charmed our fathers; not that it mattered in the least, as our band would have played Cesar Franck, Debussy, Arensky, Scriabine, or any of the moderns with the same pleasure with which they tackled " The Merry Peasant " or the latest ragtime—all was grist that came to their mill.

Every morning at eight o'clock they played three national anthems from amongst those of the Allies, and our initial practice of betting in our baths as to which they were, soon lost its interest. As soon as the band got properly going it was placed on a semi-official basis; it had a special routine of its own, the principle of which was that, in return for services rendered at route marches and to the ship's company during the dog-watches, the band were excused certain duties.

The rush of recruits was amazing, and at one

time we had no less than thirty-seven, all working "bands" on some form of musical instrument. The Commander was a true patron of the fine arts; but when the excused list rose to thirty-seven I had an interview with him, and I was told that future candidates would have to go on a waiting list, unless they were exceptionally talented.

I also used to find a certain difficulty in persuading the gunnery lieutenant that musical members of a gun's crew were as well employed at their instruments as at their guns during "quarters clean guns" periods. Can it be that gunnery lieutenants as a class are not musically inclined?

It must not be supposed that the band had no enemies, for, though much appreciated by the ship's company as a whole, there were always a few objectors.

The big drum was punctured at regular intervals in a most mysterious manner; these outbreaks generally coincided with the expulsion of some refractory member from the band. One memorable evening the band were playing to a crowd of about a hundred sailors on the boat deck, when an enemy of the band threw a halfpenny down the euphonium. As the euphonium player, a certain Stoker Emmanuel Millar, explained to me afterwards in the privacy of my cabin, "I was a-suckin' at the moment, sir! an' that swine 'e knew it, 'e did, and wot I sez is, I chucks me blinkin' 'and in, I does, with this 'ere band. I expects appreciation, not insults."

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I eventually soothed his outraged feelings, but it cost the band fund £3, 12s. 6d. to get the euphonium stripped in Edinburgh and the deadly coin removed. Two engine-room artificers and the blacksmith volunteered to do the job as a mark of their esteem for the band.

As time went on most of the other ships of the neighbouring squadrons started bands ; and a tremendous spirit of competition grew up, deadly feuds existing between rival bandmasters., This was well illustrated at the squadron sports, at which function the bands were scheduled to perform in " mass " formation. The burning question arose as to which bandmaster was to have the honour of conducting. It was eventually decided by drawing lots. The lot did not fall upon A.B. Thomas, whereupon this gentleman registered his displeasure on the day of the event by persistently playing his cornet a tone flat, alleging, in reply to my indignant accusations, that " me lips were all of a crack/" Curiously enough, this unsportsmanlike act was highly approved of by all our band, who apparently considered it a very natural outcome of an artistic temperament.

The band continued with ups and downs for three years, when most; of its members left the ship, and it died a natural death.

Before concluding its history, one incident in connexion with our big drummer deserves to be told. We had a very fine big drum, on which our battle' honours were cunningly in-

scribed, and its purchase price hung for months like a mill-stone round our financial neck. The drum was played by an enormous seaman, who, by dint of much saving, had purchased a second-hand leopard skin; and when route marching he was our pride and joy. At Jutland he lost a leg, and soon after his removal from the operating-room, I went along to see how he was getting on. A pal of his came in at the same time and, by way of letting him know the worst, said, in lugubrious tones:

"Them Huns have put a shell right through your drum, Bill—smashed it up, a fair treat, they have."

Bill was supposed to be suffering from severe shock at the time, and the sick berth steward was horrified at the bluntness of this remark. It acted in an unexpected manner on Bill, who had been lying very still.

Raising himself on one arm, he shook his fist at the deck overhead, and came out with a torrent of abuse concerning the Huns. The doctor told me afterwards that Bill spent most of the night muttering and damning the Germans; he seemed to consider that the loss of a leg was a matter of secondary importance. It is pleasing to record that Bill is now established in a comfortable job ashore, and that the shattered drum is in safe keeping as an honoured relic.

Though the band is now dispersed and its members are scattered, it served its purpose and brightened many a monotonous hour in the

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North Sea. We may also say with pride that where we led the way others have followed, as I believe there are at the present moment more than a dozen voluntary bands in the small ships of the Fleet. Perhaps we are a musical race, after all ?

THE HYDRAULIC COURSE

Extract from Grand Fleet Order : " No liquor is to be served on board prior to 11.45 a.m., except where the entertainment of distinguished foreign officers is in question."

THE W.R.¹ officers of H.M.S. *Rampageous* read the above order with pained amazement. Not because they were in the habit of drinking more than was good for them, but because the order broke a long established habit. A wise Admiralty has laid down that on or about 10.45 the sailor shall be given ten minutes stand easy. The average Naval officer, equally wise, employs this period in fortifying himself with a small cocktail for the further labours of the day.

This habit of the male sex of foregathering in clubs, pubs, bars and messes undoubtedly dates back to very early ages, and cannot be said to be peculiar to the Naval Service, though we have sound historical evidence for stating that it was initiated by Noah, who may be claimed as the father of all navigation. After a week of abstinence at 10.45, the fleet surgeon

¹ W.R.= Wardroom.

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prevailed on the Commander to try a substitute for that daily cocktail which had been his tonic for years. Medicated brandy was its basis, but unfortunately the temporary surgeon forgot one important powder. The result was severe disarrangement of the Commander's liver. This disease reacted on the lieutenants.

I, *moi qui parle*, am a lieutenant—so I know.

There were no more medical cocktails, and the parson was requested to insert a prayer into the Sunday Litany on these lines: "We beseech thee to send us a foreign officer,"

Miraculously, silently, unheralded, unadvertised, Capitaine le Comte Rougy de Poulis, Chasseur, 15th Regiment, arrived at the Northern Base and in broken English begged to be showed "ze cuissarre *Rampageux*." When he came over the side the officer of the watch was almost overcome, and registered a vow to attend church with greater punctuality than had previously been his habit, but quickly recovering himself he conducted the gallant stranger to Captain Robert Bowlin, commanding H.M.S. *Rampageous*. This officer was equally surprised, but with the tact that characterizes the higher command afloat, he concealed his astonishment, accommodated his guest in the Captain's spare cabin, and expressed deep regret that he had not yet received official notification, hence his remissness in failing to meet Monsieur le Comte.

Le Comte de Poulis was *desott* that he should

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have arrived before his introductions. He was on ze staff of General Petain. The British Admiralty so kindly had invited ten officers to visit ze Fleet. He had crossed on Tuesday, obtained ze passport Wednesday from ze Admiralty at White'all. " And 'ere 1 am," he concluded with an inimitable gesture.

The Count agreed with Monsieur le Capitaine—Bowlin—it was *lamentable crreiir*—red tape, no doubt, *mats a la guerre, comme a la guerre, que voulez vous*—should he send a telegram to ze Admiralty—or——?

No, Captain Bowlin would hear of no such thing—the fault was in London—those Government offices, etc., etc. Meanwhile, Monsieur was the guest of the ship. Would he come to the wardroom and be introduced ?

He would.

The hour was 10.45 a.m., and in honour of the event, even Captain Bowlin had a cocktail. After his third, le Comte Rougy de Poulis smacked his lips and remarked :

" *Sacre Bosche! Ce cocktail c'est epatant. Hein !* "

Four days elapsed, and in eacli of them the Count's popularity grew and flourished exceedingly. He had seen much service—on the Aisne, then Dbomide, then Verdun, and two months on the Somme. But he was always quite modest,, and it was difficult to say whether his stories of life at the front or his recollections of life in Paris were most appreciated.

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On the afternoon of the fifth day the Count had retired to his cabin, for the "distinguished foreign officer" had been entertained continuously from 10.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. Once in his bunk, he removed his collar, flung it on the table, and went to sleep.

Lieutenant Jones, on knocking at the door at 4 p.m., was surprised to hear this remark come forth in a sleepy voice :

"Go to blazes, I've not got the middle watch !"

Curiosity impelled him to enter and switch on the light. The Count stared fixedly at the invader, and then, by a supreme mental effort, pulled himself together.

"Eh, it ees my friend Jones—take a smoke, yes?"

All might yet have been well, but the Count suddenly realized that Lieutenant Jones was gazing long and hard at the inside of the collar on the table. Thereon, plainly, for all to see, ran these words: "Orchid, size 15, Gieve, Matthews and Seagrave, Naval Outfitters."

Lieutenant Jones was not intellectual, and whilst his brain groped for light amid much darkness, the Count acted. Springing alertly off the bed, he remarked: "Here, Jones, shut that damned door, have a gasper, and I'll explain."¹

That night the Count excelled himself, and the scene after dinner, when the band played "The Marseillaise," and the Count pledged

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(in champagne) the Royal Family, then La Republique, then L'Entente Cordiale, then the Royal Navy, then the *Rampageous*, and finally himself, and, for some reason no one quite understood, Lieutenant Jones, was remarkably enthusiastic.

Next day the Count had a telegram, and reluctantly left for France. Fortunately, the mail boat does not leave till noon, so the distinguished foreign officer was suitably entertained for the last time.

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Capitaine Rougy de Poulis is sincerely regretted in the *Rampageous*.

As he came, so he went, delicately shrouded in mystery. His papers never arrived, but only the Captain's clerk noticed the fact. He tried to mention it to Captain Bowlin one day, but as he did so at 9.30 a.m. he never got beyond the opening sentence. Some people, of whom I am one, see a slender clue in the following documents:

I

*From President of W.R. Mess, Rampageous,
To Accountant General's Department:*

Submitted:

That mess funds be credited with E23, 173. 6d. expended in entertaining Capitaine le Comte Rougy de Poulis (a distinguished foreign officer). Detailed statement of expenditure attached.

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II

Reply:

Nothing is known of this officer, inquiries are being made.

III

From Secretary, Board of Admiralty,
To Lieut. Stephen R. Smedd, H.M.S.
Nisbet:

March 25th, 1917.

You are to proceed to N. Base and report to R.A. *Titan*, who will detail you for short Hydraulic Course in one of the battleships. You are to be at *Excellent* in ten days from now.

IV

From President W.R. Mess, *Rampageous*,
April 10th, 1917,

To Accountant General's Department:

Monsieur le Comte Rougy de Poulis (distinguished foreign officer) left here for France, April 6th, 1917, having arrived here April 1st, 1917.

V

From Capt. *Excellent*,
To Admiralty:

Lieut. Stephen R. Smedd, late *Nisbet*, arrived here April 8th, 1917, from Northern Base, on completing Hydraulic Course in accordance with orders.

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VI

From Accountant General's Department,

To President W.R. Mess, Rampageous :

No knowledge here of Comte Rougy de Poulis (distinguished foreign officer). Application for refund should be made to War Office, under grant U.B.F. 456. No further correspondence can be entertained on this subject.

VII

Notice posted on W.R. Notice board H.M.S.
Rampageous:

At a meeting of the mess committee last night, it was agreed, owing to protracted nature of official correspondence which seems inevitable, that the cost of entertaining Comte Rougy de Poulis, our late distinguished foreign guest, should be defrayed from mess surplus.

Statement of Account.

To Lieut. Stephen R. Smedd,

From Barkson, Costumier, London :

June 20th, 1917.

To account rendered for hire of
French uniform, March 29th, 1917,
for one week 5 guineas.
A cheque will oblige.

THE PEN-WIPER

ONE day, several months ago, in the parlour of a small inn situated in the north (one must not be too precise), several Naval officers had congregated together. Two years ago this little inn had been on its last legs in a financial sense, but then came the war, and with it the Fleet, and ever since that day, whenever the ships were in harbour, Naval officers had met together at the inn "Northern Lights."

The "Northern Lights" is a very snug little house, stoutly built in grey stone, and from its porch it is only a stone's throw to the small pier (built by local labour, under the direction of an engineer commander), against which the picquet boats and sailing launches and pinnaces jostle each other when waiting for their cargoes of officers and men who have been ashore for a few hours' exercise. So it is that officers waiting for their boats gravitate naturally to the "Northern Lights," and study in a contemplative manner the Defence of the Realm Acts, and "Board of Liquor Control Regulations."

It was blowing half a gale, and the Scotch mist was rolling across the moors like puffs of damp smoke, when I turned into the "Northern

Lights." Only a few enthusiasts had "taken the beach." I took off and hung up a dripping oilskin, and entered the parlour. There were three other fellows in there sitting round the fire. One was a marine whom I did not know, and the other two were friends of mine, R—— and P——, both lieutenants from one of the battleships.

"By Jove, it's perishin' cold," complained the soldier. "Seems to grip one after East Africa," he murmured, as if in extenuation of his complaint.

"When did you come home?" said R——.

"Middle of June," replied the marine.

"The Huns are pretty well euchred out there, aren't they?" said R——.

"Oh, rather. Smuts had put the kybosh on them all right. They were getting ready to have a beano for the homecoming of the victorious warriors at the Cape when I passed through," answered the soldier. "Sickening bad luck I had in not coming home earlier. I missed the stunt on the 31st."¹

There was a lull in the conversation. We three had not missed "the stunt on the 31st," and though some months old, mention of that date evoked memories.

"Talking of the 31st," said P——, "I only realized the other day that 'The Pen-Wiper' was scuppered that night."

"Whom did you say?" I asked.

"The Pen-Wiper," repeated P——.

¹ Jutland.

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" Who the devil was that," inquired R——.

" Why Jimmy X——, of course. D'you mean to say you didn't know he was called the ' Pen-Wiper?'"

We expressed our ignorance of this fact, and demanded the tale which we knew must be attached to this name.

" I think," said the soldier, " a very small drink wouldn't do us any harm." Suzie M'Hamish entered in response to a knock of a stick on the wooden floor. " Three small whiskies and water and a lemonade," said the soldier.

" Evcrry offeecer must pay for his ain drinks," sternly remarked Suzie. Then, as she saw the clock, which pointed to 5.50 p.m., " Whishts, and it's no' yet six o'clock, so ye canna ha' whuskey the noo."

" Quick, R——, exert your well-known fascinations or we are undone," I whispered.

" My dear Miss M'Hamish," interposed R——, " how often have I warned you that the affection which exists between us will be fatally marred by this slavish adherence to those regulations." And he pointed to the " Liquor Control " rules. " Come, Suzie, for two years you have sinned at 5.50 p.m. for my sake. Why this sudden coyness? What is ten minutes of time? And our boat goes at——"

" Ah, weel, Mr R——, ye ken verra well it's no lawfu', but *I* s'pose I maun get them for ye."

With a complacent smile R——filled and lit another pipe, as P——began his story.

" It was in 1908 I first met him. I was a sub in one of the boats of the North flotilla, based at Portland. Jimmy had just got command of the *Sharper* ; he commissioned her at Pompey, and when he brought her round to join up with the flotilla we all thought him a devilish lucky fellow. He only had six years in as a lieutenant, and was the youngest skipper in the flotilla. But he deserved his command. I tell you Jimmy was one of the smartest destroyer officers in the old Home Fleet. The way he handled that boat was a revelation to the whole flotilla. There was no doubt about it, he was red hot. Of course, some people said he was reckless, and so he was in a way; but, after all, what good destroyer officer hasn't got a bit of devil in him ? Jimmy had his share all right. When he'd just shipped two stripes, they gave him a command in the Devonport torpedo boat flotilla. Old Arthur Hillow was the commander of his division, and was a bit of a taut hand. One night they were exercising off the Eddystone, and Jimmy's boat began to flame at the funnel—you know what devils at doing that those old coal-boats were; when they got in next morning, Hillow sent for Jimmy and scrubbed him down over this. Next time they went out, to the joy of the division, old Arthur's boat began to flame. Jimmy saw this, and though they were going twenty knots, he brought his boat up to within about ten yards of the divisional leader.

" ' What the deuce are you doing, you reck-

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less young fool ? ' sung out Arthur through a megaphone.

" ' Please, sir, I've only come to make some toast,' says Jimmy in reply as he hoisted out a ship's loaf on the end of a twenty-foot boathook. No one else could have done it without being court-martialled, but it shows the kind of fellow he was.

" Well, as I was saying, he joined up with our flotilla in 1908, just about the time they started the idea of putting destroyers into ' pens ' instead of mooring 'em in the stream. We used to lie two deep in the Portland pens, and whenever Jimmy was outside boat, it was the dickens to pay for the bloke inside him. Jimmy would come in at half speed, dodge half a dozen dinghies and a couple of buoys, miss the entrance pier by inches, and inside of five minutes he'd be tied up, head and stern.

" He had a mania for running things fine, and fellows swore that his boat had a smaller turning circle and less beam than any of the others, but, of course, she was sister to them all. Naturally he often had small bumps, and he thought nothing of removing every wooden outside fitting from the boat he was running alongside. If you left anything sticking over the side it was a ' dead bird ' if Jimmy was due to double-bank you in the ' pens.'

" He always sent his artificer over at once. ' With Captain X——'s compliments, and if 'e done any damage, 'e 'opes you'll let me repair it, sir.'

" ' Done any damage/ shrieked an infuriated gunner one day in which he was a helpless spectator whilst one of his sighting hoods was neatly split in twain by a bridge rail, as the *Sharper* shot past. ' Done any damage? Why, your captain's a blinkin' pen-wiper—that's what 'e is!'

" The name stuck, and no one relished it more than Jimmy himself.

" I never saw him again since those days, but I heard about him after the action. It appears that he fired his last torpedo at a range of 200 yards, with about a dozen searchlights and Lord knows how many 6-inch on him. Last tiling seen of him, his boat was disabled—bumping down the side of a German battleship. If I know anything of him, the ' Pen-Wiper' wiped the Huns that night. He always did get where he wanted to."

" Pity he's gone," said R——, " blokes like that are useful the night after a fleet action."

" Yes," agreed P——as we rose to battle our way down to the pier and its waiting boats, " but there are still some left like him, thank the Lord."

THE SERENADING PARTY

“**S**IGNAL for you, sir,” said the Chief Yeoman, as with one hand he held a signal pad at exactly the correct distance from the Captain's eyes, and expectantly fingered a pencil in the other. In the background lurked a very small signal boy, who had flown breathlessly down from the bridge with the signal; but not to take it straight to the Captain. Signal boys do not show signals to captains; this duty is reserved for yeomen and chief yeomen.

There is an exact scale of precedence in such matters at sea. Even important men such as yeomen do not show signals to admirals. In the latter case a signal boy might conceivably actually carry the signal aft from the bridge, because signal boys with the eye of a yeoman upon them move at a speed only second to that of light. But should a signal boy on such an errand encounter a leading signalman, yeoman, or chief yeoman, he would at once deliver up the signal. The penalties entailed and the wrath incurred by his "short-circuiting" any of those above him in the hierarchy of signals are almost beyond the power of description. Imagine, then, the signal in the hands of the yeoman; does

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he take it to the Admiral? Almost certainly not. He presents it to the flag lieutenant, who will then decide whether the Admiral shall see it at once or whether it will wait.

I feel very tempted to launch out into a little discussion about flag lieutenants, as I know a good deal about those interesting and remarkable people, for I have been intimately associated with one of them. I remember he had fifteen suits of plain clothes, a pretty taste in things sartorial, and we were of a size'; but I must resist the temptation and get back to my subject. This was what the Captain read :

From Captain to Captain, H.M.S. *B*——to H.M.S. *R*——. We should like to serenade you this evening.—1400.

The Captain's eyes twinkled, and a smile played about his lips. The Chief Yeoman licked the end of his pencil and held it poised over the pad.

" Make W.M.P.," said the Captain.

Down came the pencil like a dagger and W.M.P. appeared across the signal pad. The Chief Yeoman saluted, and retired in dignified haste; having rounded a corner, he gave the pad to the awaiting signal boy, and tersely remarked " Nip." But the youth was already half-way to the bridge, and a quarter of an hour later, the captain of H.M.S. *B*——, at the other end of the harbour, had a signal shown him by

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his chief yeoman to the effect that his brother captain's reply was " With much pleasure."

The announcement that the B——'s wanted to serenade us caused a sensation in the ward-room. Every one agreed on one point, and when the Commander remarked: " Got plenty of beer on board, Pay ? " it was with consternation that we heard the paymaster reply: " Opened up the last dozen to-day! " It was recognized that a crisis had been reached. The mess committee met at once, and decided to send the wine steward round the squadron in the skiff on a tour of inquiry.

I had the middle watch and therefore did not feel inclined to be serenaded. Furthermore, " serenading " is always associated in my mind with the opposite sex, and I felt that I should feel like the French officer to whom I was once attached as A.D.C. when a part of their fleet paid a courtesy visit to one of our south coast resorts. My friend and I attended an entertainment announced as a " gala operatic performance in honour of the French Fleet." As I ushered our gallant guest into a draughty theatre which was filled exclusively with sailors from both fleets, the Frenchmen surveyed the scene, then, turning to me with an expressive shrug, pathetically remarked: " But vere are de vimmen, I mean ze ladies ?" But again I digress!

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It was a perfect evening of the north in early

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autumn, not a breath of wind ruffled the oily calm of the waters of a certain base which sheltered units of His Majesty's fleet. The long lines of ships stretched literally for miles across the water. Though the ships were darkened, their great forms were plainly visible in the light of a full moon which was rising blood red in the east, as the last high lights of sunset lingered above the western hills.

Three hundred men from neighbouring ships had been invited to come on board H.M.S. *R*—, and be serenaded at 9 p.m. At that hour the port side of our boat deck was packed with seamen. There must have been six hundred men lining the side, clustered like bees half-way up the foremost rigging, on top of guns, on the bridges, in the searchlight platforms—anywhere, in fact, where the individual judged he would obtain a better view than his mess-mates. At 9 p.m. the sound of distant bagpipes up the harbour attracted every one's attention. At first nothing could be seen, but suddenly an extraordinary sight met our eyes. Rapidly sweeping down on the top of the flood tide was a craft which reminded one of Henley at its gayest. We rubbed our eyes, but the indisputable fact remained that an illuminated house-boat was apparently proceeding up harbour. From this craft came the skirl of the pipes, the beating of many drums great and small, and the frenzied cries of (presumably) Scottish bluejackets.

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Swiftly she came down the lines, causing great sensation on board the other ships, who were unaware of the proposed *tamasha*. Several ships burst into spontaneous cheering and then wondered why they had done it, and what all the fuss was about. In several wardrooms ingenious individuals deduced that some good war news had come through, and that the flagship had devised a new method of announcing it to the fleet. A friend of mine in the *H—*, actually complained to me next day that he was so overcome at the sight of an illuminated boat, that in a fit of mad optimism he had registered a wager of one Bradbury to ten that Turkey was suing for peace.¹

When the serenaders arrived off our beam, the bagpipes stopped and a choir of male voices inquired if we were the *R—*. A hundred voices answered in the affirmative, and our visitors altered course and came to rest at a distance of about forty to fifty yards from our beam.

We could now see that the theatre consisted of two distinct parts. There was a sailing barge, which had been decked in with planks placed across the thwarts. In the centre of this was a small stage lit by half a dozen footlights. Round the stage, and grouped at the back, were stools and chairs on which were seated about forty men in every kind of fancy dress. Amongst those we noticed, as they say in society papers,

¹ This was in 1916—"ETIENNE."

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were Charlie Chaplin and certain of the Hohenzollern family. At one end of the barge were a piano and a couple of violinists. A mast at the bow and another at the stern carried a row of Japanese lanterns on a jackstay between them. A picquet boat lashed on the far side fulfilled the double role of a dressing-room and the source of the motive power required to stem the tide. The rays of a shaded arc lamp were thrown on to the stage from our bridge, and a gentleman stepped into the limelight and remarked, " I vos de manager, shentlemen."

When the tumultuous applause which greeted this observation had subsided, he proceeded to inform us, lest any member of the audience felt alarmed by the idea that prowling Zepps would be attracted to the scene by the brilliancy of the illumination, that he had much pleasure in announcing that the plug in the bottom of the boat was a very loose fit, and that it would be immediately withdrawn as soon as the alarm was sounded. In one and a half minutes, he assured us, the stage would be completely submerged. He added that all the performers, save only the two Willies, were fitted by the management with Mr Gieves' famous waistcoat.

At 9.15 the serenade began and lasted an hour, during which period an excellent performance was given. Each turn was allowed five minutes. At its conclusion, during the applause, Charlie Chaplin stepped on to the back of the stage and, in the manner familiar to

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any patron of the cinema, neatly yanked the performer off the stage with the crook of his stick. There were several songs by a well-trained quartette, and the effect of the voices stealing across the water and faintly echoing against the armour on our side was delightful.,

At 10.20 they sang "Farewell comrades," with a choir of about sixty voices. It was followed by "The King," which was sung by six hundred men. We implored them, through megaphones, to come on board and refresh themselves, but the manager excused himself, by breaking into poetry to the effect that

The way is long
The tide is strong, etc.

Slowly they steamed round the ship, whilst the delighted audience gave them round after round of cheers. As they passed close under our stern for the second time, we heard the sharp tinkle of the picquet boat's bell signalling "Full speed ahead." Instantly the serenaders shot ahead, the drone of the bagpipes rose to a screech, and the drums crashed and rolled. In a few minutes nothing could be seen save the white wake of the serenading party as they skirled their way up harbour, homeward bound to their ship.

Dead silence reigned on board as the strains of the bagpipes receded faintly into the night. At length our Commander spoke, and there rose the plaintive wail of the boatswains' pipes,

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"piping down the hands." There followed the measured tramp of many feet, till at 10.45 the upper deck was deserted save for those on watch, and the slow-pacing figures of the night guard.

THE GUEST NIGHT

THE long-expected news had come, and small groups of officers were discussing it in the smoking-room. The Commander was leaving us. For three years he had been in the ship—longer, in fact, than any other officer in the mess—and now he was going.

Though hard things had been said about him by his mess-mates, and though his departure had been openly prayed for by nearly every one at some time or other, these expressions and sentiments had always been made in the heat of the moment, and are probably commonly said and thought of every commander there has been, or ever will be, in the Service. For by the nature of his position it is impossible for a commander not to make himself unpopular at times—unless he is a "Popularity Jack," than which there is no more damnable person.

But when the various rumours as to our Commander's departure, which had been floating round the ship, crystallized into naked facts, the wardroom officers of H.M.S.———realized that they were not only about to lose a first-class Commander, but also a very charming mess-mate. It was unanimously decided that he

should be dined by the mess, with all pomp and honour.

The decision once made, the mess committee—otherwise known as "the civic fathers"—went into consultation with the Admiral's staff as to which day during the coming week the ship might be moderately certain of being in harbour. The staff at once assumed an air of profound mystery until threatened that they would not be invited to the feast. On receipt of this ultimatum the "Secrecy Brigade" promptly collapsed and confessed that, as far as they knew, there was nothing much impending, provided the Germans kept quiet.

A date was fixed, and a formal invitation was sent to the guest of the evening. The mess committee then retired to the fleet surgeon's cabin. They were closeted in there for over an hour, ostensibly engaged in composing the menu. The gunnery lieutenant, who lived next door, sardonically suggested that they were engaged in sampling cocktails at the expense of the mess. But as the paymaster explained, when called upon to give reasons as to the continuous visits of the wine stewards to the scene of the committee's labours, "My dear fellow, how could we compose a menu without being inspired?" and "*Duke est pro bono publico vinum bibere.*" The young doctor, an artist of merit, painted the menu cards with scenes representing famous incidents in the past two years of the ship's life. Such was one entitled,

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" Scene on the upper deck when M——dropped the whaler in the water,"

The first lieutenant, who is known as the " Impresario," arranged a gala kinema performance, an amusement in which the *Com-mander* took much joy, having always been by far the most enthusiastic patron (with the possible exception of the Admiral) of our weekly shows.

The guest night arrived, and, fortunately, H.M.S.———was quietly at anchor. The ship's band, of which we are inordinately proud (it musters twenty-seven members, all amateurs from the lower deck) played " The Roast Beef of Old England," and the feast began its lengthy course. The King's health was drunk with musical honours, and the father of the mess, who had been almost three years with the *Com-mander*, made a short speech. The *Com-mander* replied, and, these formalities complied with, every one settled down for the real business of the evening. The first item was the kinematograph performance, which is always held on the upper deck in a space screened in by awnings and canvas curtains.

Our engineer commander, a man of resource, had rigged up an ingenious arrangement by means of which, should the picture palace prove too cold, we can deflect into it the hot-air exhaust from the engine-room. As the first lieutenant proudly, if somewhat coarsely, remarked to our assistant paymaster, " My dear fellow, you only want some one's hand to squeeze and the

illusion would be complete; you could imagine yourself in a picture palace ashore." On this particular night the *piece de resistance* was a drama in three parts called "Satan's Amazon." We get our films weekly from an agent near our regular base, and they are returned at the end of the week—if the Service permits. In between Parts 1 and 2 of the drama the following telegram, received by the first lieutenant that afternoon, was thrown on the screen :—

"To Lieutenant——, H.M.S.——. Urgent. 'Satan's Amazon' must arrive here to-day, Saturday. Contract to show film at Hull Picture-drome for week beginning Monday, 5th inst.—KINO."

As at the moment "Satan's Amazon" was some 400 miles from her home, in a place where the railway runs not, and as it was Saturday night, the above wire was not without its humour.

During kinema performances the younger members of the mess usually congregate on a life-saving raft at the back of the theatre. This position is known as the threepenny gallery, and the occupants generally keep up a running fire of candid criticism on the various films. In one of the intervals between the films the Captain laughingly told the first lieutenant that he would be obliged to cancel his licence as manager of the house if the disturbance at the back did not abate. The remark was greeted

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with loud cheers by the " gallery." Supported by the gunnery lieutenant, the manager announced his intention of clearing the hooligans out of the house. The two " chuckers-out" made a frontal attack on the position, which was easily repulsed. A parley ensued, in which the " gods " agreed to behave themselves if the undesirable characters down below were requested to leave the building. " We may be common people," dramatically shouted the young doctor, " but we are virtuous ; look at the people strolling round your promenade, and the Bishop of London was up here only ten days ago ! " A cheer went up from the gallery, and the baffled " impresario " returned to his seat in the " promenade," When the kinema was over we adjourned to the wardroom and a sing-song was started. ♣

The famous topical song entitled " Coal in the Sack," and dedicated without special permission to the Commander, was sung and resung. At about 11.30 p.m. it was suggested that a few parlour tricks might not be out of place. I had to leave the mess at five minutes to twelve, as I had the middle watch; but the last impression I received was that of a number of officers endeavouring to balance pokers on the ends of matches, a feat which the " Sub " declared to be quite feasible, and the secret of which he would impart to any gentleman for the very modest price of one whisky and soda.

Next morning breakfast was rather a frosty

meal and several people had "livers." At noon we suddenly went to sea and encountered a small gale. By sunset, to all save a few unfortunates, the guest night of the evening before was a memory of the past. To the few it was still a naked living reality.

A DROP OF LEAF¹

A GLEAM of light flickered up momentarily to the east and caught the tired eyes of a young lieutenant on his fore-bridge of a light cruiser.

He leant his back against the binnacle of the compass, and rubbing the eyepieces of his binoculars to remove the dew, he focussed them on the horizon. He knew that somewhere on Ids beam lay a squadron and that at dawn a signal was expected from the flagship of that squadron.

The hour was 3.40 a.m. and the day was at that stage of its career which is sometimes called "the false dawn."

The sea was perfectly calm, and of a leaden grey hue; such of the sky as could be distinguished was grey, the ships were grey, and to the young lieutenant, who had been standing by the compass since midnight, life seemed grey.

He was waiting for the signal with an anxious intensity born of nine months' arduous patrol and convoy work.

As he stared through his glasses a startling

¹ "Leaf" is Matelot's language for leave:

change took place in the eastern sky. At first a dull, red glow appeared, as from a big fire below the rim of the sea.

From this centre of light, which grew more luminous every second, purple and gold fingers stretched themselves tentatively across the sky, reaching towards the zenith. It was the birth of dawn. The young lieutenant was not without a sense of the beautiful, but he had seen the inauguration of so many days in the North Sea that his attention was chiefly concentrated upon four dark silhouettes which appeared for the first time on the horizon. It was the other squadron, and the leading ship was the flagship.

At the first sign of dawn a signalman in the flagship had announced the fact to the flag lieutenant, who was snatching an hour or two's sleep on the chart-house settee. Sitting up, he fumbled in his pocket for a signal written out the night before and countersigned by the Admiral.

"Take that to the *Belfast*, and report when through," he said, handing the crumpled paper to the waiting yeoman.

A couple of minutes later he was asleep again, and had to be awakened a second time to receive the information that the *Belfast* had received and understood "your 1545."

At 3.45 a.m. on the lower bridge of the *Belfast*, three signalmen had collided, due to their simultaneous attempts to reach the signalling shutter

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of a searchlight and reply to the calling-up signal of the flagship.

The young lieutenant on the after-bridge was just able to shout "Flagship calling us" when the metallic rattle of the shutter and the hiss of the arc light below informed him that his information was entirely superfluous.

In thirty seconds the signal had been received, in another ten the young lieutenant was shouting down a pipe, "Captain, sir! Captain, sir! Captain, sir! . . ."

"Yes?"

"Officer of the watch speaking, sir. From the Flag; 'Proceed in execution of previous orders' "

"Ah—well, alter course; have you got the new course?"

"Yes, sir, it's N.70° W., and the navigator is down for a call at 4 a.m."

"Very good. What sort of a day is it?"

"Fine morning, sir. Extreme visibility, B.C. and the glass is steady."

"Very good. Call me again when we're steady on the new course."

"Very good, sir," answered the young lieutenant, and closing the mouth of the speaking tube he took his stand at the compass.

"Pretty chatty the owner is this morning, ain't 'e?" remarked the helmsman to the petty officer quartermaster. Though they were on the lower bridge, the whole of the foregoing conversation had been audible to them, as a

branch to the Captain's fore-bridge voice-pipe led to the steering compass.

" You watch the ship's 'ead, young feller 1 " replied the quartermaster, who objected on general principles to familiarity with young ordinary seamen.

The helmsman accepted the rebuke and silently gazed into the magnifying prism on the compass bowl. This docility touched the heart of the quartermaster; he determined to unbend.

" Wotcher going to do wiv yer drop of leaf, my son ? "

The helmsman was about to reply when a voice from above shouted: " Port 25 ! "

The young lieutenant was altering course, and the *Belfast* was proceeding in execution of previous orders.

As the helm went over, the bow slowly swung round with increasing speed, her long low stern appeared to side-slip in the water, and as she " transferred " she left a sheet of glassy water on the inside of the turn.

The edge of this sheet of water lapped and folded in towards her swinging quarter with a curious sucking sound. As she was turning at speed, she " heeled inwards two or three degrees, and this, combined with the distinctive rattle of the steering engine, caused more than one of the occupants of cabin bunks, and serried rows of hammocks on the mess-decks, to wake and think for a moment as to the meaning of the turn.

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In a man-of-war at sea most of her inhabitants sleep very lightly, and a swift turh, especially during the daylight hours, makes every one pause for a moment and wait expectantly for the bump, or what a Hun officer of my acquaintance once described as the "characteristic jar of a torpedo on steel plating."

At night a turn probably wakes up half the ship's company. Things—unpleasant things—can happen so very quickly on a dark night when one's home is travelling at twenty-five knots without lights—it is always wise to be prepared.

On the occasion I have in mind, those of the *Belfast's* company who were awakened by the turn rolled over again with a happy smile on their lips. They knew what it meant. They knew that the rest of the squadron were steaming south and that they alone had turned to the westward for the purpose of making an East Coast port, wherein the ship would refit and from which they would proceed on leave.

As the young lieutenant steadied the *Belfast* on her new course and reported to the Captain, eight bells struck; half a dozen hooded figures in lammy coats turned over to the morning watch look outs and tramped below, negotiating the steep ladders to the upper deck with amazing swiftness in their heavy sea boots and masses of warm clothing.

A few minutes later the navigator came up and, as is the habit of navigators, fondled the compass and took a bearing of the sun.

To a navigator his standard compass is as a good wife, a pearl beyond price, for on the accuracy of his compass depends the safety of the ship and his professional reputation. In the North Sea, where opportunities for sunsights are often infrequent, much navigation must be done by dead reckoning. Three instruments are used for this—the compass, the log, and the lead—but the greatest of the three, and the most essential, is the compass.

Watch any navigator when he first appears on the fore-bridge. He goes immediately to the compass and looks at it. He will revolve the azimuth mirror, and if the glass over the compass bowl is dirty, he will remove the azimuth, and with his pocket handkerchief he will carefully wipe the glass clean, then look round the horizon to see if there is anything which "will give him a chance of taking a bearing. As he leaves the bridge he nearly always launches a parting shot at the officer of the watch, to the effect that careful steering is particularly necessary for the next few hours. Two or three hours later he will come up and repeat the performance, including the advice.

In the *Belfast* the navigator often kept the morning watch at sea, and it was to him that the young lieutenant turned over the safety of the ship, the Poldhu Wireless "Press message," the watchkeeper's electric kettle, a chipped enamel mug, and a tin of cocoa.

A few minutes later the young lieutenant

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was standing on the quarter-deck, looking with satisfaction at half a dozen wisps of smoke far astern and below the horizon, which marked the presence of the squadron which they had left for several weeks.

As he turned to go down the narrow hatch that led to the cabin flat, a sea-gull rose lazily from a pit prop upon which it had been sitting and flew to another baulk of timber. The young lieutenant paused on the top step of the ladder, and a hard look came into his eyes as he saw that over an area of several hundred yards square the sea was thickly covered with pit props of Norwegian pine. Upon the largest of these timbers a dark mass of what appeared to be clothing sprawled inconsequently, a cluster of birds hovered round it.

" Seems to have been some dirty work at the old cross roads," murmured the young lieutenant, addressing no one in particular, unless it was the sea-gull. The gull, disturbed from its second resting-place by the wash of the ship, rose and flew over to the dark mass.

" Brutes! " muttered the young man as he thumped down the ladder.

Four hours later a sentry knocked at his cabin door and, shouting through the curtain, slid: " We're inside the bar, sir ! and going up the river; the first lootenant's compliments, an' will yer look out for the wires aft ? "

A hasty toilet—sea boots, trousers, sweater, and monkey jacket were pulled on, and he went on deck.

The *Belfast* was slowly gliding up the very muddy waters of an exceedingly narrow river, but one of the wombs of British sea-power for all its small size. Gigantic cranes stood on both banks. The latter were covered with an endless succession of building slips, sheds and workshops.

The continued roar of thousands of pneumatic riveters filled the air; whistles blew, and long, lean, ugly pipes puffed jets of white exhaust steam into the smoke-laden atmosphere. High over all towered the enormous chimneys with the thick smoke of North Country coal streaming from their lips.

In the shadow of the chimneys, under the pall of the smoke, stood row upon row of small houses, hideously similar. These stretched in serried rows up the slopes of the valley. The highest row was shrouded in smoke and mist.

On the quarter-deck lay coils of wire with which the *Belfast* was to be warped into dock.

Close astern of her, like faithful hounds, splashed the *Rambler* and the *Buster*, two paddle tugs, captained by shabby but knowledgeable gentlemen, in seedy overcoats and bowler hats. At 9 a.m. the struggle began. Four tugs, two ahead and two astern, laboured to turn a ship, 450 feet long, in a river 370 feet broad. This apparent impossibility was achieved by gradually working her nose into the dock.

The real interest to a detached observer began when shipping tried to pass up or down stream,

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and many quaint oaths in English and in Scandinavian tongues were bandied to and fro.

At noon the dock gates were shut with a thud, and they began pumping out and shoring up.

The paymaster had a busy time paying the hands and acting as an interpreter between sailors, who wanted tickets to unheard-of corners of the British Isles, and two very worried railway officials.

The Commander informed the watchkeepers that one of them would have to travel, to London with the 10.21 p.m. as two hundred of the sailors were going by that, and he thought an officer should be available on the journey.

The lot falling on the young lieutenant, the rest of the wardroom wished him joy and went their several ways.

At 10 p.m. the young lieutenant arrived at the station, and was somewhat surprised to hear a brass band playing in the central hall. It turned out to be the ship's amateur band, which was the centre of an admiring crowd of some fifteen hundred people. As luck would have it, the band saw him and raised a loud cheer, and the crowd, suspecting hidden heroism somewhere, joined in heartily.

The young lieutenant, blushing furiously, fled to his sleeper, devoutly praying the band would miss their train. It was not so ordained. At 2 a.m. he was awakened by an agitated attendant. He looked through the window and saw they were at Bedford.

Above the jangle of empty milk-cans rose the distant strains of a band.

"What is it ? " said the lieutenant.

" Please, sir ! it's them sailors of yours, they're a-playing of the ' Rosary' on their hinstruments, and they're a-playing of it houtside the fore-most sleeper, and General Sir William Somme is hout on the platform in 'is pink sleeping-suit, cursin' somefink 'orrid."

" My good fellow ! I don't care if the whole Army Council are on the platform in purple pyjamas. Those sailors are on leave, and, as far as I know, there is no law preventing them playing the ' Rosary' or any other blinking tune. They probably think he likes, it . . . I'll have some tea at 7.30 a.m. Good-bye-e! "

¹¹ But, sir ! Sir William——"

" I said good-bye-e once," said the young lieutenant, with a touch of irritation in his voice.

The attendant withdrew.

The last mournful chords of "Where my caravan has rested" mingled with the guard's whistle and lulled the officer to sleep.

When he left his sleeper at 8 a.m. next morning not one of his unruly flock was to be seen.

Breakfast and a Turkish bath followed, and at 11.45 the young lieutenant shaped a certain course, which led to the " Sign of Capricornus."

It is permitted to follow him to the door of this very remarkable place, which excites the wildest curiosity on the part of many mothers

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and sisters, but the descriptive pen may go no further. "Members only" is a rule rigidly enforced.

Nor would it be fair to follow his movements during the subsequent ten days.

Sufficient to say that his passion for navigation led him to explore many reaches and backwaters of the Thames, and that he was not alone.

.

Three weeks had elapsed since that first morning when the *Belfast* had parted company.

Once again it was early in the day—about 6 a.m. Once again the young lieutenant was on watch, but this time he searched the horizon for signs of the squadron, with somewhat different feelings.

At 6.30 a.m. light tapering masts showed up, followed by funnels and hulls as the range decreased.

Accurately the *Belfast* adjusted her course and speed to wheel into line behind the rear ship.

As she did so, the flagship ran up a couple of hoists of flags.

"The old man welcoming us back and hoping we have had a pleasant leave," jested the lieutenant to the sub.

"I do not think!" replied the latter.

A signalman jumped up the ladder: "Signal, sir."

"Read it," said the lieutenant.

" Flag to *Belfast*—make less smoke—prepare for ranging exercise/" announced the signalman.

" War is Hell! sub," laughed the young lieutenant.

The sub sang in a low voice as much as he could remember of " Let the great, big world keep turning" ; it reminded him of a girl he had met at a dance in town and temporarily caused him to forget the imminence of the ranging exercise.

THE SEWING-MACHINE

WE all know that in the "Early Days" we were very short of those munitions of war which at the moment of writing are being showered with prodigality upon the Hun in Flanders. In those early days light cruisers sometimes found themselves in harbour for two or three days. It wasn't much of a harbour, its chief advantages being that in one corner was a hulk in which mails and parcels accumulated, and that the sea inside the harbour was appreciably better behaved than the sea outside. *The* edge of the harbour was a long way off, and looked its best at a distance. The attractions on the beach were nil to anyone who had the least feeling of citizenship—that is, to a lover of cities.

It was generally blowing a bit, and anchor watch absorbed twenty-five per cent, of one's life. Hence a large number of officers found that, after the restful effects of the first twenty-four hours in harbour had passed off, a feeling of boredom supervened. Some clever person suggested that perhaps the Navy would like to jnake munitions in its spare time. The Navy said it would be charmed, and it was decided that we should

THE SEWING-MACHINE 118

make gromets to protect the driving bands of shells.

So successful was this venture that the Ministry of Munitions wrote a little letter in which they patted us on the back, and then said: " If we give you a sewing-machine, will you make lifting slings for shells ? " We said we'd do our best, and shortly afterwards a storeship came alongside us and dumped a large packing-case on our quarter-deck.

The supply note described its contents as " Single Treadle Machine Sewing, Patt. III., No. 1567." A carpenter's mate split open the packing-case and the duty hands reverently carried it down to the smoking-room. The news soon travelled round " Morality Row" and " Paradise Alley," our two streets of cabins, and the occupants, delighted to hear of the arrival of the strange instrument, hastened to the smoking-room. When I got there the visitors to the exhibition included the engineer commander, his senior engineer, the two doctors, the paymaster, and a couple of watch-keeping lieutenants, Brown and Williams.

We were gingerly fingering its various parts and speculating on their functions when " the Irrepressible" burst into the smoking-room. " The Irrepressible" is our sub, and he rather fancies himself at impersonating gunners' mates and drill instructors. True to his habit he immediately let off:

" Now what 'ave we 'ere ? 'Ere we 'as a sewing-

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machine. Now the object of this 'ere himplement is to sew, and I'll tell yer the reason fer why. Class, T'shun!"

"Dogs of war, out sub ! " remarked Brown.

As one man, every one below the rank of three stripes hurled themselves on the sub, and a Homeric struggle was in progress when the arrival of the Commander restored comparative peace.

"I understand the Service Sewing-machine has been fetched up," said the Commander.

"Yes, sir!" replied the sub. "We 'ave been fortunate enuff in this 'ere ship to secure one of the latest Marks, this 'ere magnificent hinstrument operating at 'igh pressure can sew thirty-five yards of Merchant Navy canvas to a similar piece in hunder one 'our, or halternatively it will sew seventeen and 'arf yards of canvas in 'arf a similar period."

"Always supposing we find some one who can work it," remarked the young doctor. "Now when I was at Bart.'s I had quite a lot of experience with stitching, and I think I could drive this gadget! "

"I may as well say without further delay," remarked the Commander, "that by virtue of my office as Commander of the ship and Mess President, / am going to dig the first sod, or drive the first stitch, or whatever one does when one christens a sewing-machine. Meanwhile——"

"Thank you, Chief, you have divined my innermost thoughts. I was just going to ask

THE SEWING-MACHINE 115

you to agitate the line of communication between this spot and the pantry. We have before us a task which cannot be tackled without stimulants. Now, sub, give me a chair."

A chair was placed in front of the machine, on which the Commander seated himself. Amidst breathless silence he placed his feet on the treadle and started the machine. His action was faintly reminiscent of a great organist trying a few preliminary chords. After a few revolutions he stopped the machine and, leaning back in his chair, remarked with much satisfaction : " So far, so good; it seems to have its gearing connected up all right."

" Don't you think, sir," said Brown, " we'd better trace the lead of the thread ? "

" Good idea," replied the Commander. " I take it, it goes like this—from the reel——"

" Or bobbin," interjected the sub.

" I said from the reel," continued the Commander.

" I believe the best seamstresses invariably refer to it as the bobbin, sir," said the sub in an aggrieved tone.

" If the sub puts me off my stroke again, sit on him, Brown," said the Commander. " Let me see, where was I ? Oh, yes, it leaves the bobbin—damme ! I mean reel, which presumably revolves on this vertical spindle. Thence by a leading block——"

" Do you mean this small pulley ? " inquired the Chief.

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" Yes, I do ! " replied the Commander pugnaciously. " It leads the thread along, doesn't it ? And doesn't a leading block lead a wire along the upper deck ? "

" Well, I suppose you could call it a leading block," admitted the Chief.

" From this block it proceeds," continued the Commander, " to er—er—er, let me see, oh, yes—to the head of the machine."

" The where ? " asked the paymaster.

" The head of the machine, Pay, this left-hand part containing this piston-like apparatus, on the end of which the needle moves up and down."

" Ah! But how does it get to the needle ? " triumphantly asked the Pay.

" How does it get there ? " scornfully ejaculated the P.M.O. " Why, any fool can see it goes down through these little rings.

" Look here!" indignantly remarked the Commander, " who is giving the detail of this machine, you or me ? "

" You are, sir ! / am not," pointedly replied the P.M.O.

" All right, then perhaps every one will let me get on. To summarize then, it seems to me the following theory fits in with observed facts. As soon as motive power is applied to the system by means of this treadle and crank underneath——"

" I tell you what, sir," jubilantly exclaimed Williams, " we could do away with the treadle,

THE SEWING-MACHINE 117

and gear up a neat little J-horse-power electric fan motor. We could use the one in the Pay's office; they love a fugg and never use it, and as a development of the idea we could fit a little indicating device with red and green lamps which would show us the number of beats of the needle per second."

" Nothing of the sort/" said the Commander. " You, in your enthusiasm for that most unpleasant stuff electricity, would make this machine a fruitful source of shocks; you wait until you've been through the long course at the *Vernon*, and then we'll allow you to monkey about with the electrical fittings of the ship. Till then you're a danger."

" Why not try to sew some canvas, Commander ? " suggested the P.M.O.

" Good idea. Sentry, ask the bo'sun to come this way, and to bring a couple of yards of canvas with him."

A few minutes later the bo'sun, a certain Mr Bolt, appeared on the scene. In the background lurked a hardy and ancient three-badged able seaman ; a bunch of keys attached to a lanyard round his waist proclaimed him to be the bo'sun's yeoman. His secretive and miserly cast of countenance were also indications that he belonged to that great band of robbers, the store-keeping fraternity. In his horny fingers he clutched a small strip of the thinnest canvas supplied to H.M. ships. The strip was about two feet long. As soon as Mr Bolt entered the

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smoking-room, he stopped dead as his gaze rested on the sewing-machine.

" *My Sewing-machine* / " he gasped.

" I beg your pardon, Mr Bolt," frostily remarked the Commander.

" I was only a-saying, sir, or in a manner of speaking, expressing surprise at seeing my—er, I mean the sewing-machine, which is one of my unconsoomable stores, standing like this 'ere in the smoking-room."

" Well, Mr Bolt, it's standing here because I intend to work it. Now, did you get my message about the canvas ? "

" Yessir. And I have brought two feet of canvas as you sent along for, but if I might make a remark, sir——"

" Well ? "

" I should say, sir, as 'ow it would be 'ighly injudicious to operate this 'ere machine before the 'and-book on the subject arrives."

" What hand-book, Mr Bolt ? "

" Well, sir," continued the bo'sun, making a gallant effort to retrieve the situation, " in all the thirty years I've been afloat, I never 'card tell of a new instrument arriving without a 'and-book of instructions, and more often than not an happendix as well."

" Do you mean to suggest seriously, Mr Bolt, that I, as Commander of this ship, need a hand-book to tell me how to work a simple sewing-machine ? " indignantly demanded the Commander.

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" No, sir. Of course not. I was only 'azarding an opinion, in a manner of speakin'."

" Very well, that's settled. Now let's have the canvas,"

The canvas was produced and placed under the needle. A reel of cotton was put in position and the thread led along to the needle, through which, after numerous unsuccessful efforts, the young doctor succeeded in threading it. His prestige rose so suddenly that he was emboldened to make another attempt to oust the Commander from his position of operator. It met with no success, the Commander taking refuge in the general statement that no bachelor could be permitted to try.

The canvas was divided into two strips; they were superimposed on each and placed under the needle. The Commander treadled vigorously, and the needle rose and fell and continued to rise and fall.

" It don't seem to be sewing, sir," said Mr Bolt in a voice from which he could not conceal satisfaction.

" Thank you, Mr Bolt, for the canvas. I think that's all we want," pointedly remarked the Commander.

Mr Bolt is no fool, and rightly interpreted this as a signal for him to withdraw. It was, however, soon plain to the whole party that the bo'sun's remark was only too true. The needle rose and fell in a most encouraging manner, but beyond puncturing the canvas, there was not

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the slightest sign of the two pieces being sewn together. A council was held, and after some discussion it was decided to reeve the needle "on the bight." This accomplished, the Commander started operations again.

He had been pedalling for about two minutes, again without result, when a piercing yell, followed by a torrent of invective, brought the padre hot foot from his cabin. He arrived just in time to see a Commander in the painful position of being pinned to a piece of canvas by a needle through the side of his thumb. The sub did not improve matters by turning the machine in the wrong direction when the Commander called on him for help.

Our Commander is an obstinate man and believes in the adage, "There is nothing the Navy cannot do." This contretemps increased his determination to conquer the machine. In a moving little speech, delivered while the P.M.O. was bandaging his finger, he accepted a cocktail from the Chief and called on all present to give their joint opinion.

"There is only one thing for it," said the Chief, "and that is to strip her right down."

"Yes, that's the best thing to do; strip her down thoroughly," agreed the senior engineer.

"We *will* strip the perisher," announced the Commander with an air of a surgeon deciding on an operation in a case of life and death.

"I'll send along for one of my artificers at once," announced the senior engineer. An

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interval of a few minutes elapsed during which period the officers gloomily surveyed the refractory machine.

The artificer arrived armed against all contingencies with a hammer, cold chisel, footrule, screw-driver, and an assortment of spanners. He threw himself into his task with enthusiasm, and soon the proud machine was lying in pieces on the smoking-room floor. Each part was carefully examined by every one, and it was whilst this was taking place that the quartermaster entered and, handing a small parcel to the Commander, said:

"A small boat has just come over from the store ship, sir, and they says as 'ow they forgot to leave this when they dumped the packing-case aboard a couple of hours ago."

The Commander looked at the parcel, then looked at the label, emitted a faint groan and sank into the nearest chair. The P.M.O. gently withdrew it from his nerveless grasp and read out the superscription on the parcel. It ran as follows:

"*For Singer Treadle Machine Sewing Patt. ///., No. 1567—Shuttles. Two in number—one spare—Patt. Va.*"

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In the warrant officers' mess Mr Bolt was remarking to his friend the gunner:

"Wot'I sez is, stores are stores, but, Lor' bless you, *that* don't make no difference to ward-room officers, they does wot they likes. It

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reminds me of a poetry my dear mother used to versify with; it was a pretty little piece and went:

" ' For the rich gets all the pleasure
And the poor gets all the blame,
It's the same the whole world over,
It is a blinkin' shame.' "

ZEAL

[N.B.—*Though this story is based on an actual incident, the characters as described here are wholly imaginary.*]

"MY dear Nap," said the Captain of H.M. destroyer *Bloodhound* to his first lieutenant, "zeal is excellent in its right place. In the abstract it is, I suppose, always a desirable trait in either one's own or anyone else's character, but in real life it is often a dashed nuisance."

Lieutenant-Commander Airmach lit another cigarette, and continued :—

"Take the gunner."

At these words Lieutenant Clambos, sometimes called Napoleon, from the shape of his head, but more often known as "Nap," stirred uneasily on the settee upon which he was lying and murmured something that seemed to be in the nature of a prayer.

It was evident that thinking of the gunner moved him somewhat.

"Look at his effort the other day," gloomily remarked Airmach.

"Do you mean the grabby's¹ dinner-party
¹Sailors' nickname for a soldier.

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we gave ? " inquired the recumbent first lieutenant.

" Great Scott! There's not been anything else since, has there ? " anxiously demanded Airmach.

" Oh, only last night he fired a rifle bullet across a flag-officer's barge, which was taking the old boy back from a dinner-party in the flagship. The boat had engines that make a noise like a fashionable night club's rag-time band, so of course the coxswain never heard the hail, and our Mr Cocker assumed it was ' a Turkish destroyer or other 'ostile craft' and fired a shot across his bows. The flag-officer was in the stern sheets digesting, and though he was a hundred yards off, it was quite easy to see the colour of his face by the light of his cigar; they harmonized somewhat," eloquently concluded Clambos.

" Well, it might be worse," remarked the skipper. " He didn't hit anyone, did he ? "

" We haven't had the Service letter about it yet," said the first lieutenant, " so he may have done for all I know. Lord! It is blasted hot in this place. When is it our turn to patrol the Straits ? "

" To-morrow at dawn, my boy, will see you hauling the hook up on the fo'c'sle. We've got to patrol the West flank from 9 a.m. for twenty-four hours. I hope that perishin' field gun on Gaba el Wad has been flopped out by the Anzacs, Johnnie Turk will catch us bend-

ing with it one day. I bet they've got some swine of a Hun spotting for them."

"A propos of that gun," remarked Clambos, "Mr Cocker told me he had a scheme for silencing it."

"No doubt he has," replied Airmach. "Our Mr Cocker has a scheme for most enterprises. I shouldn't object to them if they didn't invariably recoil on my head," with which remark he rang the bell, and asked if there was any soda on board.

Mr Carlo Bimpero, Maltese steward, second class, answered the summons and replied in the negative.

"Have we any beer?" demanded the Captain.

"No, sah!" briskly replied Carlo.

"Why not, confound it," indignantly demanded the Captain. "Didn't I tell you last Thursday to get some from the store ship next time we were in the base?"

"Yes, sah! and that did I do. I tell you, Signor, I go myself to the store ship and I bring the beer. It was Monday, Signor. I remember the day, sah, because I getta a lettah from my wifa Rosetta. She tell me I haf a baby, a bello bambino, a verra fine—"

"Confound your baby, what about the beer?"

"Yes, sah, certainly, sah. I say, Signor, I bring de beer to zis ship, and then what 'appen? I tell you, sah. Dat damfool Giuseppe he putta de beer on de after boiler-casing, and de heat

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it affect de beer, sah, and de beer maka de pop-bang, and, Santa Maria, in a meenit he has gone! It gives me great regret to tell you dis story, Signor. It never shall happen again."

"You'll sack Giuseppe when we get back to Malta/" announced Airmach.

"Oh, sah! he verra good boy. His mother and my Rosetta are sistahs, Signor."

"Oh, get out of it, Carlo," wearily remarked the Captain, and Signor Bimpero, knowing Lieutenant-Commander Airmach, deemed it advisable to withdraw.

"No beer, no whisky, no nothing. *I'm* going to repose in my cabin. Let me know if any ciphers come through.¹¹ And with a colossal yawn the skipper left the sweltering wardroom for the slightly cooler shelter of his upper-deck cabin, on the fore-bridge.

Lieutenant Clambos reread *La Vie Parisienne* for the third, time, cursed his lack of application to the study of the French language in the earlier days of his youth, cursed the heat, the flies, Gallipoli, and life in general, and then gently dropped off into an uneasy sleep.

The perfect peace which brooded over the destroyer as she lay on the glassy surface of her base amidst half a dozen of her sisters was only broken by the low persistent rumble of the guns which rolled across from the blood-stained peninsula and echoed and re-echoed dully on the rocky and sun-dried shore of Rabbit Island.

The whole ship's company seemed asleep,

and though her bare iron decks were unpleasantly hot to the hand, recumbent figures were scattered fore and aft in such shadow as her ventilators, funnels and torpedo tubes afforded. There was one notable exception to this state of slumber.

The exception was Mr Cocker, Gunner (T). This gentleman was sitting in his cabin right aft, attired in a pair of duck trousers and a vest, and sweating profusely. Every few moments he absent-mindedly dabbed his forehead with a piece of Service blotting-paper. His dampness was due to two causes: first, the Gallipoli sun; secondly, he was writing a letter. When it is added that the letter was to a girl, much is explained. Mr Cocker was a big man, and looking at him in his cabin one was irresistibly reminded of those model ships inside bottles which used to adorn so many public-houses.

On this very hot afternoon Mr Cocker was endeavouring to write a letter to a certain young lady in Plymouth for whom he had a deep and abiding affection. It was a lamentable and deplorable fact, from Mr Cocker's point of view, that this affection was not entirely reciprocated. The young lady's affections wavered between Mr Cocker and Quartermaster-Sergeant Basher of the R.M.L.L., recently awarded the Military Medal for having throttled a Hun in a trench raid on the Western Front. It was this medal that seemed to lie like a shadow between Mr Cocker and his adored one, as he savagely bit his pen in his tiny cabin; for the young lady

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had intimated in a letter which lay before him that the gallant Basher was pressing his claims per medium of field post cards, and that, although she did not withdraw all hope from the more distant Alfred Cocker, yet her patriotism told her that his chances would be considerably improved were he to achieve some martial glory. "At least, Alf," she concluded, "if you really love nte you will get mentioned in dispatches. Bill has sent me his photo taken with the medal on. He looks a hero."

"Blinkin' Turkey¹ ; flat-footed grabby, that's what he is," muttered Mr Cocker as he continued to wrestle with the problem of convincing the damsel that he belonged to a service noted for its silence and in which potential V.Cs. might blush unseen and unheard of.

Mr Cocker had been aware of the lady's partiality for heroes for some months, and when he had left England in the spring to join the *Bloodhound* he had registered a mighty oath to distinguish himself in some manner or other.

The power of love is great, and in the two months he had been in the ship he had certainly distinguished himself, but not in a manner likely to bring a medal to his manly breast or even a mention in dispatches.

His first exploit had been to arrest and confine in the afterhold for three hours an individual who had strolled on board the ship at 4 p.m. one day in plain clothes in Malta dockyard.

¹ Sailors' nickname for a marine.

On Airmach's return from the club at 7 p.m. he had instantly ordered the release of the prisoner, and a dishevelled apparition, smelling strongly of tar, paint, and new rope, had emerged from the manhole. When it *could speak*, it transpired that Lieutenant-Commander Airnach had entertained unawares a highly respectable Member of Parliament, on a commission travelling through Malta to the Far East.

This episode was but the first of a series culminating in an awful *faux pas* at a military dinner, which cannot be described even here, and lastly, he had only the night before committed the *betise* of adhering strictly to the letter of the regulations in a matter concerning a flag-officer. At 6 p.m. Mr Cocker completed his labours and took to his bunk, there to revolve in his active brain fresh schemes whereby he might impress his Captain with a proper sense of Alfred Cocker's efficiency.

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The next day at dawn, as ordered, the *Bloodhound* weighed anchor and proceeded towards the peninsula.

At 6 a.m. Mr Cocker came up to relieve Clambos, who warned him before turning over that it had been definitely established that German submarines had arrived, and a look out was to be kept accordingly. Mr Cocker's face lit up on the instant, and who shall say what visions flitted through his optimistic mind. Imagine then,

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if it be possible, what his feelings were when at 6.30 a.m., distant half a mile on the port bow, he sighted a small dark projection apparently standing up about a foot above the water. To ring " Full speed ahead " and starboard his helm was the work of an instant.

At ever-increasing speed the *Bloodhound* bore down on the suspicious object. Trembling with excitement, Mr Cocker, with glasses glued to his eyes, prayed the object would not dip. When they had but three hundred yards to go Mr Cocker dropped his glasses in amazement, then, staring wild-eyed, shrieked out at the top of his voice: " Submarine with *four* periscopes right ahead."

As Airmach reached the bridge the *Bloodhound* reached her quarry, and there was a slight bump and a perceptible report.

" We got her! I got her! We got her! " exulted Mr Cocker, executing a species of war-dance round the bridge.

" Got what, Mr Cocker ? "

" Submarine, sir! With four periscopes! Four of 'em, sir! Saw 'em with my own eyes. Must be one of their latest. Rammed her fair and square."

" Nonsense," said the Captain.

" But didn't you feel the bump ? " indignantly demanded the Gunner.

" Yes, I did feel something," admitted Airmach. " Turn the ship round at once," he concluded.

" Did you see anything, Johnson ? " queried Airmach, addressing the coxswain.

" Yessir! I see four hobjects a-sticking up in the water, and we 'it 'cm fair and square. Likewise I felt the blow and 'eard a noise, a kind o' underwater bang like."

" Great Scott! What an appalling stench ! " remarked Clambos, who arrived on the bridge at this juncture.

"Heavens! what on earth is it ? " said the Captain, as a fearful odour began to pervade the atmosphere.

The next instant every one who had a handkerchief was applying it to his nose. After a few moments of agony Clambos muttered through his handkerchief, " *It seems to come from fore'ard, sir.*"

An A.B. was dispatched to explore, and cautiously making his way on the forecastle, leant over the side.

He speedily withdrew his head, and, speaking with difficulty, was understood to shout that " We've gone and got the innards of an adjectival animaul round our bows/'

It was at this juncture that Mr Cocker really established his reputation. Without hesitating for an instant, he jammed both telegraphs to full speed astern. The *Bloodhound* came to rest, and then slowly gathered stern-way.

As she did so the honoured remains detached themselves from the bows, and the Mediterranean absorbed the carcass of a mule which had died

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for his country some weeks previously on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and had been drifting about with his legs in the air ever since.

As a result of this adventure Mr Cocker had a long interview with Lieutenant-Commander Airmach. The Gunner emerged therefrom wreathed in smiles; exactly what transpired was never officially published, but it may be noted that at the date of writing Lieutenant-Commander Airmach is a godfather in the Cocker family, that Mrs Cocker cherishes an official "strictly private" letter from Lieutenant-Commander Airmach which speaks in glowing terms of her husband's unremitting attention to duty and his stupendous zeal. It also insinuates that it was only Mr Cocker's extraordinary modesty that stood in the way of his being recommended for a V.C.

Mr Cocker is still serving with Lieutenant-Commander Airmach, so it may be presumed that his zeal has abated somewhat.

Quartermaster-Sergeant Basher is still throttling Huns in France with added viciousness.

DINING OUT

From LIEUTENANT FITZ PRICE, H.M.S. *Amiens*,
To LIEUTENANT JOHNSTON, H.M.S. *Hardy*.

" **E**XCUSE short notice. Will you dine with me to-night ? "

Such is a typical signal to receive at about the hour of 4 p.m. Always supposing Fitz Price is a friend whom one wishes to cultivate, one can, and personally I often do, counter the signal by replying: " Very sorry, can't get off. Please dine with me."

It is dangerous to go into details, such as " Very sorry, can't get a boat," or something like that, as should the Commander see the signal, he, knowing you haven't asked him for a boat, will take it as reflecting personally on himself, and also there is a slight danger that Lieutenant Fitz Price will reply: " We will fetch you."

It may happen that owing to some grave event, such as the supply of mess port giving out, you are not adverse to making the necessary effort and dining out.

Under these circumstances it is as well to ascertain:

(a) The probable state of the weather.

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(b) The distance the *Amiens* is anchored from the *Hardy*.

If the weather looks well, and the *Amiens* is within the two-mile radius, one would probably commit oneself to the great adventure, and send back a signal "W.M.P.", which, being interpreted, tells Fitz Price that you accept his invitation "With much pleasure."

I will now endeavour to describe, as accurately as possible, my own experience the other day, after sending the above signal to my particular Fitz Price.

At 5 p.m. I interviewed the Commander in *re* boats.

"What do you want," said he.

"I'm dining in the *Amiens*, and I'd like a boat, sir," said I.

"All right—send you over in the skiff—find your own way back—that suit you?"

"Well, sir, the *Amiens* is six ships down the line, and there'll be an ebb tide against me, so—^{so}—"

"Oh, I suppose you'll have to have the picket boat—well, you must be back by 11.15. What time do you want her?"

Drawing a bow at a venture, I said 7.20, as I imagined they dined at 7.30 in the *Amiens*. I was mistaken, for when I arrived there at 7.25 Fitz Price met me at the top of the gangway, and greeted me with the remark:

"Cheer-oh, old bird, I'd given you up—you're twenty-five minutes late—didn't you know we

were feeding at 7 Pip Emma, as the grabbles¹ say? "

I replied in the negative, and pointed out that wireless telepathy was still in the experimental stage.

George (no one calls Fitz Price by his surname) relieved the tension by announcing that, "Well, it doesn't matter a damn. I've only got as far as the fish, and I'd like to start again."

As we were walking across the quarter-deck he paused and, turning to me, said, "Oh, I say, how are you going to get back? "

"Well, I've got a perfectly good steamboat, and I've arranged for it to come and fetch me between now and dawn," I replied.

"You see," he continued, "it's a bit awkward——"

"What's a bit awkward," I inquired, for, knowing George since Osborne days, my suspicions were instantly aroused.

"Well, as a matter of fact," he said, "we got a signal at 6 p.m. putting us at half an hour's notice for steam, and there's a buzz floating round that we're slipping off at 8 p.m."

"The devil you did. And what the deuce do you suppose I'd do if you do shove off? "

"Oh, well, it will be all right," he answered in soothing tones. "Tommy was dining with me last week and we shoved off unexpected like, and we had to leave him on the buoy when we slipped. We gave him a bottle of sloe gin

¹ Grabbles, soldiers.

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and a box of matches, and as we went down harbour we signalled to his packet, 'Lieutenant Thompson is on number eight buoy, striking matches/ You'll be all right.'

Words failed me. George is irresistible, and I meekly followed him down to the wardroom.

"Excuse me, Mr President, and my guest, who's come at last," said George.

"Certainly," said the President. "Waiter, Mr Fitz Price has already had fish, so in the interests of national economy he will start at beef."

George protested volubly, and, as I expected, with entire success.

I need not enlarge on the subsequent entertainments, which consisted of a sing-song, followed up by a "rough house," in which a certain amount of furniture was broken.

At ii p.m. the *Amiens* showed no signs of going to sea, which was good, but my boat showed no sign of turning up, which was bad. Conversation with George languished, and I was not surprised to discover, in the course of conversation with the sub, that George had the morning watch. A guest after 11.30 becomes a nuisance if one is obliged to get up at 3.45 a.m. It was not until after 11.45 that my boat arrived. On going on deck I found it was raining and blowing, and that the picket boat had been obliged to take an urgent letter to the *Didon*, at the extreme end of the line—hence the delay. On entering the boat a playful wave covered

the bottom step of the ladder whilst I was on it. I called out to the coxswain, as a matter of form:

" Back to the ship, please."

A dripping figure in oilskins came aft:

" Please, sir, I've got to go to the *Quinten Castle* first to fetch the engineer commander, who went over at 9 p.m."

I groaned, and retreating into the cabin sat down in a pool of water.

A series of crashes, bumps, and hoarse shouts of:

" Give them the grass line."

" Why the devil don't you make fast forrard? "

" Put your helm to port, coxswain."

" Look out for our blinkin' ladder,"

apprised me that we were in the vicinity of the *Quinten Castle*. Groping my way out into the stern sheets, I requested the officer of the watch, who loomed high above us, the centre of a constellation of lanterns, to inform the engineer commander that his boat was waiting. Five minutes had elapsed when a voice from above sung out:

" I say. That officer in the boat—will you come down to the mess, please."

" No, thanks," I replied. " Did you tell our Chief I was in the boat ? "

" Yes, and our Commander said I was to bring you down."

I foresaw half an hour's wait, and as the motion alongside was decidedly unpleasant, I

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wearily clambered up the ladder and was taken below. A tremendous party was in full swing, the centre of attraction being our Chief, who was performing to the accompaniment of slow music his famous impersonation of a match-seller in Piccadilly Circus. It appeared that their chaplain had that day taken unto himself a wife, hence these festivities. The reverend gentleman was at the moment on his honeymoon, so the connexion seemed obscure, but such was the explanation given to me.

At 12.30 our engineer commander thought we'd really better go, and at 1 a.m. I got to bed, swearing I would never dine out again. And yet I know that if I got a signal from George to-morrow night I should go and dine with him. George is irresistible.

AT SEA

TIME: 11.50 p.m. Bang-bang on the cabin door, the heavy tread of a marine sentry, a crash as he trips over *the* chair, and then a flood of light bathes the tiny cabin.

Lieutenant John Smith, owing to long practice, is by this time thoroughly awake, but he closes his eyes and tries to believe it is all a dream and that it is only his imagination which is saying:

"Ten minutes to eight bells, and Mr 'ill's compliments, sir, and it—it's—rainin' and blowin' very 'ard—oil-skin and sea-boot weather, if I might 'azard a remark, sir ! "

This effort of chattiness on the part of the marine sentry rasps on Lieutenant Smith's sensitive nature.

Sitting up abruptly he remarks, " For Heaven's sake get out of my cabin ! "

The sentry withdraws and tells his own relief that " Smithy 'as the 'ell of a fat 'ead."

He also privately registers the resolve to mistake a quarter to twelve for ten minutes to the hour when next he calls Lieutenant Smith.

But let us return to this gentleman and observe

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attentively his movements and listen to his conversation.

Having carefully examined his wrist-watch he springs ponderously out of his bunk. The ship is pitching heavily, and it is with some bitterness that he notices a photograph of a girl—much esteemed—has fallen from its frame into his wash-basin.

He quickly dresses, putting on several layers of Shetland waistcoats, a special inflatable waistcoat, and, finally, sea boots, an oil-skin, a pair of reputed waterproof gloves and a sou'-wester hat.

He flings a pair of binoculars round his neck, and with a lingering look at his warm bunk, from which (O shame !) a hot-water bottle leers at him, he staggers on deck.

His progress to the bridge is lengthy and somewhat painful. Funnel guys and other wires strike him smartly across the face at regular intervals; a bluejacket hastening below for four hours' sleep rams him, then disappears in haste. Eventually Smith reaches Monkey Island,¹ where he and Mr Hill enter into a short conversation lasting a couple of minutes.

Mr Smith's contributions to this consist of a series of grunts, but it apparently satisfies his opposite number, for with a parting remark that the " sea-cows " are five miles on the port beam, Mr Hill retires to his bunk.

¹ Monkey Island is the name given to the fore upper bridge.

Let me explain, *en parenthese*, that the "sea-cows" are an extremely respectable squadron of cruisers, once attached to the Grand Fleet.

Amongst other yarns, passed from ship to ship, concerning the squadron, runs one to the effect that the "sea-cows" were late at a rendezvous. On inquiries being made by wireless, a reply was received as follows :

"We are zigzagging 90 degrees in each direction every quarter of an hour, in order to cope with the submarine menace."

But we have lost sight of our protege. Smith soon finds that it is in very truth oil-skin weather. About every ten seconds the cruiser buries her forecastle deep into creamy foam, then, without effort, she lifts, and her "flared bow" flings many tons of North Sea back along the upper deck.

Much of this is caught by the gale and, rising in a curved sheet, is hurled against the bridge.

Smith and his companion (for another unfortunate is also keeping a weary vigil) manage to dodge most of these by ducking behind a canvas screen at the critical moment, but every now and then they miscalculate and receive the penalty in the shape of stinging, blinding spray.

An indeterminate distance ahead a feeble blue light glimmers in the gloom. Smith watches it carefully—he must keep four hundred yards from that light, which marks the plunging stern of the next ahead. Whenever he can he sweeps the horizon and imagines dark spots, though

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common sense tells him that there is little chance of the Hun destroyer being out on such a night.

In such a manner the minutes pass, and slowly (oh! so slowly sometimes) they become hours.

As 2 a.m. rings out on the ship's bell, a dripping figure appears at his side, holding in one hand a pulpy mass of signal sheets.

" One or two signals come through, sir. Shall I read 'em ? "

" Carry on," says Smith.

The dripping one produces a shaded torch, switches it on, and intones various signals.

" One more, sir: ' Fleet will alter course at 2.15 to North/ "

" Thank Heaven for that/' comes from the other corner. " We shall have this sea behind us."

" 'Ear! 'Ear! to your sentiments, John, they does yer credit," adds Smith.

At 2.15 a.m. course is altered satisfactorily, though not before Mr Smith has gone through an unpleasant five minutes, during which he first lost his guiding stern light, then having increased to twenty knots in a flutter of excitement he suddenly noticed a black shape on his beam- However, with no lights showing such things often happen, and he drops into station without anyone being the wiser.

The rain has kindly stopped, and on the new course the bridge is comparatively dry.

Thoughts of cocoa obtrude themselves.

" Messenger! "

" Sir! "

" Go down to my cabin, and in my basin you will find a cup, saucer, and spoon, a coffee cup full of milk, another one full of brown sugar, a tin of cocoa, and an electric kettle. Bring it all up—got it ? "

" Yessir! "

In the fullness of time the small boy, aged about fifteen, reappears with the necessary impedimenta for cocoa. The kettle is plugged up, and the brew mixed.

Soon both officers are enjoying the cup that cheers but does not inebriate. Under cover of a screen pipes are lit, and Mr Smith, revived by the cocoa and soothed by the pipe, known as the " gum-bucket " to his pals, becomes quite affable.

" You know," he remarks, " that drop of leave we gathered in the other day seems like a dream, a vision punctuated with lovely ladies——"

" Yes," interposes the other, " it is like a dream until you look at your cheque-book. I had not observed mine closely until I got a screed from my bankers requesting me to do so. The shock was terrific."

" Ah, yes, Jacko ! but what a devil of a good time one had in those four days ! By the way, did you get engaged ? "

" No, thank Heaven, but I had a dashed narrow escape. It was on the river, and in the dusk, about the time you darken ships—savee ? and 'pon my word I just was losing my head, when our punt was rammed amidships by a tinker in

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a skiff, one of the 'grabbles,'¹ taking his young lady out for a row. Of course that brought me to. I sweated with fear when I thought about it."

Mr Smith murmured sympathetic condolences, then, apropos of nothing in particular, he remarked:

"It's marvellous how noble, how sympathetic some girls are! Now last leave I met——"

He was rudely interrupted.

"Look here, old chap, it's quarter to four. What about the reliefs?"

"Good lor! So it is. Here! Hi! messenger, nip down and tell the sentry to call Mr Blanche and Mr Burrell. Tell 'em it's a fine night, and see they turn out. . . . Signalmen, bring the books, and send a hand down to report 3.50 to the navigator! . . . Bosun's mate, send a hand up here to take the crockery down!"

At 4 a.m. a sleepy "figure arrives on the bridge, and takes over from Smith's companion. "Night, Smithy," says the latter, "I'll smooth your sheets for you as I pass your house."²

"See if that slug Blanche has turned out, would be more to the point," is Mr Smith's reply.

4.2 a.m.—"If there is one thing I abominate, it's being relieved late," remarks Mr Smith.

4.4 a.m.—"I say, Burrell, did you see if Blanche was turned out?"

"No, my eyes were not unstuck then," replies Burrell.

¹ Grabbles, soldiers.

² House, cabin.

4.6 a.m.—" Blast his sluggish liver ! Here, messenger! "

" Yessir."

" Take my compliments—*compliments*, do you savee, to Mr Blanche and tell him—Oh! here he is—wash out."

" Sorry, old sport," remarks the new arrival with forced joviality. " I'm a wee bit adrift."

" Not at all, I like it," says Smith, with heavy sarcasm. " Well, here you are. Course North, etc."

4.15 a.m.—" Sentry ! "

" Sir! "

" Call me at eight o'clock. A good shake."

" Very good, sir."

4.20 a.m.—Heavy breathing.

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STRANGE TALES
FROM THE FLEET

STRANGE TALES FROM THE FLEET

BY
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STRANGE TALES FROM THE FLEET

DAVID AND GOLIATH

CAPTAIN HENRY SCUDD, of the British Mercantile Marine, sat in my wardroom and smoked Royal Naval tobacco with evident pleasure.

Stress of weather had forced me and the destroyer under my command into Dartmouth, and the King's Harbour-master had directed me to anchor in a billet unpleasantly close to the *s.s. Rosebank*, likewise weather-bound, awaiting convoy to the Western Atlantic.

In the middle watch the two ships had swung contrariwise, and our sterns had touched.

This contretemps led to much business with fenders and bad language on our part, but the *s.s. Rosebank* had taken no notice of the affair—her plates were not the sort to be dented with a boathook.

Captain Henry Scudd, being a model of courtesy, had come across in state, in a whaler manned by a steward, two firemen and a boy, to inquire solicitously as to our well-being—and to smoke Naval tobacco in the duty-free shadow of the White Ensign.

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He had stayed to lunch, and after the meal we had discussed German submarines, a question which interested us both from different points of view, for whereas it was my pleasant duty to hunt them, Captain Scudd was liable to find himself the hunted.

Not that he worried—he had been torpedoed twice, and he reckoned the *Rosebank* a fast ship—for had not his Chief Engineer squeezed eleven knots and a kick out of her ?

When he said this I felt a great humbleness, for a week previously I had complained that my speed had dropped to 31 knots, and what were destroyers' engines coming to, etc., etc.

Captain Henry Scudd gazed round the ward-room.

" Smart pictures, though I don't know that Mrs Scudd would pass them," he remarked, indicating our Kirchners with the stem of his pipe.

I agreed that they were charming, and mentally wondered what Mrs Scudd's pictures were like.

" Women "—began Captain Scudd, his eyes fastened on "La Coquette."

I waited anxiously ; there was an air about the Captain that seemed to indicate he had seen life in the course of the last twenty-five years, but it was not to be, evidently he did not feel that he knew me well enough, for he suddenly remarked:

" Damned rummy for me to be sitting in a Royal Navy mess."

"How's that," said I.

"Well, Lieutenant Fitz Price, there was a day when I hated the R.N.—you stunk in my nostrils, as the Book says." .

I expressed my sorrow that this should have been so, and demanded further details.

"It was in '01 that the trouble started," replied the Captain. "I was skipper of a decent little craft called the——well, call her the *David*."

"Yes, that's a good name, call her the *David*," and Captain Scudd chuckled to himself.

"I was in the Black Sea trade," he continued, "and one December morning I fetched up off Gibraltar. Due to go in for orders, I was."

"As I turned up for the Breakwater I saw a blasted great battleship, guns dotted about her like barnacles, and five hundred sailors to make her look pretty, standing up for the same entrance. I had her abaft me starboard beam—right oh! you say I had to give way."

"I'm sure I never . . ."

Captain Scudd did not allow me to continue.

"No, sir! I maintain she was an overtaking ship. Howmsoever, we both drew near the entrance, and a bicycle-maker from Birmingham could see it was-going to be a near thing."

"The battleship I'm going to call the *Goliath*" continued Captain Scudd, "blew her syren, and hoisted international flags, which, when I had time to look 'em up next day, meant '*Stand out of my course.*'"

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" Now I had my pride then just as I have now, so I held on. Nearer and nearer we got to the hole in the wall, and nearer we got to each other. My quartermaster—we had dagoes in those days—tried to put the helm over without orders. I knocked him down and took the wheel myself. Well, the whole of Gib. would have seen two ships with a combined beam of no feet trying to get through an entrance 120 feet wide, if the *Goliath*, by a turn of speed, hadn't got past us and got there first. We were so close his torpedo booms carried away my sea boat, but it was a neat bit of work with a ship that size, and I could have forgiven him if a gilded young popinjay, in a suit of white ducks with brass buttons, hadn't sung out from her fore-bridge with a megaphone: ' Noah ahoy! I'll send you a copy of the rules "of the road when we've anchored,'

"And all these blinkin' sailors laughing like a pack of jackasses at ME, a man with twenty years' sailing in those days, and an extra master's certificate. I can assure you I said a thing or two; I hadn't met Mrs Scudd then."

There was a long pause.

" Was that the end ? " I ventured to remark.

" By no means, Lieutenant Fitz Price," replied the Captain, " for in March '02 I was plugging through the Bay, homeward bound, wind force seven, sea ditto, when whom should I meet rolling her guts out, but my old friend the

DAVID AND GOLIATH 5

Goliath. I had a look at her through glasses, and saw a crowd of sailors vomiting good and hearty over her lee side. That gave me an idea.

"I routed out some flags, and hoisted, '*Please close me. I have urgent question to ask.*'"

"Round came the *Goliath*. Lord, how she rolled when she got in the trough, then as she wallowed about just off my beam, I ran up with me own hands: '*Have you any sick on board? I can supply medical assistance.*'" I'd have given a month's pay to be on her bridge.

"After a long pause she ran up a four-letter signal."

"What was it?" I asked.

"*You win*" replied Captain Scudd with relish.

"Thank you," said the Captain, "à whisky water, please." Then as he sipped his drink:

"But now, Mr Fitz Price, things are different. This war has taught us both. This convoy work has changed my ideas. As for you gentlemen in destroyers, well—you're grand."

"The war has shown us, Captain," said I, "that those that sail the sea are of two kinds. 'The Hun and the others'; and as far as your service and mine are concerned they are both one, and long may they remain so."

"Hear, hear," said the Captain.

As we went on deck and awaited his boat, I said:

"May I offer you a couple of pounds of Naval tobacco, Captain Scudd?"

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The Captain grinned.

" Well, as you rightly said, we're both one, and I hate these Customs officers. Thank you, I shall be obliged, Mr Fitz Price."

PINCHING

IT was at 9.30 a.m. one day in the smoking-room of a submarine depot ship. Several first lieutenants of submarines were disposed in as many arm-chairs; theoretically these officers should have been in their boats, which lay in serried ranks of four submarines in each group, alongside the depot ship—but this is a true story.

The morning papers had been finished and cast on the deck, and conversation ranged from Foch's latest move to the awful flavour of the margarine at breakfast.

Lamp-post John—6 ft. 5 in his socks—was just saying: "Of all the muck I've ever tasted, that axle grease this morning was the worst," when the Second Torpedo Lieutenant of the depot came into the room and joined the group. He was an officer of some twenty-five summers, and, like nearly all Naval officers, going slightly bald on top. He loved his stomach, and, quickly grasping the situation, remarked :

"As for the so-called milk, it nearly made me vomit."

"Muck," tersely agreed Maurice Black.

"*I* daresay the Germans wouldn't call it a bad breakfast," mildly remarked the Padre.

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" Bosh," exclaimed the Second Torpedo Lieutenant? " Do you suppose Hindenburg sits down and pours a mixture of sour milk and cheese over his porridge ? "

Then with bewildering rapidity he changed the subject.

" By the way, you blokes, do you know E 57 is going to Chatham this evening to pay off ? " This simple announcement had a most curious effect on the assembled officers, for with one accord they rose, and each murmuring something about " getting on with the day's work," they left the mess.

The Second Torpedo Lieutenant smiled sardonically and, sinking into one of the vacant chairs, said to the Padre, " Where the carcass is, there also shall the vultures be found."

" Explain yourself," replied the priest.

The Second Torpedo Lieutenant laughed.

" You see," he said, " I heard this morning from certain sources of information that had the tip which is straight, from the Captain's office, that E 57 was going to pay off, so I straightway sent for my gunner, and, speaking in the vernacular, I said to him, ' Mr Tovey, E 57 goes to Chatham to pay off—get busy.'

" Mr Tovey, a splendid fellow, reported to me just now that he had secured: ' Boxes of torpedo tools, one in number. Ammeters, two in number. Pressure gauges, one in number, and a miscellaneous collection of battery thermometers, two ventilating fans, and other sundries."

" But surely you don't mean Mr Tovey has purloined these articles, do you ? " said the parson in a scandalized voice.

" My dear Padre, since you only joined up to save souls for the duration I will explain further. You must savce that in a boat all the fixtures and stores are either consumable or non-consumable ; in the latter case they are said to be on charge. Now, when a boat goes to the dockyard to pay off, if she has got three fans or two tool-boxes on her charge sheet, her crew have got to produce these fans or boxes of tools, or else pay miserably for them. But it doesn't matter what condition the gear is in—consequently, if E 57 has a lovely tool-box full of beautiful tools, and I have one, which by reason of much use is full of broken spanners, I pinch her box and give her mine; in fact one does the ' New lamp for old ' stunt reversed, right through the boat. As for consumable stores, of course one pinches every blinkin' thing one can lay one's hands on. She needn't arrive with any of those on board at Chatham, and you can lay your last Bradbury E 57 won't take much away, now that I've combed her out myself and told the secret to those first lieutenants. They'd pinch her engines, saddle tanks and conning-tower if they could. Have you got the idea ? "

The Padre declared that he had, and mentally docketed another story for his parishioners when he went back to civil life.

"An hour later the Second Torpedo Lieutenant

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strolled along the jetty to where E 57 was lying. A number of first lieutenants were entering the boat through the after-hatch. Each was accompanied by a sailor from his boat. At regular intervals one of these henchmen appeared at E 57's foremost hatch, laden with loot, which he would spirit away to his boat and return for more.

Val Sepping, the first lieutenant of E 57, moodily surveyed the scene from the conning-tower, as he kept a sharp eye open and demanded categorical assurance that a substitute had been brought into the boat for each piece of stuff taken out.

Lamp-post John suddenly uncoiled himself, and, stretching up through the foremost hatch, shouted:

" I say, Val, do you want your small magnetic compass ? We'll give you one instead, of course.

" What's wrong with it ? " asked Val.

" Well, the magnets have dropped off the card/" admitted John.

" Well, there's nothing doing," announced Val.

" We might need a magnetic compass going round to Chatham, that's to say if there's a boat left by 8 p.m. to go in, and we aren't going to run aground for your sake."

" Right-O," replied John, as undeterred by his failure he vanished into the boat.

Inside E 57 all was animation. First lieutenants, armed with tools, conscientiously worked up and down the length of the boat, removing

lockers, switches, light shades, etc., etc. In the central room Maurice Black loudly raised his voice in some bitter complaint.

After lunch that day a group of lieutenants, in command of submarines, were discussing the impending departure of E 57. Her past career was reviewed, as were also the careers of the notable men who in turn had shepherded her into the dangerous waters of the Bight, until after four years the old junk was to be repaired and almost rebuilt.

" Well, anyhow, my Second Dickie¹ pinched some useful gear out of her this morning," said Colin, Captain of E —.

" So did mine," remarked J——, Captain of E—.

" What about yours, B. ? " inquired Colin. " Was he one of the foolish virgins. Hasn't your boat got a memento of E 57 ? "

Lieutenant Bladder looked up and replied, "That silly fool Maurice came to me this morning and told me the looting party was starting, and could he borrow my long screw-driver. I lent——"

" Not that good-looking one you pinched from a pew in church on Intercession Day, was it ? " anxiously inquired J——.

" The very one," gloomily remarked Blackler. " Well, I lent it to him, and he put it down on a bunk in E 57 whilst he was trying to find the best way to unscrew a box full of accumulators.

¹ First Lieutenant, or Second in Command.

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When he turned round the driver had gone. Whilst he was looking for that, some shark came along and took out the accumulators and put back a set with broken containers. In fact, one way and another, we positively went down the spout over E57."

The Second Torpedo Lieutenant, who had been listening in silence to this recital of failure, beckoned to his messenger, " Go and tell Chief Petty Officer Hemp to muster all our screw-drivers, and warn him that Lieutenant Maurice Black has lost one and may look for it in the torpedo shed."

ONE OF THE R.N.Ds.

“**N**OW on the rammer number of this 'ere gun becoming a casualty or in any hother manner renderin' 'imself unfit fer dooty, number 5 will smartly take his place and perform 'is dooties as before de-tailed. Gun's crew—close up!”

Petty Officer Bates, the perspiring and somewhat loquacious gunner's mate, wiped his brow and surveyed the bewildered crowd of men who clumsily scrambled to obey his order and close up round the 6-inch gun, the drill of which they were learning.

These men were the Kitchener's Army of the Navy, the R.N.Ds., or "Winston's Brigade," as they are often nick-named.

Straight from the Crystal Palace the draft had been sent for training to a light cruiser. Small wonder if ship life seemed strange to men who a few months earlier had toiled in the hum-drum trades of civil life.

The gunner's mate, when taking a class, had a habit of prefacing his extracts from the drill book with a few choice remarks on life in general, for in the depths of his heart he rather imagined himself an orator. The gun's crew took up

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their stations round the gun and expectantly awaited their instructor's inevitable criticism.

Petty Officer Bates began as follows: " Now, becos you are kitted up as seamen and wearin' yer number fives, don't any of yer go fer to himagine that ye're bluejackets, 'cos yer ain't, in any manner o' speakin'. It his hestimated that hupwards o' eleven years' continuous training " —the class shuddered—"is required to make a fully qualified able seaman, 'oldin' badges, and a ratin' of gunlayer, second class. Hexceptional men"—there was an impressive pause—" 'ave been known to become gunner's mate hafter honly nine years' hexperience. 'Avin' told yer this—Class, pay attention !

" Hon the 'orizon, range 5000, deflection 20 right, hindependent fire. Commence."

The class feverishly went through the motions of loading and firing and again loading the gun, while the gunner's mate poured forth a torrent of criticism and correction.

Suddenly he roared:

" Rammer number, fall out."

Ordinary Seaman Packwith (late piano player at a cinematograph theatre), grinned sheepishly, dropped his rammer, and thankfully retired to one side.

No. 4 pretended to insert a projectile into the breech, and then ensued a dreadful pause. The rammer was still on the deck. Instinctively the class turned to look at Petty Officer Bates—all save No. 5. He was gazing at the distant High-

lands and wondering whether from the top of the most distant purple peak a clear-sighted man would be able to see the western coast, and more especially the kirk tower of Portnamuchree.

At last Petty Officer Bates marshalled up his forces and the volcano erupted. "Num-ber five, will you wake up? What the 'ell's the good of me a-givin' you the detail an' you 'alf asleep?"

No. 5—otherwise Ordinary Seaman Strong, R.N.D.; place of residence, Portnamuchree; trade or occupation, crofter—started violently, seized the rammer and wildly plunged it into the breech of the gun. Unfortunately he did so wrong end first.

The oratorical soul of Petty Officer Bates delighted in such an opportunity. For full five minutes the admiring if somewhat nervous class listened to the gunner's mate's opinion as to the intellect and general intelligence of R.N.Ds. in general, and of No. 5 in particular. The address concluded with an eloquent appeal to the gods of battle that they might be pleased to ordain that Ordinary Seaman Strong should never find himself rammer number of PI gun when that weapon was discharging lyddite at the Germans.

"I dout me I would have no verra great deeficulty with yon rammer if ah was fetchin' the Germans," quietly remarked No. 5 at the conclusion of the gunner's mate's remarks. This latter individual snorted, and the drill was resumed.

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This little incident took place in February 1916.

On May 31st of the same year a shell burst on the boat deck of the same light cruiser. It burst close behind P I gun.

A hundred vicious fragments lashed the surroundings, including the gun's crew. Ordinary Seaman Strong, of His Majesty's R.N. Division, found himself on the deck amid a heap of wounded and dead men.

At the moment he felt no pain and did not really know that his left arm had been almost severed at the shoulder. He did observe that the gun was standing idle, with a projectile lying just inside the breech. The rammer was on the deck; its master, burnt to death by the flash of the shell, lay by its side.

Something about the rammer number becoming a casualty and the duties of No. 5 under such circumstances must have passed through Strong's mind; he was seen to stagger to his feet, pick up the rammer with his right hand and, holding its shaft against his chest, he applied the rammer head to the projectile and lurched forward. The impetus of his body served to ram the shell home. Some one pushed him up against the inside of the gun shield, threw out the rammer, and inserted a cordite charge. The same hand shut the breech, and a voice hoarsely shouted: " Ready! "

Petty Officer Bates, sitting on the deck with

his back up against the funnel casing and his life-blood streaming out at each breath from a hole in his chest, had the inexpressible satisfaction, a few Seconds before his senses left him, of seeing the gun fire.

Strong, practically unconscious from pain and loss of blood, rocked drunkenly to the discharge of P I gun ; then quite slowly his legs slid forward and his back moved down the smooth surface of the shield till he collapsed on to the deck like an empty accordion. A minute or two later there was a lull in the action. The stretcher parties hastened up the batteries, and both Bates and Strong were picked up and taken below. They each made a brief visit to the stokers' bathroom, where the doctors were doing what they could. From there they were carried into the wardroom and laid on mattresses placed on the table.

Twenty-four hours later I had a moment to spare and, armed with a tin of cigarettes, I went into the wardroom and walked around among the seriously wounded whom we had placed in there.

Strong was lying flat on his back, his face was icy white, and it was difficult to believe that life still remained. The sick berth steward told me that he had never recovered consciousness since the action, and that there was no hope, as the shock and loss of blood had been tremendous. On the next mattress to String, and lying almost alongside him, Petty Officer Bates was slowly dying. It needed no doctor to tell me that in

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this case the end could not be far. The man's face was drawn with pain, and little sweat drops clustered on the forehead told of the agony of his passing. He was quite conscious and recognized me as I bent over him. Rolling over on one side he let his gaze rest on the statue-like form of Ordinary Seaman Strong.

Slowly nodding in his head, he whispered reflectively, " 'E did remember his rammer drill, an' that's a fact."

At first I was at a loss to understand what Bates was driving at. Then I remembered that a month ago before I had been officer of the watch one afternoon. A class of R.N.Ds. were being drilled, and when the drill was over I pointed out to Petty Officer Bates that perhaps he expected rather a lot from the class. I had mentioned the rammer incident as an example, and said that I thought it quite possible that Ordinary Seaman Strong might be right when he said that he would remember his drill in action.

It was not till some days later that I heard from an eye-witness how Strong had rammed home the waiting projectile. Then I fully understood Bates's last remark.

They both died within an hour of each other and we buried them together in the North Sea.

THE STUNT

" **R** AISE steam with all despatch and report when ready to proceed." The Commander read the signal aloud and added, " Rather cramps your style, Pay. Weren't you due to meet the widow in the 'Burgh to-morrow afternoon ? "

" Men must work and women must weep," loftily quoted the Paymaster. A general laugh from the occupants of the *Porthampton's* smoking-room greeted this retort.

" When will you be ready, Chief ? " inquired the Commander. The Engineer Commander looked at his watch; it was 8 p.m. He knew that he could be ready to go at 10 p.m., though officially he was supposed to have four hours' notice. Being a Scotchman and canny, and realizing the desirability of "Clearing his yard-arm" in case of unforeseen delay, he replied, " Well, I'll get both watches of stoker boys down there, and with luck we ought to have 22 knots by 10.45 P-m«"

A signalman entered and handed the pad to the Commander, who read out, " Rear-Admiral to Twelfth Light Cruiser Squadron. Report estimated time when you will be ready to proceed."

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" Any replies through yet from the other three ships ? " demanded the Commander.

" Yes, sir, as I left the bridge the *Westingham* had 10.30 p.m. flying/

" Did I say 10.45 p.m.," interrupted the Chief. " I've just been working it out, and I cancel that estimate and substitute 10.15 p.m." He looked aggressively round the smoking-room, but no one deemed it wise to comment on this remarkable change of opinion. A few minutes later the smoking-room was empty, and the shrill whistle of the boatswain's pipe, mingling with the tramp of many feet, showed that both watches of the hands were preparing the ship for sea.

In the wardroom the Paymaster, the Assistant Paymaster, the Clerk, and the Chaplain were having an animated discussion.

" Well, as far as I can make out, I have the forenoon watch to-morrow, which gives me a night in," announced the Pay, consulting a small and dirty piece of paper.

" Surely that is hardly correct, Pay," protested the Padre. " Last time we were out I had the first watch the night we left harbour, the middle the next, and the morning the night after,"

" Ah, that was because the Clerk was on the sick list," cryptically remarked the Assistant Pay, one Jones by name.

The Clerk looked apologetic.

" Well, anyhow," said the Pay, " we shall not

be getting cypher signals through until midnight, so there will only be the middle and morning decoding watches to be kept."

"Quite so," said the Padre, "and even if I am not entitled to a night in, it would be my turn for the 8 to 12 watch to-night,"

"But there ain't an 8 to 12 watch, as you call it, oh, turbulent Priest," retorted the Assistant Paymaster.

"I wouldn't mind the watches so much," replied the man of God, "if only your worthless assistant would relieve me within—well—say—half an hour of the appointed time. I notice he always follows me on the list. Why does he never follow you?"

"I know his disgusting habits too well," laughingly retorted the Pay, but meanwhile, *mes enfants*, we must fix up these watches—the middle is the worst so the Clerk will keep that."

"Sir, I——"

"You were about to say, Cleric?" inquired the Paymaster with a paternal smile.

"I said, Yes, sir," answered the Clerk with praiseworthy presence of mind.

"Well, that one is settled," remarked the Pay. "As to the morning, we three will gamble with cards as to whom is the lucky little boy."

"My conscience——" began the Padre, still clinging to the hope of a night in.

"How you can have the face to say that you've got a conscience, after the way you

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rooked me at Bridge last night, defeats my simple mind," reproved Jones, as he produced a pack.

" Now lads, cut the cards, ace high, lowest one lurked," announced the Pay.

The Padre drew an ace and at once left the mess to avoid all further discussion. The Paymaster drew a queen, his Assistant drew a knave, much to the dismay of the Clerk, who foresaw with accuracy that his first watch would be prolonged to 1 a.m. owing to the impossibility of getting Jones to turn out of his bunk in time to relieve him punctually. The Paymaster called for refreshment on the strength of his success, and the drinks were just being served when two lieutenants R.N., one lieutenant R.N.R., and a Sub., known as the " Marquis " came into the mess. They were all dressed in old clothes, with sweaters and scarfs, the Marquis living up to his name with a magnificent pair of fur-lined gloves.

The four officers did not appear to be on speaking terms, nor were they on such terms at the moment, for they constituted the deck watch-keepers of the ship and had just had a furious argument as to who was to keep the middle watch. The pack of cards, and the expression on the Assistant Paymaster's face, acted in a remarkable manner on the watch-keepers.

" Hullo," said Lieutenant Johnson to the R.N.R. " Unless appearance' are deceptive the

coding brigade have had a difference of opinion *re* watches. I've never met such a crowd for 'kagging.' "

" We never have any trouble in fixing our watches up in this Trades Union," remarked the Marquis.

" They should do a few months in the Merchant Service," said the R.N.R., "then they'd know what watch-keeping was. *I* remember going from Callao to Quebec in a seven-knot packet with a cracked connecting rod. I was——"

" On the bridge the whole time and never sober once," interrupted the Paymaster. " That reminds me that on one occasion when in the *Valetta*, up the Straits, I typed incessantly in German characters for ninety-five hours on a Blick. On another occasion I remember, way back in the 'oughts—no, it was in the nineties—at a Court of Inquiry. I——"

Further reminiscences were interrupted by the entrance of-the Commander's messenger.

" Commander, 'e sez, sir, 'e sez, 'e sez, 'e——"

" Well, what does the Commander say, boy ? " demanded Johnson.

" Well, sir, Commander, 'e sez to me, 'e sez, sir. Where the 'ell's all the lootenants—find 'em, boy—'e sez, sir, so I comes to the wardroom, sir, and Commander, 'e sez to me, 'e sez——"

What further remarks passed the Commander's lips were never repeated, as with one accord, with a sarcastic farewell from the Paymaster,

¹ Kagging, arguing.

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the four officers hastily made their way to the upper deck and added their voices to the uproar that is inevitable when preparing a ship for sea in total darkness. A spot of light from an electric torch marked the rapid movements of the Commander as he dashed up and down the boat deck, damning everything and every one, including himself, with nice impartiality.

In a surprisingly short time the boats were secured for sea, life-lines rove, guns tested and cleaned away, and the upper deck was deserted save for a group of figures indistinct in the gloom, bunched together on the forecastle.

The measured clank of the cable, link by link, indicated that the anchor was coming home. For an instant the cable-holder stopped; the ship seemed to stiffen momentarily, then relax, upon which the cable rattled noisily, and a tiny signalling torch winked its message from the officer on the forecastle to the upper bridge—the anchor had been broken out and was away.

Far down in the brilliantly illuminated engine-room a bell rang, and the turbines began to add to the many millions of revolutions they had done since 1914. The ship rapidly gained speed, and the rest of the squadron, making their way delicately and with perfect precision into station astern, the vague and shadowy line of ships moved towards the protecting boom. As the light cruisers passed the Fleet flagship, speed was reduced and a panting motor launch dashed

alongside; a seaman dangling in a bowline was lowered and received a sealed envelope, and the motor launch disappeared into the darkness. The operation orders were taken to the bridge and delivered to the Admiral, who, after perusing them, consulted a large scale chart of the North Sea, and decided on his dispositions for the night. Five minutes later a series of cryptic numerals were flashed from ship to ship down the line astern; ten minutes afterwards each Captain knew the Admiral's instructions as certainly as if they had spoken to him in person.

Just before the *Porthampton* reached the boom, a picquet boat in command of some light-hearted snottie nipped across her knife-edged ram, avoiding destruction by yards. The infuriated Admiral seized a megaphone and shouted:

" You———young fool. What ship do you come from ? "

Needless to say there was no reply. On top of the cabin of the picquet boat lay a life-buoy, with a lantern standing inside. The Admiral, not wishing to be balked of his lawful prey, ordered every one on the bridge to read the name on the life-buoy. Six pairs of night glasses were levelled at the retreating boat, but, as if by intuition, some one in the boat simultaneously threw a large coat completely over the lantern and the buoy. The Admiral acted at once, for, seizing his megaphone, he shouted:

" You may be a fool, but you aren't such a

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——fool as I thought. Good boy that," he remarked to the Flag Captain. "I wish I did know his name, we'd ask him to dinner."

Somewhere away on the beam a snottie was wishing he had been able to hear what had been shouted at him, and wondering whether he had better put on thick underclothing on the off chance of an interview with the Sub. next morning.

Outside the harbour there was more discreet flashing, and a covey of destroyers, invisible save for the splash of their bow waves, tailed on to the line.

Next morning, at dawn, the destroyers were flung out ahead and wide on the wings, as scouts. It was evident to all that the squadron was searching for something. At 1 p.m. "Stand by for instant action" was signalled, and scarcely had the flags fluttered down from the foremast of the *Porthampton* than the complete guns' crews, control parties, stretcher parties, etc., etc., in each ship of the squadron were at their battle stations. The guns' crews resembled monks of some ancient and secret order in their masks, baggy clothes and white hoods of anti-flashproof material. At 2 p.m. a floating mine was passed, an ancient relic of some long-forgotten mining stunt in 1914. Half an hour later several German ones, of later manufacture, were sighted and destroyed by one of the destroyers. As tea was being served out a periscope was sighted 2000 yards on the beam of the wing light cruiser. Three

destroyers raced madly to the spot, and as the squadron swept on to the eastward, dull detonations from astern indicated that the U-boat was being heavily depth charged, and dealt with according to her fortune. Experienced gentlemen stated that indications were promising, and that oft disappointed hopes might be realized this time; the event of the day being when the Secretary in the *Porthampton*, who was deciphering in the wireless cabinet, was suddenly seen to be sprinting vigorously up to the bridge, a signal in his hand; this unusual spectacle roused every one to the greatest excitement, and the eastern horizon was ardently scanned by hundreds of eyes.

At 6.30 p.m. long wisps of smoke, as from fast moving ships, were seen ahead. Unfortunately there lay between the Twelfth Light Cruiser Squadron and those distant ships certain hidden obstacles beneath the calm sea, which it would have been madness to attempt to pass. Two miles from the edge of the minefield the squadron turned sixteen points and headed west. The "stunt" was over, and two brief hours had prevented the Twelfth Light Cruiser Squadron from cutting off the enemy light forces.

As the squadron steamed west a seaplane droned up from the eastward, and made several fruitless attempts to bomb the squadron, which retaliated viciously with every high-angle gun that would, bear, but without causing the Hun 'plane any damage.

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The return journey was marked by one curious incident. It happened during the afternoon of the following day, when about eighty miles from her base, that H.M.S. *Porthampton* passed within 800 yards of a British trawler. As the cruiser went by, the whole crew of the trawler lined up on deck, gesticulated wildly and shouted something, but no one could make out what they had said. Fearing to miss information of value the Admiral signalled to the squadron to disregard his movements, and ordered his Captain to put his helm over and pass the trawler again. Once more the fishermen waved their arms and shouted something that sounded like "Waow—Yaow—Wow—Waow—Bow—Bis."

Going at twenty knots the *Porthampton* swept past them before they could repeat their shouts. Fuming at the delay, the Admiral, though fearing he would miss his tide at the base, decided that the only way to hear what they had to say was to ease speed. The necessary orders were given, and at ten knots the cruiser slowly turned and came practically alongside the trawler. As the two ships came together, with startling clearness these words came over the water, "Do you want to buy some fish, Captain?" The scene on the bridge can be more easily imagined than described, for by this time the rest of the squadron were hull down on the horizon.

At i a.m. the squadron, still led by the *Porthampton*, thanks to an extra knot the Chief

had knocked out of her, glided into the base and noisily dropped their anchors.

At 5 a.m. all four ships were endeavouring for the " umteenth " time to establish a new coaling record.

By noon they were ready for the next " stunt."

THE CLASSICS AFLOAT

AT a certain Naval technical school on the northern coast of England, the officers thereof were collected together in one place. They were in the smoking-room, and it was 11.30 on a Sunday morning. Church had just finished, and the mind of man turned naturally to higher things. The Electric Light Lieutenant was endeavouring to ensnare the Torpedo Officer into an admission that a recent development in the torpedo would entail an addition to the daily tests of that weapon. The Whitehead Officer, mindful of previous traps, was cautiously making a few rapid sketches on the back of an envelope before committing himself to a reply. It was the newly-joined R.N.V.R. Lieutenant, sometime Professor of Electro-magnetics at a famous University, who startled the assembly by remarking:

"I say, No. I, what's the motto of this place?"

The First Lieutenant, who was mentally considering the case of Stoker Georgeland—defaulter—in that he did apply for five days' leave to plant peas in his allotment, investigation establishing that:

(a) He had no allotment.

(b) The pea-planting season was over,
looked up and remarked :

" What's that you said, most learned Professor ? "

" I ask," replied the latter, " what is the motto
of this famous establishment ? "

" Motter," repeated the First Lieutenant with an
air of bewilderment, then after a moment's thought,
he added, " I don't believe we've got one."

" Well, I must say that is a lamentable ad-
mission," replied the man of electro-magnetics.

" I thought there was nothing we could not do
in the Navy," complacently continued one of its
latest recruits, as he cleaned his pince-nez.

" No more there ain't, professor!" ungrammati-
cally retorted the First Lieutenant, all his *esprit
de corps* roused by the taunt.

" Wilkins, be so good as to agitate the bell
and summon the marine sentry to my presence."

' A moment later the sentry entered, and saluted
with the mechanical rigidity which leads one to
suppose that the sockets of arms, as supplied
to the Royal Marines, are not as those supplied
to lesser mortals.

" Ask Mr Watt to speak to me," said the First
Lieutenant.

The sentry withdrew.

A few minutes elapsed whereupon Mr Watt,
Gunner (T), of some twenty years' service, entered
the smoking-room.

" You sent for me, sir ? "

" Ah, yes, Mr Watt, a small matter requires

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attention. Sit down, won't you? Will you have a——"

"Been a member of the Third Naval Lodge of Independent Order of Good Templars ever since your father, as Captain of this 'ere establishment, founded same in '79, sir."

"Ah, yes, of course, Mr Watt, I had quite forgotten. Well now, it's like this. Mr Smith has just pointed out to me that, strange to say, we have no motto in this establishment"

"I always tells them young E.As. wot jines up 'ere we 'as a motto, sir. I tells 'em 'Work like Helen—b—Happy,' " expostulated Mr Watt.

"Quite so, quite so, Mr Watt—and a very excellent motto too, I'm sure, but what we need is something classical—something to inscribe on the mess silver, paint on the quarter-deck screen, and so on."

"Yessir."

"Well, I have decided that as you are the oldest officer on the establishment, it is only right that you should have a share in this effort."

Mr Watt swelled with pride, and a noise as of wind whistling through hollow teeth rose on the air.

"Now, what are your ideas on the subject, Mr Watt?"

"Can't say as how I have any touttee de sweetee, as they say abroad, sir."

"Well, of course, it is a bit sudden, but I see from your conversation we have come to the

right shop—classical education and all the rest of it."

"Well, I won't say as how I haven't done a bit of schoolin' in my day, sir," admitted Mr Watt.

"The general idea," continued the First Lieutenant, "is that it should be a well-turned phrase in Latin, containing some sentiment characteristic of the school—something like 'Zealous for work, and working through zeal.' That's only a little extempore work of my own," concluded the First Lieutenant, "but it outlines the idea. Now what do you say?"

There was a lengthy pause. Finally, Mr Watt, clearing his throat, spoke :

"Well, sir, I ain't got no Latin drill book in the ship, but over at my 'ome I think I could figger out something wot would be a credit to the Service, so I respectfully arsts for a day's leaf for that werry purpose "

"Certainly, Mr Watt, by all means. Of course you will be excused all other duty whilst engaged on this job."

A few minutes later Mr Watt was explaining to a startled gathering of his mess-mates in the Warrant Officers' mess, that for the time being, whilst engaged on hexperimental work for the fust lootenant, he would be prevented from taking his turn at "duty officer of the day."

An hour later, in the solitude of the parlour of "Trafalgar"—semi-detached villa—Mr Watt

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wrestled with the problem. Outside the locked door Thomas Watt, schoolboy, wondered greatly what his father could be doing with his Latin Primer. Actually, Mr Watt was making his first acquaintance with the Classics. For an hour he searched the book industriously in an effort to discover some well-turned phrase, which, by a stretch of imagination, might be considered applicable to a torpedo school. His industry was in vain. The whole book seemed to hinge on *mensa*, a table; *puella*, a girl, etc., etc.

Mr Watt tried a new tack. He first wrote down a motto in English, and then endeavoured to translate it into Latin. From many flights of fancy he eventually eliminated, all save one, which was "Renowned for experimental work,"

He knew this to be true of the establishment, for many instruments in the Fleet and improvements in the torpedo had originated in the Northern School. Next followed the task of putting it into Latin. This accomplished, Mr Watt wiped his brow, and, opening a cupboard, withdrew from it a small bottle, on which was a label marked "POISON." Its contents represented that amount of rum, which scientists have assured the victualling department may reasonably be expected to evaporate from a ten-gallon cask in one calendar month.

It is only necessary to add that Mrs Watt was own sister to the establishment's ship steward, and that the latter dined *en famitte* with the

Watts on the first of each month. The label was for the benefit of chance visitors. Having absorbed a generous tot, Mr Watt opened the door, shouted in his best quarter-deck voice, "Annie—good shake at seven bells," and forthwith began his afternoon's shut-eye, usually obtainable only on the Sabbath.

The next morning Mr Watt interviewed the First Lieutenant.

"What luck, Mr Watt?"

"Well, sir, I don't think as how you'll think it so bad, sir," and he handed No. I a piece of paper on which was written these words: "Laborum Experimentum Bonum Plenum," meaning in English, "Good experimental work—plenty of it."

"Hm," said the First Lieutenant. "The sentiments are Mark I. Laborum Experimentum Bonum Plenum." He rolled it off his tongue. "And it sounds all right. Got a nice metre and all that sort of thing—in fact I think it will do very well."

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Nine years later—in 1918 to be exact—a young lieutenant on the Staff at the Northern School was much struck by the straightforward simplicity of their Latin motto. He inquired as to its origin, but no one could enlighten him. Persistent research led his footsteps to a semi-detached villa, recently renamed "Jutland Bank," and it was from the lips of Mr Watt, Gunner (T),

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retired, that most of the foregoing material was gleaned.

Mr Thomas Watt, Mate, R.N., a nice-looking young man of twenty-four or twenty-five, on short leave from the Grand Fleet, supplied a little of the local colour.

AS FICTION, NOT AS FACT ?

U. D. 66 blew her ballast and rose to the surface, the water streaming off her hog-back in foaming cataracts.

A hatch was thrown open and seamen tumbled out and manned her 4-inch gun, which, in this particular type, remains up, covered with grease when the boat dives.

Eight hundred yards on the beam His Majesty's patrol boat, *Crimson Rambler*, suddenly cocked her fast-sinking bows into the air and wobbled to the bottom in fifteen fathoms.

She left on the surface Lieutenant Vaughan, R.N.V.R., her commanding officer, and Ordinary Seaman Monel, Royal Naval Division.

Lieutenant Vaughan could swim after a fashion. Ordinary Seaman Monel made no pretence to have acquired the art during his training at Crystal Palace, consequently there was a slight commotion in the water, a choking cry of "Look out for yourself, sir!" a brief struggle, and Ordinary Seaman Monel went to the bottom where ten of his mess-mates lay in the wreck of the *Crimson Rambler*.

Lieutenant Vaughan was still on the surface, though considerably exhausted by his well-meant but fruitless effort to support Monel.

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He would doubtless shortly have followed his ship had not the U.D. 66, by a skilful piece of seamanship, edged over towards him in such a manner that he found himself lying on her foremost port hydroplane. A big seaman stretched down and, catching him by the collar, jerked him up on to the foredeck.

As he steadied himself on a stanchion he heard a click, and looking up saw that a bespectacled officer was photographing him from the top of the conning-tower. This individual was the propaganda expert, and his duty was to take cinematograph pictures and photographs of the work of the U-boats.

Lieutenant Vaughan was taken into the boat and brought before the Captain, who introduced himself as Commander Rudelstein, and added the unnecessary words, "You are my prisoner."

"So it would seem," replied Vaughan in perfect German.

"You speak German admirably," politely remarked the Commander in the same language.

"Well, I was at Heidelberg University for three years," replied the Englishman.

"Ach so! my native city," exclaimed the Commander, much interested, "but excuse me, I must see to the boat, or we shall have some of your confounded patrols on top of us. You sent off a wireless message without a doubt?"

"Possibly yes; again, possibly no!" answered

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Vaughan. " Meanwhile, I should like to point out *I'm* soaking wet. May I dry my clothes ? "

" Of course; I'm sorry I forgot. Here, Hans—my first lieutenant—have this officer's clothes dried and fit him out meanwhile with some of mine."

" Boat's crew : 'Achtung!' Diving stations."

The crew were well trained, and in a few minutes the boat was down to thirty feet and travelling slowly away from the scene of her exploit.

Lieutenant Vaughan was accommodated in a small screened-off compartment containing a camp bed, next to the Captain's cabin.

An armed sentry mounted guard outside. At tea-time Commander Rudelstein visited his prisoner and asked whether he might join him in a cigar.

Vaughan, thoroughly bored with being cooped up, gladly assented, and the two sat together on the bed.

" I fear all your crew were lost," remarked the Commander.

" Yes, I'm afraid so," replied Vaughan. " After all one must expect to lose patrol boats."

" Truly, your losses in patrols must be very high."

" Not incommensurate with our results, I think," parried Vaughan.

" Yes, a certain number of U-boats fail to return," agreed the German. " If it were not

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asking too much, may I inquire if you have any information concerning U.B. 15 ? "

" I am afraid I can hardly answer that question, Commander."

" Ah well! I thought perhaps that in return for any slight service I may have been able to do for you, that you could stretch a point. You see I have special reasons. My brother-in-law is her first lieutenant."

Vaughan felt moved by the appeal in the man's voice, and it so happened that he knew U.B. 15 had gone. He decided to tell the German.

" I fear, Herr Commander, from what I know, your brother-in-law has given his life for the Fatherland."

There was a moment's pause, then Commander Rudelstein said in a low voice: " A great death, Lieutenant! One to wish for, but Adolf was young, only twenty-one, was my brother-in-law. It will be a cruel blow to my Minna—it is the women, Herr Lieutenant, that suffer the most in war, but perhaps you are not married."

" I have a mother," said Vaughan.

" Well, she will be glad to hear you are alive."

" I'm certainly alive now, but I don't know that I'd gamble heavily on my chances of getting back to Wilhelmshaven, or wherever you eventually take me to."

" You mean—? " queried the German.

" I was just running over in my mind one or two facts in connexion with local patrols," explained Vaughan.

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" I suppose you wouldn't care——"

" Under no circumstances whatsoever I" indignantly ejaculated Vaughan, divining the other's meaning.

" Accept my apologies," interposed the Commander. " I appreciate your feelings. We are both officers, but it was my duty to make the suggestion."

" Tell me," said Vaughan, "what do you think of the U-boat warfare ? "

" Oh well," replied the Commander, with a shrug of his shoulders. " Shall we call it an unpleasant but necessary duty. I have sunk ninety-five thousand tons of your shipping," he concluded with a touch of vanity.

" Any lives lost ? "

" Unfortunately yes! one cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs, as one of your expressions runs."

" And the *Lusitania* ? " remarked the Englishman.

A frown appeared on the German's face.

" Herr Lieutenant, there are some things better not discussed."

After this remark conversation languished, and the German soon excused himself, explaining that he intended to lie on the surface and charge his batteries as soon as it became dark, should no ships be in sight.

The night was cloudless, and the sea calm, when at midnight the U.D. 66 rose cautiously to the surface, and throwing open her hatch began to

42 TALES FROM THE FLEET

drive her motors as dynamos and recharge her storage batteries.

Her crew, glad to get away from the tinned air below and the nerve-shattering roar of the Diesel engines, were allowed to come up on deck three or four at a time.

On top of her conning-tower two look outs, provided with night glasses, sat back to back and swept the sea.

A young moon low in the east gave a visibility of about two thousand yards, and every member of the crew had been well impressed with the fact that a British destroyer will cover a thousand yards in precisely fifty-three seconds. And perhaps a little under if a U-boat is at the other end of her rush.

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Commander Vaughan, Senior Naval Officer of Patrols, in or around the area adjoining Cantaloup Bay, was burning midnight oil in his small corrugated iron office.

The walls were hung with charts, marked with strangely-shaped areas in red ink. On one of these charts some humourist had neatly sketched in three little iron crosses at three spots on the surface of the sea. A date was written against each.

Commander Vaughan tore up his third attempt at writing a letter, threw the pieces into the fire, lit his pipe, and rising to his feet paced up and down his office; at length he opened the door

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and gazed over the calm sea that splashed gently on the rocks 200 feet below.

For several minutes he looked out to the eastward, then abruptly closing the door he returned to his desk and once more took up his pen.

" *Dearest Mother* (he wrote). *Be brave, for Jack has gone. The Crimson Rambler was done in this morning——*"

The telephone bell at his side tinkled sharply; with a muttered curse he picked up the receiver and listened.

Crisply, and as one habituated to quick decisions, he issued his orders.

" The second subdivision will sail in five minutes' time. I will take passage in the *Bonny Maid*.

A minute later, as he was leaving the office, his eye was caught by the unfinished letter; seizing it he placed it in his coat pocket.

Within five minutes, six ships, led by the *Bonny Maid*, slipped their moorings and headed at full speed to the eastward.

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The U 66 had been charging for two hours when one of her look-outs nudged his companion. Both stared in the same direction for a few moments, then with a hoarse shout of " Ach-tung" one dashed below to warn the Captain, the other, acting on his own initiative, shouted " Diving stations ! "

In an instant the crew were at their stations, and " flooding " was in full swing. With rudders

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at maximum "dive" the U 66 slowly descended at a steep angle.

The noise and excitement woke Vaughan from an uneasy sleep, and he could not help admiring the perfect drill that seemed to prevail.

A seaman was intoning the depth of submersion from a gauge, and he had just announced twenty metres, when a tremendous external explosion shook the boat from bow to stern. Every lamp was smashed to atoms, but before any confusion could ensue, the Captain's level voice rang through the boat:

"Secondary lighting illumination!"

Though a marked contrast to the previous brilliant illumination of the boat, the accumulator lights sufficiently lit the boat for practical purposes.

A rapid inspection was made by the first lieutenant, who reported no material damage.

The U 66 came to an even keel and slowly proceeded from the scene of her narrow escape.

At irregular intervals dull blows on the side indicated that depth charges were being expended with prodigality near the spot where she had dived. Turning over to the first lieutenant, Commander Rudelstein left the control room and greeted his prisoner with a smile.

"I must apologize for your friends, Herr Vaughan. One of your patrols was nearly on top of us before those rascals on look-out duty saw her. The nuisance is that we shall have to lie low all to-day, and I didn't get much of

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a charge on the batteries. Our late antagonist will be screaming by wireless now, and in an hour this bay will be stiff with craft. Don't you agree ? "

" I think, Herr Captain, that your forecast is an uncommonly accurate one," replied Vaughan.

Even as he spoke a distant drumming noise made itself heard; growing louder it roared overhead and receded into the distance.

" You see," exclaimed the German, with a grim smile, " a destroyer, I should say, doing at least thirty knots—already the vultures gather where they hope the carcass will be found. But it is still dark, nothing can spot us, and when I sit down on a little patch of seaweed I know of, which is a few miles from here, not even those damned seaplanes will see us."

And smiling with satisfaction Rudelstein passed on into his curtained cabin.

At 9 a.m. that morning a strange assortment of surface craft were laboriously trudging across Cantaloup Bay.

Two seaplanes patrolled ceaselessly overhead. The drifters, trawlers and armed yachts might have appeared to a casual observer on the cliffs as being steered by lunatics, so erratic were their courses and speeds.

In actual fact their movements were being controlled with the greatest accuracy by Commander Vaughan from the bridge of the *Bonny Maid*.

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A mighty hunter of U-boats before the Lords of Admiralty, Commander Vaughan had very special reasons of a private nature for wishing to exterminate any U-boats in Cantaloup Bay.

Suddenly the *Ernest Higgs*, armed fish carrier, fired a Very's light; instantly the whole flotilla hurried towards her.

A faint smell of oil fuel permeated her surroundings, and upon the sea an oily patch slowly grew in size.

Commander Vaughan indicated the patch to the skipper of the *Bonny Maid*. Speech was superfluous. As he passed over the oil he pulled a lever, and with a gentle splash a depth charge rolled off the stern chute.

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Eighty yards to the northward of this oil, and sixty feet below it, the U 66 was lying quietly on the bottom. Unknown to her Captain, the depth charge in the middle of the night had started a rivet in one of his emergency fuel tanks. From this leak a tiny stream of oil had percolated, and meandered up to the surface.

Caught by the set of the tide the tell-tale stream of fuel had drifted a considerable distance to the southward before accumulating on the surface.

This set of tide, for which Commander Vaughan had failed to make due allowance, saved the U 66 from instant destruction.

When his brother released the depth charge, Vaughan had just been introducing his captor

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to the subtleties of whisky poker, and arising from a point in the game the German remarked, "As in war, Lieutenant, the end is all important, the means of secondary importance. In war, life, wealth, comforts, even in certain cases honour itself, must be sacrificed to attain one's end; therein lies our strength. We have the will to conquer—so have you Englishmen, but always with your reservation, 'Let us be gentlemen.' C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas——"

A shattering explosion interrupted him.

The submarine was lifted bodily from her resting-place several feet and fell back heavily on the sea floor, becoming badly strained as a result. A hissing noise filled the air, and a score of tiny jets of water under high pressure shot in to the boat from leaky rivets on every side; acrid fumes rose from several fractured containers in the battery tank, and breathing was a painful and unsatisfying effort.

The crew were momentarily stunned by the suddenness of the catastrophe, then recovering themselves rushed to action stations—all save Carl Schmidt, ordinary seaman.

With staring eyes he deliberately pulled a small lever projecting from the side of the boat.

The next instant a shot rang and re-echoed through the boat, and Schmidt collapsed to the floor plates.

The First Lieutenant, with a smoking revolver, looked steadily round at the crew.

Not a man moved—discipline was preserved,

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but too late to save the U 66, for the " emergency release buoy and telephone," liberated by Schmidt under the influence of some mad impulse, was already on the surface.

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Commander Vaughan, having waited confidently for a shower of debris, was astonished to see a red can buoy bob to the surface.

A skiff was lowered and the buoy hauled on board. On it was written a sentence which, translated, read, "Here lies U66. Please open compartment and telephone to us, also send for assistance to the dockyard without delay."

" This is a quaint turn-out," remarked the Commander. " Do the blighters imagine they are in Kiel Bay. I've got a good mind to slip a charge down the moorings of the buoy, but I suppose I'd better give them a chance to surrender," and opening the buoy he took up the telephone.

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The U66 was helpless, her batteries out of action, she could not move, and even if she had been able to creep away, the buoy, which it was impossible to detach from inside the boat, would have revealed her position, so that when the telephone rang in the manoeuvring chamber of the conning-tower, Rudelstein answered it with alacrity as it offered him one small avenue of escape.

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" Hullo ! " said a voice. " Who is there ? "

" Korvetten Kapitan Heinrich von Rudelstein of U 66," replied the German.

" Do you surrender ? " said the voice.

" We never surrender in the Submarine Service."

" Well, that's a matter of opinion, but why have you sent this buoy up ? "

" An accident," briefly replied Rudelstein.

" WeU, look here," answered the voice, " I'll give you three minutes to come up, if not——"

" Never."

" Well, I'm sorry, but there's nothing for it. . . . Any—er—er messages. I'll see they go through the Red Cross."

" Thank you. No ! " replied the German, then in a level voice he played his trump card.

" Before you let that depth charge go, I thought you might like to know I have an English prisoner here."

" Nonsense." The voice was frankly sceptical.

" A fact—an English Naval Lieutenant, called Vaughan."

" Good heavens !—my brother—impossible," said the voice.

" Would you like to speak to him," inquired Rudelstein. " We picked him up from the *Crimson Rambler* yesterday."

" Yes, please," replied the voice very quietly.

Commander Rudelstein called Vaughan into the small compartment, closed the door, and handed him the 'phone.

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" Your brother is up there," said he. Vaughan put the receiver to his ear.

" Hullo ! HuUo ! " came the voice. " Is that you, Jack ? "

" Yes, speaking."

" This is a damnable business, Jack. Won't he surrender ? "

" Not a dog's chance, old boy. There's only one thing for it, you must slip it across us ; make it a big one."

" But I can't. I can't," said the voice in broken tones.

" But you've damn well got to," fiercely exclaimed the younger brother; "if not—well, we've got to change the subject. Commander Rudelstein here doesn't approve of my conversation."

" I say," continued the young man,

" Yes ! " replied the voice.

" You'll not tell any of 'em at home about this. Keep it out of the home circle. Savee ? "

" All right, old chap. Look here"—the voice lowered itself to a mere whisper—" if he has not got another pair of receivers on and can't overhear, cough twice."

Lieutenant Vaughan coughed twice.

" Good," continued the voice in low tones, " now your only chance is to scupper the Captain, and call on the crew to surrender. It's a thousand to one against, but it is a chance, and if nothing happens in five minutes, I'll—I'll—damn it, I can't say it. Ask him to come to the

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'phone, and do your best whilst I am talking to him. In case—in case—oh, good-bye'and God bless you ! " And the voice stopped abruptly.

" Will you come to the 'phone, Commander," said Vaughan.

The German took up the receiver. Vaughan made way and stood behind him.

Commander Vaughan was listening with straining ears to the repeated assertions of the German that he would not surrender, when the conversation ceased suddenly.

He thought he heard a muffled exclamation, but was uncertain, and waited in an agony of apprehension.

A minute passed, two minutes went by; the strain was too great. He shouted down the 'phone, and his voice sounded to him curiously high pitched.

There was no reply.

The third minute was drawing to its close when the surface of the sea moved strangely, and with a rush the U66 came to the surface like a blowing whale.

The conning-tower hatch was thrown open, and Vaughan dived into the sea, closely followed by a panic-stricken crowd of sailors. It appeared that the cast-iron discipline, like the metal, when it did break, broke suddenly and badly.

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" How on earth did you manage it, Jack ? "

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asked his brother as they steamed back to the base.

The young man, with fingers that trembled slightly, lit a cigarette, then said: "An unpleasant, but necessary act of war, as he himself would have said. You see, we were alone together in the manoeuvring chamber, a little bug-trap of a place about six feet square.

" When he went to the telephone I stood behind him, and with a sudden movement got the lower part of my right hand under his chin, the fingers across his mouth, and one knee in the small of his back.

" The poor devil never had a chance. I simply went on bending—his weight did the rest—a sickening show.

" Well, when it was over—it must have taken a full ninety seconds—I simply put the pointers of both order instruments to ' Blow all ballast.'

" I heard a bit of a scrap going on in the boat, so I guessed the crew were anxious to obey the signal, but that the First Lieutenant smelt a rat, knowing his Captain's ideas on surrendering, and he wanted to come into the manoeuvring chamber and get the order Confirmed.

" At any rate, I think they must have done him in, for they blew ballast as hard as they could—and you know the rest. I wish——" The young man bit his lip and looked away.

" I understand, Jack," said his brother, " but it was the only way,"

" You see," explained the young man, " he

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was a decent sort, and he had a wife. He told me about her—well—war is a damned funny toss up. I think a drink would do me good," he concluded as he slowly went below. Commander Vaughan put his hand in his pocket, felt a letter, pulled it out, smiled faintly, then, tearing it into small pieces, idly tossed them into the creamy wake of the *Bonny Maid*.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR

" **W**HO are yer gettin' at ? " growled the Sergeant-Major of Marines.

Gunner Ephraim Joseph Tuke, no badges, ability superior, character moderate, repeated his request.

" I wants ter put me tally in fer forty-eight hours' leaf, Sergeant."

" You, going ter apply for leaf ? " slowly repeated Sergeant Basher, dazed by the audacity of the request.

" Why, 'ow many times is it you've broken leaf this commission—four or five, I know/

" Six, Sergeant, including the accidental one at Gibraltar/" admitted Gunner Tuke.

" And yet you, an 'abitual leave-breaker, second class fer leaf——"

" Third class, Sergeant/" corrected Gunner Tuke with a sheepish grin.

The Sergeant grew a dusky red.

"The hastounding himpudence of applying fer leave in these 'ere circumstances," protested the Sergeant, who felt that the universe was about to crumble at his feet.

" Well, I got pertikler reasons, Sarge," doggedly asserted Gunner Tuke.

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" Answer yer name at 9.30 to-morrow morning at Commander's requestmen," crisply snapped Sergeant Basher, anxious to terminate an interview which strained his patience to the limit.

The ship was due to sail in three days, and that Gunner Tuke, the blackest lamb in the detachment on board H.M.S. *Amiens*, if not the blackest lamb that ever left the fold of Eastney Barracks, should apply for leave, was amazing, extraordinary, epoch making. Sergeant Basher tried to imagine some reason which Gunner Tuke might be able to produce, and which would induce the Commander to grant him forty-eight hours' leave, in Malta of all places.

The Sergeant estimated that the Commander's knowledge about Tuke was equal to his own, and acting on this assumption, Basher could not imagine any combination of circumstances, deaths, marriages, or funerals included, which would obtain for Tuke forty-eight hours' leave. The whole thing seemed like a nightmare, and the Sergeant vaguely wondered whether he would get "scrubbed" for bringing the most notorious leave-breaker in the ship before the Commander on such a mission.

However, in the eyes and by the wisdom of Naval law, every man has the right to appear before Caesar and state his case, and so it came about that at 9.30 next morning the Sergeant stepped in front of the Commander, clicked his heels, saluted, and in a voice from

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which he could not entirely conceal emotion, intoned:

" Gunner Ephraim Joseph Tuke, application for forty-eight hours' leave ashore, urgent private affairs/ "

Gunner Tuke marched up to the table and looked the Commander straight in the face. There was a moment's silence, during which the marines engaged on cleaning the bright work on the after-turret, crept a little closer.

" Why do you want this leave ? " said the Commander.

Gunner Tuke swallowed hard, then gazing round at the assembled officers and men, he said:

" Like to speak to yer private, please sir,"

The Commander waved his hand, and every one fell back. Tuke and the Commander were alone.

" Well ? " said the Commander.

" I want forty-eight hours' leave, sir."

" Yes, yes, I know that, but what's the reason. Ship's under sailing orders, you know, apart from other considerations.

" Well, sir, in 'ought five I was in this 'ere 'arbour, and I got mixed up with a piece ashore. Broke me leave, sir, got took up by the patrol, never 'ad a chance to see the girl again, sir. Never 'ad a chance to do the square by 'er, sir. Want to see what I can do now, sir."

" H'm," said the Commander, fixing Gunner

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR 57

Tuke with that penetrating gaze, which had caused many a skilful liar to collapse.

" Do you realize that you have the worst record for leave of any man in the ship ? "

" Yes, sir," replied Gunner Tuke.

" And yet you apply for this special privilege ? "

" Special case, sir. I shan't break my leave."

" How do I know ? "

" Give you me word, sir. Never told the Commander a lie yet, sir. Broken me leave, sir. Never told you a lie, sir."

There was a moment's silence and then the Commander spoke:

" I take your word.

" Sergeant-Major."

The Sergeant approached.

" Forty-eight hours' leave for this man, as from noon to-day."

Sergeant Basher mechanically repeated the award; he dimly felt that he had assisted in a humble degree at a miracle.

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At noon Gunner Tuke, full of money, the accumulation of much stoppage of leave, landed at the Custom House Steps, and shaped course for Strada San Marco.

He paused irresolute outside the third house from the fruit-sellers, then pushed open the door and went in.

Eighteen stone of frowsy femininity barred

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his progress in the narrow passage. Then the lump, raising its hands to heaven, wailed, " Santa Maria El diavolo Tukey."

" Not so much of it," growled the Marine. " Glad to see I've come to the right house, though.

" Where's Maddalena ? " he added.

The lump protested by all the saints she didn't know, she couldn't say, she was dead. She had gone away, she had . . .

" Where is she ? " demanded Gunner Tuke with a menacing gesture.

" Up there," indicated the lump as she sank sobbing to the ground.

Mounting the rickety stairs, the Marine entered the first room on the landing.

It contained Maddalena. Five years had left their mark, but she still showed signs of that beauty that had once held Gunner Tuke under its spell.

The room also contained Guiseppe, the Karotzi driver.

As he noted this last fact, the gleam of joyous battle flashed in Gunner Tuke's eye, and he muttered:

" Gawd. What luck."

Without wasting time Gunner Tuke advanced and, seizing Guiseppe, shook him like a rat, upon which this conversation ensued.

" So I've found you, 'ave I ? "

(Bang, bang, against the wall.)

" Madre de Di——"

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" Didn't think I'd find yer. Thought I forgotten perhaps ? "

(Bang, bang.)

" Santa Maria, I tell you——"

" No you don't. (Bang, bang.) I'll teach you to play the devil with my girl. I'll teach you to deceive her whilst I was away."

(Bang, bang, bang.)

" Use a knife, would yer ? Take that and that. I'll make yer swallow some of yer teeth. Stand up like a mati, yer 'ound. Now, what 'ave yer got ter say ? "

Guiseppe had nothing to say, which was not surprising, he being at that moment unconscious.

Gunner Tuke pushed him to one side with his foot, and turned to the weeping Maddalena.

" Well," he remarked.

The girl wept steadily.

" Oh, fer——sake stop the water works," implored the Marine.

Maddalena brushed aside her long black hair, and raised a tear-stained face.

The heart of Gunner Tuke was softened.

" Wotcher want to do the dirty on me fer ? " he demanded in a more kindly tone. " Didn't yer think I was going to do the straight thing by yer ? Didn't I tell you I was going to marry yer, and take yer back to Pompey, when we cam' back from the eastern cruise, eh ? "

Wonderful thoughts of " what-might-have-

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been " crossed the mind of Maddalena, as she looked at Gunner Tuke, a man amongst men, as he stood over his prostrate rival.

But with a woman's guile she refused to discard her armour of silence.

" Well, anyhow, things can't be altered now," said Gunner Tuke.

" 'Ow does he treat you ? "

" Verra cruel sometimes, signor," sobbed Maddalena.

Gunner Tuke grunted, then indicating the child, " Whose is it ? "

The girl shrugged her shoulders and gazed steadily out of the window.

" Damn all women," muttered Gunner Tuke. Then aloud he said:

" 'Ere, Maddy, 'ere's thirty quid, keep it 'id from this 'og Guyseepe, and if 'e 'urts yer, yer ter write ter me aboard the *Amiens*. Savee ? "

" Gratia, Gratia, signor!" exclaimed Maddalena with a fresh outburst of sobbing.

" Oh, cheese it," said Tuke, and lifting her up he kissed her fiercely, then breaking from her arms he descended the stairs, stepped carefully over the lump and regained the street. Here he squared his shoulders, straightened Ms belt, and proceeded to seek solace from his sorrows.

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At 1145 a.m. on the day after the next a strange sight was seen in Malta harbour. A string of twelve " djicos," one in tow of the other, left

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR 61

the Custom House Steps, and proceeded in a long line across the harbour.

They arrived alongside the *Amiens*, and the long line stretched up her side to the forecastle.

The last boat of the tow came gently alongside the gangway.

In the stern sheets of this boat Gunner Tuke, wearing a necklet of boiled crabs, lay drunk—gloriously, incapably drunk.

On his breast was pinned a note.

He was carried up the ladder, and the O.O.W. read the label.

As Gunner Tuke was taken below, eight bells struck; he had returned from leave.

The note, written the night before, was in a shaky handwriting and ran as follows :

" I have fixed to come off in a chain of boats. I have promised Mr Beppo five pun' to do this at ate bells. Smith, Corpril knoes were I have this 'id. Please give Beppo five pun' if I come off safe. I have never told Commander ('es a gent) a lie yet.—Yours respectful,

" GUNNER TUKE."

As the *Amiens* left the Grand Harbour that evening the sound of merriment issued forth from the third house from the fruit-sellers in the Strada San Marco.

" What is this noise," demanded the fruit-seller of his wife, Mariana.

" Maddalena had an Inglese soldier there the

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other day Doubtless she has much money," spitefully exclaimed Mariana.

The fruit-seller smiled lazily.

"Fear not, Mariana, you are too ugly to be in danger—Corpo di Bacco ! I wish it were otherwise," he added, as he spat into the street.

OUR BAND

MEETING an old shipmate at the sign of Capricornus, that Zodiacal spot known only to naval officers and to a few of the very best soldiers, which bears four cables north-west of Piccadilly Circus, we refreshed ourselves, then retiring to a corner which was adorned by the flag of a defunct U-boat, we discussed the old ship and the Navy in general.

I had left the ship some months previously, but my friend was still in her, and he explained his presence in London by the fact that the old junk was at last getting a decent refit.

"Fourteen days' leave of the best and brightest," said he, with smug satisfaction. "There are rumours of strikes amongst the riveters, so we may get an extension of four days," he added quietly, as a thoroughly unpatriotic after-thought.

This last remark amused me, for, when I had last refitted in the ship and there had been labour troubles which had delayed us somewhat, I remembered my friend had fulminated for hours in front of the wardroom stove as to the iniquity of strikes in war time, and the grave danger we ran of missing an operation which a cousin of his in high places had told him was impending.

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For half an hour he told me all the local news, of how the " sub " had nearly got engaged, and that the " Pay " was suspected of designs on a Scotch widow in Edinburgh, of how they had at last wangled triplex glass out of the dock-yard, of how the engineer commander had been defeated in the quarterly auctions for back numbers of *La Vie Parisienne* by the assistant paymaster after a duel which ran the price up to two shillings a copy. He told me that the piano on which I used to make such hideous noises was still going strong, though a bit queer in the treble, as a green sea, coming down a badly battened skylight, had half-filled up the noble instrument, and the treble strings had broken, and the ship, being far from civilization at the time, the torpedo lieutenant had replaced half a dozen of the missing strings with electric fuze-wire of various sizes.

All these matters, and many others, concerning their comings and goings, what they had seen—and more especially what they had not seen—in the North Sea, my friend told me of. Until at length I asked him about that which had been as an ewe lamb to me in the ship.

" And what of our band ? " said I.

" Broken up," he replied, and I'll swear his hand trembled slightly as he lifted his glass. When I had left the ship I had turned over the Business of fathering pur band to this officer, and he had taken it over without a murmur. The stupendous and well-filled "spring-back,"

replete with bills, a few receipts, and reams of official correspondence, the endless reports of band committee meetings, all these things he had cheerfully taken on his shoulders—so I had known him to be an enthusiast.

Well, the band served its purpose, and now that its chequered career of three years has ended, it seems fitting that there should be some historical record of the " Voluntary Band of H.M.S. *Orpheus*" It originated in the very early days of the war, as the result of a brain-wave between the secretary and myself. It was then of the drum-and-fife variety.

We managed to wheedle E8 out of the wardroom by striking when the iron was hot, after a very cheery guest night. The secretary attacked the Admiral for a subscription the day he got his decoration, and touched him for E2—which shows what enormous influence secretaries have over admirals. With this capital of £10 we purchased instruments and started operations.

But the " matelot " is one of the most ambitious creatures on earth; wood-wind but ill-satisfied his desire for music, once the appetite was excited. One of our number, Able Seaman Thomas, suddenly procured a cornet, upon which instrument he proved to be a remarkably good performer. A brass band was forthwith suggested and it was enthusiastically approved.

In strict historical fact, the honourable part played by the torpedo lieutenant should come in here; but if this meets his eye, he will, I feel

66 TALES FROM THE FLEET

sure, excuse me if I show a reluctance in attempting to describe the extraordinary complicated transactions which took place before the drum-and-fifers were amalgamated with the " brassers " with a minimum of resignations from either camp. I had never fully understood the trials which theatrical managers and producers have to undergo in their dealings with the artistic temperament—I do now; all the members of our band claimed the artistic temperament, and A.B. Thomas was the greatest artist on the lower deck. His opening gambit, when brought up before the Commander on those rare occasions on which he was caught breaking the regulations, ran as follows:

" Intimately hassociated as I am with every social horganization in this 'ere ship, I begs to point out . . . "

The alternative to this opening was as follows:

" Speakin' not so much fer myself as ler those wot ain't fluent, I begs to point out . . . "

Either remark is a perfect index to a character which, though interesting to study, was a thorn in many fleshes. Early in 1915 the brass band was in full swing. A.B. Thomas was the amateur bandmaster, and undoubtedly knew his job. He played the cornet with tremendous vigour, and kept the band in good order. I remember one day, in the middle of the Japanese Anthem, he removed his cornet from his lips, and, shaking it in the direction of a panting signalman, shouted: " Blow you—, yer dirty hound."

A fearful blare from the criticized performer, who was supporting a bassoon, testified to the accuracy of the bandmaster's criticism.

The manner in which this signalman became a bandsman was typical of many of our recruits, and illustrates the average sailor's belief in his own capabilities. Signalman Bunting came to my cabin one evening and informed me that he desired to join the band. Much gratified, I inquired what instrument he played. He explained that he did not actually play any instrument, but that, noticing an advertisement which offered a second-hand bassoon for £6, and observing that he happened to possess £5, he considered that the opportunity was unique.

Although I did not feel quite so sanguine as he did, I had not the courage to damp such enthusiasm ; I had my reward, for, strange to say, as a result of daily practice in the solitude of the starboard condenser-room, Bunting became quite a good performer. Another sportsman bought a silver-plated trombone on the credit system, which was priced £12, los. On being pressed for payment he applied to me for a loan of £10.

I was weak enough to oblige him, and every month I used „to receive masses of coppers and sixpenny-bits, until at the end of a year we were square. I could never make out where he got the money from, as he was in the habit of bringing instalments at all sorts of odd times, whilst the hands, of course, are paid monthly. The secret

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was revealed upon the day on which the ship's police discovered him presiding over a crown and anchor board in the screw alley. Fortunately for me, this event took place some time after the debt was liquidated. I can still remember the anxiety with which I used to watch this gentleman on those occasions when we came under shell-fire.

As the months went by the band improved and grew in grace ; a certain town sent us music, and, more wonderful, an official letter to the School of Music eventually extracted some most interesting old orchestrated operas whose tuneful melodies must have charmed our fathers; not that it mattered in the least, as our band would have played Cesar Franck, Debussy, Arensky, Scriabine, or any of the moderns with the same pleasure with which they tackled " The Merry Peasant " or the latest ragtime—all was grist that came to their mill.

Every morning at eight o'clock they played three national anthems from amongst those of the Allies, and our initial practice of betting in our baths as to which they were, soon lost its interest. As soon as the band got properly going it was placed on a semi-official basis; it had a special routine of its own, the principle of which was that, in return for services rendered at route marches and to the ship's company during the dog-watches, the band were excused certain duties.

The rush of recruits was amazing, and at one

time we had no less than thirty-seven, all working "bands" on some form of musical instrument. The Commander was a true patron of the fine arts; but when the excused list rose to thirty-seven I had an interview with him, and I was told that future candidates would have to go on a waiting list, unless they were exceptionally talented.

I also used to find a certain difficulty in persuading the gunnery lieutenant that musical members of a gun's crew were as well employed at their instruments as at their guns during "quarters clean guns" periods. Can it be that gunnery lieutenants as a class are not musically inclined?

It must not be supposed that the band had no enemies, for, though much appreciated by the ship's company as a whole, there were always a few objectors.

The big drum was punctured at regular intervals in a most mysterious manner; these outbreaks generally coincided with the expulsion of some refractory member from the band. One memorable evening the band were playing to a crowd of about a hundred sailors on the boat deck, when an enemy of the band threw a halfpenny down the euphonium. As the euphonium player, a certain Stoker Emmanuel Millar, explained to me afterwards in the privacy of my cabin, "I was a-suckin' at the moment, sir! an' that swine 'e knew it, 'e did, and wot I sez is, I chucks me blinkin' 'and in, I does, with this 'ere band. I expects appreciation, not insults."

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I eventually soothed his outraged feelings, but it cost the band fund £3, 12s. 6d. to get the euphonium stripped in Edinburgh and the deadly coin removed. Two engine-room artificers and the blacksmith volunteered to do the job as a mark of their esteem for the band.

As time went on most of the other ships of the neighbouring squadrons started bands ; and a tremendous spirit of competition grew up, deadly feuds existing between rival bandmasters., This was well illustrated at the squadron sports, at which function the bands were scheduled to perform in " mass " formation. The burning question arose as to which bandmaster was to have the honour of conducting. It was eventually decided by drawing lots. The lot did not fall upon A.B. Thomas, whereupon this gentleman registered his displeasure on the day of the event by persistently playing his cornet a tone flat, alleging, in reply to my indignant accusations, that " me lips were all of a crack/" Curiously enough, this unsportsmanlike act was highly approved of by all our band, who apparently considered it a very natural outcome of an artistic temperament.

The band continued with ups and downs for three years, when most; of its members left the ship, and it died a natural death.

Before concluding its history, one incident in connexion with our big drummer deserves to be told. We had a very fine big drum, on which our battle' honours were cunningly in-

scribed, and its purchase price hung for months like a mill-stone round our financial neck. The drum was played by an enormous seaman, who, by dint of much saving, had purchased a second-hand leopard skin; and when route marching he was our pride and joy. At Jutland he lost a leg, and soon after his removal from the operating-room, I went along to see how he was getting on. A pal of his came in at the same time and, by way of letting him know the worst, said, in lugubrious tones:

"Them Huns have put a shell right through your drum, Bill—smashed it up, a fair treat, they have."

Bill was supposed to be suffering from severe shock at the time, and the sick berth steward was horrified at the bluntness of this remark. It acted in an unexpected manner on Bill, who had been lying very still.

Raising himself on one arm, he shook his fist at the deck overhead, and came out with a torrent of abuse concerning the Huns. The doctor told me afterwards that Bill spent most of the night muttering and damning the Germans; he seemed to consider that the loss of a leg was a matter of secondary importance. It is pleasing to record that Bill is now established in a comfortable job ashore, and that the shattered drum is in safe keeping as an honoured relic.

Though the band is now dispersed and its members are scattered, it served its purpose and brightened many a monotonous hour in the

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North Sea. We may also say with pride that where we led the way others have followed, as I believe there are at the present moment more than a dozen voluntary bands in the small ships of the Fleet. Perhaps we are a musical race, after all ?

THE HYDRAULIC COURSE

Extract from Grand Fleet Order : " No liquor is to be served on board prior to 11.45 a.m., except where the entertainment of distinguished foreign officers is in question."

THE W.R.¹ officers of H.M.S. *Rampageous* read the above order with pained amazement. Not because they were in the habit of drinking more than was good for them, but because the order broke a long established habit. A wise Admiralty has laid down that on or about 10.45 the sailor shall be given ten minutes stand easy. The average Naval officer, equally wise, employs this period in fortifying himself with a small cocktail for the further labours of the day.

This habit of the male sex of foregathering in clubs, pubs, bars and messes undoubtedly dates back to very early ages, and cannot be said to be peculiar to the Naval Service, though we have sound historical evidence for stating that it was initiated by Noah, who may be claimed as the father of all navigation. After a week of abstinence at 10.45, the fleet surgeon

¹ W.R.= Wardroom.

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prevailed on the Commander to try a substitute for that daily cocktail which had been his tonic for years. Medicated brandy was its basis, but unfortunately the temporary surgeon forgot one important powder. The result was severe disarrangement of the Commander's liver. This disease reacted on the lieutenants.

I, *moi qui parle*, am a lieutenant—so I know.

There were no more medical cocktails, and the parson was requested to insert a prayer into the Sunday Litany on these lines: "We beseech thee to send us a foreign officer,"

Miraculously, silently, unheralded, unadvertised, Capitaine le Comte Rougy de Poulis, Chasseur, 15th Regiment, arrived at the Northern Base and in broken English begged to be showed "ze cuissarre *Rampageux*." When he came over the side the officer of the watch was almost overcome, and registered a vow to attend church with greater punctuality than had previously been his habit, but quickly recovering himself he conducted the gallant stranger to Captain Robert Bowlin, commanding H.M.S. *Rampageous*. This officer was equally surprised, but with the tact that characterizes the higher command afloat, he concealed his astonishment, accommodated his guest in the Captain's spare cabin, and expressed deep regret that he had not yet received official notification, hence his remissness in failing to meet Monsieur le Comte.

Le Comte de Poulis was *desott* that he should

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have arrived before his introductions. He was on ze staff of General Petain. The British Admiralty so kindly had invited ten officers to visit ze Fleet. He had crossed on Tuesday, obtained ze passport Wednesday from ze Admiralty at White'all. " And 'ere 1 am," he concluded with an inimitable gesture.

The Count agreed with Monsieur le Capitaine—Bowlin—it was *lamentable crreiir*—red tape, no doubt, *mats a la guerre, comme a la guerre, que voulez vous*—should he send a telegram to ze Admiralty—or——?

No, Captain Bowlin would hear of no such thing—the fault was in London—those Government offices, etc., etc. Meanwhile, Monsieur was the guest of the ship. Would he come to the wardroom and be introduced ?

He would.

The hour was 10.45 a.m., and in honour of the event, even Captain Bowlin had a cocktail. After his third, le Comte Rougy de Poulis smacked his lips and remarked :

" *Sacre Bosche! Ce cocktail c'est epatant. Hein !* "

Four days elapsed, and in eacli of them the Count's popularity grew and flourished exceedingly. He had seen much service—on the Aisne, then Dbomide, then Verdun, and two months on the Somme. But he was always quite modest,, and it was difficult to say whether his stories of life at the front or his recollections of life in Paris were most appreciated.

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On the afternoon of the fifth day the Count had retired to his cabin, for the "distinguished foreign officer" had been entertained continuously from 10.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. Once in his bunk, he removed his collar, flung it on the table, and went to sleep.

Lieutenant Jones, on knocking at the door at 4 p.m., was surprised to hear this remark come forth in a sleepy voice :

"Go to blazes, I've not got the middle watch !"

Curiosity impelled him to enter and switch on the light. The Count stared fixedly at the invader, and then, by a supreme mental effort, pulled himself together.

"Eh, it ees my friend Jones—take a smoke, yes?"

All might yet have been well, but the Count suddenly realized that Lieutenant Jones was gazing long and hard at the inside of the collar on the table. Thereon, plainly, for all to see, ran these words: "Orchid, size 15, Gieve, Matthews and Seagrave, Naval Outfitters."

Lieutenant Jones was not intellectual, and whilst his brain groped for light amid much darkness, the Count acted. Springing alertly off the bed, he remarked: "Here, Jones, shut that damned door, have a gasper, and I'll explain."¹

That night the Count excelled himself, and the scene after dinner, when the band played "The Marseillaise," and the Count pledged

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(in champagne) the Royal Family, then La Republique, then L'Entente Cordiale, then the Royal Navy, then the *Rampageous*, and finally himself, and, for some reason no one quite understood, Lieutenant Jones, was remarkably enthusiastic.

Next day the Count had a telegram, and reluctantly left for France. Fortunately, the mail boat does not leave till noon, so the distinguished foreign officer was suitably entertained for the last time.

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Capitaine Rougy de Poulis is sincerely regretted in the *Rampageous*.

As he came, so he went, delicately shrouded in mystery. His papers never arrived, but only the Captain's clerk noticed the fact. He tried to mention it to Captain Bowlin one day, but as he did so at 9.30 a.m. he never got beyond the opening sentence. Some people, of whom I am one, see a slender clue in the following documents:

I

*From President of W.R. Mess, Rampageous,
To Accountant General's Department:*

Submitted:

That mess funds be credited with E23, 173. 6d. expended in entertaining Capitaine le Comte Rougy de Poulis (a distinguished foreign officer). Detailed statement of expenditure attached.

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II

Reply:

Nothing is known of this officer, inquiries are being made.

III

From Secretary, Board of Admiralty,
To Lieut. Stephen R. Smedd, H.M.S.
Nisbet:

March 25th, 1917.

You are to proceed to N. Base and report to R.A. *Titan*, who will detail you for short Hydraulic Course in one of the battleships. You are to be at *Excellent* in ten days from now.

IV

From President W.R. Mess, *Rampageous*,
April 10th, 1917,

To Accountant General's Department:

Monsieur le Comte Rougy de Poulis (distinguished foreign officer) left here for France, April 6th, 1917, having arrived here April 1st, 1917.

V

From Capt. *Excellent*,
To Admiralty:

Lieut. Stephen R. Smedd, late *Nisbet*, arrived here April 8th, 1917, from Northern Base, on completing Hydraulic Course in accordance with orders.

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VI

From Accountant General's Department,

To President W.R. Mess, Rampageous :

No knowledge here of Comte Rougy de Poulis (distinguished foreign officer). Application for refund should be made to War Office, under grant U.B.F. 456. No further correspondence can be entertained on this subject.

VII

Notice posted on W.R. Notice board H.M.S.
Rampageous:

At a meeting of the mess committee last night, it was agreed, owing to protracted nature of official correspondence which seems inevitable, that the cost of entertaining Comte Rougy de Poulis, our late distinguished foreign guest, should be defrayed from mess surplus.

Statement of Account.

To Lieut. Stephen R. Smedd,

From Barkson, Costumier, London :

June 20th, 1917.

To account rendered for hire of
French uniform, March 29th, 1917,
for one week 5 guineas.
A cheque will oblige.

THE PEN-WIPER

ONE day, several months ago, in the parlour of a small inn situated in the north (one must not be too precise), several Naval officers had congregated together. Two years ago this little inn had been on its last legs in a financial sense, but then came the war, and with it the Fleet, and ever since that day, whenever the ships were in harbour, Naval officers had met together at the inn "Northern Lights."

The "Northern Lights" is a very snug little house, stoutly built in grey stone, and from its porch it is only a stone's throw to the small pier (built by local labour, under the direction of an engineer commander), against which the picquet boats and sailing launches and pinnaces jostle each other when waiting for their cargoes of officers and men who have been ashore for a few hours' exercise. So it is that officers waiting for their boats gravitate naturally to the "Northern Lights," and study in a contemplative manner the Defence of the Realm Acts, and "Board of Liquor Control Regulations."

It was blowing half a gale, and the Scotch mist was rolling across the moors like puffs of damp smoke, when I turned into the "Northern

Lights." Only a few enthusiasts had "taken the beach." I took off and hung up a dripping oilskin, and entered the parlour. There were three other fellows in there sitting round the fire. One was a marine whom I did not know, and the other two were friends of mine, R—— and P——, both lieutenants from one of the battleships.

"By Jove, it's perishin' cold," complained the soldier. "Seems to grip one after East Africa," he murmured, as if in extenuation of his complaint.

"When did you come home?" said R——.

"Middle of June," replied the marine.

"The Huns are pretty well euchred out there, aren't they?" said R——.

"Oh, rather. Smuts had put the kybosh on them all right. They were getting ready to have a beano for the homecoming of the victorious warriors at the Cape when I passed through," answered the soldier. "Sickening bad luck I had in not coming home earlier. I missed the stunt on the 31st."¹

There was a lull in the conversation. We three had not missed "the stunt on the 31st," and though some months old, mention of that date evoked memories.

"Talking of the 31st," said P——, "I only realized the other day that 'The Pen-Wiper' was scuppered that night."

"Whom did you say?" I asked.

"The Pen-Wiper," repeated P——.

¹ Jutland.

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" Who the devil was that," inquired R——.

" Why Jimmy X——, of course. D'you mean to say you didn't know he was called the ' Pen-Wiper?'"

We expressed our ignorance of this fact, and demanded the tale which we knew must be attached to this name.

" I think," said the soldier, " a very small drink wouldn't do us any harm." Suzie M'Hamish entered in response to a knock of a stick on the wooden floor. " Three small whiskies and water and a lemonade," said the soldier.

" Evcrry offeecer must pay for his ain drinks," sternly remarked Suzie. Then, as she saw the clock, which pointed to 5.50 p.m., " Whishts, and it's no' yet six o'clock, so ye canna ha' whuskey the noo."

" Quick, R——, exert your well-known fascinations or we are undone," I whispered.

" My dear Miss M'Hamish," interposed R——, " how often have I warned you that the affection which exists between us will be fatally marred by this slavish adherence to those regulations." And he pointed to the " Liquor Control " rules. " Come, Suzie, for two years you have sinned at 5.50 p.m. for my sake. Why this sudden coyness? What is ten minutes of time? And our boat goes at——"

" Ah, weel, Mr R——, ye ken verra well it's no lawfu', but *I* s'pose I maun get them for ye."

With a complacent smile R——filled and lit another pipe, as P——began his story.

" It was in 1908 I first met him. I was a sub in one of the boats of the North flotilla, based at Portland. Jimmy had just got command of the *Sharper* ; he commissioned her at Pompey, and when he brought her round to join up with the flotilla we all thought him a devilish lucky fellow. He only had six years in as a lieutenant, and was the youngest skipper in the flotilla. But he deserved his command. I tell you Jimmy was one of the smartest destroyer officers in the old Home Fleet. The way he handled that boat was a revelation to the whole flotilla. There was no doubt about it, he was red hot. Of course, some people said he was reckless, and so he was in a way; but, after all, what good destroyer officer hasn't got a bit of devil in him? Jimmy had his share all right. When he'd just shipped two stripes, they gave him a command in the Devonport torpedo boat flotilla. Old Arthur Hillow was the commander of his division, and was a bit of a taut hand. One night they were exercising off the Eddystone, and Jimmy's boat began to flame at the funnel—you know what devils at doing that those old coal-boats were; when they got in next morning, Hillow sent for Jimmy and scrubbed him down over this. Next time they went out, to the joy of the division, old Arthur's boat began to flame. Jimmy saw this, and though they were going twenty knots, he brought his boat up to within about ten yards of the divisional leader.

" ' What the deuce are you doing, you reck-

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less young fool ? ' sung out Arthur through a megaphone.

" ' Please, sir, I've only come to make some toast,' says Jimmy in reply as he hoisted out a ship's loaf on the end of a twenty-foot boathook. No one else could have done it without being court-martialled, but it shows the kind of fellow he was.

" Well, as I was saying, he joined up with our flotilla in 1908, just about the time they started the idea of putting destroyers into ' pens ' instead of mooring 'em in the stream. We used to lie two deep in the Portland pens, and whenever Jimmy was outside boat, it was the dickens to pay for the bloke inside him. Jimmy would come in at half speed, dodge half a dozen dinghies and a couple of buoys, miss the entrance pier by inches, and inside of five minutes he'd be tied up, head and stern.

" He had a mania for running things fine, and fellows swore that his boat had a smaller turning circle and less beam than any of the others, but, of course, she was sister to them all. Naturally he often had small bumps, and he thought nothing of removing every wooden outside fitting from the boat he was running alongside. If you left anything sticking over the side it was a ' dead bird ' if Jimmy was due to double-bank you in the ' pens.'

" He always sent his artificer over at once. ' With Captain X——'s compliments, and if 'e done any damage, 'e 'opes you'll let me repair it, sir.'

" ' Done any damage/ shrieked an infuriated gunner one day in which he was a helpless spectator whilst one of his sighting hoods was neatly split in twain by a bridge rail, as the *Sharper* shot past. ' Done any damage? Why, your captain's a blinkin' pen-wiper—that's what 'e is!'

" The name stuck, and no one relished it more than Jimmy himself.

" I never saw him again since those days, but I heard about him after the action. It appears that he fired his last torpedo at a range of 200 yards, with about a dozen searchlights and Lord knows how many 6-inch on him. Last tiling seen of him, his boat was disabled—bumping down the side of a German battleship. If I know anything of him, the ' Pen-Wiper' wiped the Huns that night. He always did get where he wanted to."

" Pity he's gone," said R——, " blokes like that are useful the night after a fleet action."

" Yes," agreed P——as we rose to battle our way down to the pier and its waiting boats, " but there are still some left like him, thank the Lord."

THE SERENADING PARTY

"**S**IGNAL for you, sir," said the Chief Yeoman, as with one hand he held a signal pad at exactly the correct distance from the Captain's eyes, and expectantly fingered a pencil in the other. In the background lurked a very small signal boy, who had flown breathlessly down from the bridge with the signal; but not to take it straight to the Captain. Signal boys do not show signals to captains; this duty is reserved for yeomen and chief yeomen.

There is an exact scale of precedence in such matters at sea. Even important men such as yeomen do not show signals to admirals. In the latter case a signal boy might conceivably actually carry the signal aft from the bridge, because signal boys with the eye of a yeoman upon them move at a speed only second to that of light. But should a signal boy on such an errand encounter a leading signalman, yeoman, or chief yeoman, he would at once deliver up the signal. The penalties entailed and the wrath incurred by his "short-circuiting" any of those above him in the hierarchy of signals are almost beyond the power of description. Imagine, then, the signal in the hands of the yeoman; does

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he take it to the Admiral? Almost certainly not. He presents it to the flag lieutenant, who will then decide whether the Admiral shall see it at once or whether it will wait.

I feel very tempted to launch out into a little discussion about flag lieutenants, as I know a good deal about those interesting and remarkable people, for I have been intimately associated with one of them. I remember he had fifteen suits of plain clothes, a pretty taste in things sartorial, and we were of a size'; but I must resist the temptation and get back to my subject. This was what the Captain read :

From Captain to Captain, H.M.S. *B*——to H.M.S. *R*——. We should like to serenade you this evening.—1400.

The Captain's eyes twinkled, and a smile played about his lips. The Chief Yeoman licked the end of his pencil and held it poised over the pad.

" Make W.M.P.," said the Captain.

Down came the pencil like a dagger and W.M.P. appeared across the signal pad. The Chief Yeoman saluted, and retired in dignified haste; having rounded a corner, he gave the pad to the awaiting signal boy, and tersely remarked " Nip." But the youth was already half-way to the bridge, and a quarter of an hour later, the captain of H.M.S. *B*——, at the other end of the harbour, had a signal shown him by

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his chief yeoman to the effect that his brother captain's reply was " With much pleasure."

The announcement that the B——'s wanted to serenade us caused a sensation in the ward-room. Every one agreed on one point, and when the Commander remarked: " Got plenty of beer on board, Pay ? " it was with consternation that we heard the paymaster reply: " Opened up the last dozen to-day! " It was recognized that a crisis had been reached. The mess committee met at once, and decided to send the wine steward round the squadron in the skiff on a tour of inquiry.

I had the middle watch and therefore did not feel inclined to be serenaded. Furthermore, " serenading " is always associated in my mind with the opposite sex, and I felt that I should feel like the French officer to whom I was once attached as A.D.C. when a part of their fleet paid a courtesy visit to one of our south coast resorts. My friend and I attended an entertainment announced as a " gala operatic performance in honour of the French Fleet." As I ushered our gallant guest into a draughty theatre which was filled exclusively with sailors from both fleets, the Frenchmen surveyed the scene, then, turning to me with an expressive shrug, pathetically remarked: " But vere are de vimmen, I mean ze ladies ?" But again I digress!

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It was a perfect evening of the north in early

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autumn, not a breath of wind ruffled the oily calm of the waters of a certain base which sheltered units of His Majesty's fleet. The long lines of ships stretched literally for miles across the water. Though the ships were darkened, their great forms were plainly visible in the light of a full moon which was rising blood red in the east, as the last high lights of sunset lingered above the western hills.

Three hundred men from neighbouring ships had been invited to come on board H.M.S. *R*—, and be serenaded at 9 p.m. At that hour the port side of our boat deck was packed with seamen. There must have been six hundred men lining the side, clustered like bees half-way up the foremost rigging, on top of guns, on the bridges, in the searchlight platforms—anywhere, in fact, where the individual judged he would obtain a better view than his mess-mates. At 9 p.m. the sound of distant bagpipes up the harbour attracted every one's attention. At first nothing could be seen, but suddenly an extraordinary sight met our eyes. Rapidly sweeping down on the top of the flood tide was a craft which reminded one of Henley at its gayest. We rubbed our eyes, but the indisputable fact remained that an illuminated house-boat was apparently proceeding up harbour. From this craft came the skirl of the pipes, the beating of many drums great and small, and the frenzied cries of (presumably) Scottish bluejackets.

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Swiftly she came down the lines, causing great sensation on board the other ships, who were unaware of the proposed *tamasha*. Several ships burst into spontaneous cheering and then wondered why they had done it, and what all the fuss was about. In several wardrooms ingenious individuals deduced that some good war news had come through, and that the flagship had devised a new method of announcing it to the fleet. A friend of mine in the *H—*, actually complained to me next day that he was so overcome at the sight of an illuminated boat, that in a fit of mad optimism he had registered a wager of one Bradbury to ten that Turkey was suing for peace.¹

When the serenaders arrived off our beam, the bagpipes stopped and a choir of male voices inquired if we were the *R—*. A hundred voices answered in the affirmative, and our visitors altered course and came to rest at a distance of about forty to fifty yards from our beam.

We could now see that the theatre consisted of two distinct parts. There was a sailing barge, which had been decked in with planks placed across the thwarts. In the centre of this was a small stage lit by half a dozen footlights. Round the stage, and grouped at the back, were stools and chairs on which were seated about forty men in every kind of fancy dress. Amongst those we noticed, as they say in society papers,

¹ This was in 1916—"ETIENNE."

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were Charlie Chaplin and certain of the Hohenzollern family. At one end of the barge were a piano and a couple of violinists. A mast at the bow and another at the stern carried a row of Japanese lanterns on a jackstay between them. A picquet boat lashed on the far side fulfilled the double role of a dressing-room and the source of the motive power required to stem the tide. The rays of a shaded arc lamp were thrown on to the stage from our bridge, and a gentleman stepped into the limelight and remarked, " I vos de manager, shentlemen."

When the tumultuous applause which greeted this observation had subsided, he proceeded to inform us, lest any member of the audience felt alarmed by the idea that prowling Zepps would be attracted to the scene by the brilliancy of the illumination, that he had much pleasure in announcing that the plug in the bottom of the boat was a very loose fit, and that it would be immediately withdrawn as soon as the alarm was sounded. In one and a half minutes, he assured us, the stage would be completely submerged. He added that all the performers, save only the two Willies, were fitted by the management with Mr Gieves' famous waistcoat.

At 9.15 the serenade began and lasted an hour, during which period an excellent performance was given. Each turn was allowed five minutes. At its conclusion, during the applause, Charlie Chaplin stepped on to the back of the stage and, in the manner familiar to

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any patron of the cinema, neatly yanked the performer off the stage with the crook of his stick. There were several songs by a well-trained quartette, and the effect of the voices stealing across the water and faintly echoing against the armour on our side was delightful.,

At 10.20 they sang "Farewell comrades," with a choir of about sixty voices. It was followed by "The King," which was sung by six hundred men. We implored them, through megaphones, to come on board and refresh themselves, but the manager excused himself, by breaking into poetry to the effect that

The way is long
The tide is strong, etc.

Slowly they steamed round the ship, whilst the delighted audience gave them round after round of cheers. As they passed close under our stern for the second time, we heard the sharp tinkle of the picquet boat's bell signalling "Full speed ahead." Instantly the serenaders shot ahead, the drone of the bagpipes rose to a screech, and the drums crashed and rolled. In a few minutes nothing could be seen save the white wake of the serenading party as they skirled their way up harbour, homeward bound to their ship.

Dead silence reigned on board as the strains of the bagpipes receded faintly into the night. At length our Commander spoke, and there rose the plaintive wail of the boatswains' pipes,

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"piping down the hands." There followed the measured tramp of many feet, till at 10.45 the upper deck was deserted save for those on watch, and the slow-pacing figures of the night guard.

THE GUEST NIGHT

THE long-expected news had come, and small groups of officers were discussing it in the smoking-room. The Commander was leaving us. For three years he had been in the ship—longer, in fact, than any other officer in the mess—and now he was going.

Though hard things had been said about him by his mess-mates, and though his departure had been openly prayed for by nearly every one at some time or other, these expressions and sentiments had always been made in the heat of the moment, and are probably commonly said and thought of every commander there has been, or ever will be, in the Service. For by the nature of his position it is impossible for a commander not to make himself unpopular at times—unless he is a "Popularity Jack," than which there is no more damnable person.

But when the various rumours as to our Commander's departure, which had been floating round the ship, crystallized into naked facts, the wardroom officers of H.M.S.———realized that they were not only about to lose a first-class Commander, but also a very charming mess-mate. It was unanimously decided that he

should be dined by the mess, with all pomp and honour.

The decision once made, the mess committee—otherwise known as "the civic fathers"—went into consultation with the Admiral's staff as to which day during the coming week the ship might be moderately certain of being in harbour. The staff at once assumed an air of profound mystery until threatened that they would not be invited to the feast. On receipt of this ultimatum the "Secrecy Brigade" promptly collapsed and confessed that, as far as they knew, there was nothing much impending, provided the Germans kept quiet.

A date was fixed, and a formal invitation was sent to the guest of the evening. The mess committee then retired to the fleet surgeon's cabin. They were closeted in there for over an hour, ostensibly engaged in composing the menu. The gunnery lieutenant, who lived next door, sardonically suggested that they were engaged in sampling cocktails at the expense of the mess. But as the paymaster explained, when called upon to give reasons as to the continuous visits of the wine stewards to the scene of the committee's labours, "My dear fellow, how could we compose a menu without being inspired?" and "*Duke est pro bono publico vinum bibere.*" The young doctor, an artist of merit, painted the menu cards with scenes representing famous incidents in the past two years of the ship's life. Such was one entitled,

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" Scene on the upper deck when M——dropped the whaler in the water,"

The first lieutenant, who is known as the " Impresario," arranged a gala kinema performance, an amusement in which the *Com-mander* took much joy, having always been by far the most enthusiastic patron (with the possible exception of the Admiral) of our weekly shows.

The guest night arrived, and, fortunately, H.M.S.———was quietly at anchor. The ship's band, of which we are inordinately proud (it musters twenty-seven members, all amateurs from the lower deck) played " The Roast Beef of Old England," and the feast began its lengthy course. The King's health was drunk with musical honours, and the father of the mess, who had been almost three years with the *Com-mander*, made a short speech. The *Com-mander* replied, and, these formalities complied with, every one settled down for the real business of the evening. The first item was the kinematograph performance, which is always held on the upper deck in a space screened in by awnings and canvas curtains.

Our engineer commander, a man of resource, had rigged up an ingenious arrangement by means of which, should the picture palace prove too cold, we can deflect into it the hot-air exhaust from the engine-room. As the first lieutenant proudly, if somewhat coarsely, remarked to our assistant paymaster, " My dear fellow, you only want some one's hand to squeeze and the

illusion would be complete; you could imagine yourself in a picture palace ashore." On this particular night the *piece de resistance* was a drama in three parts called "Satan's Amazon." We get our films weekly from an agent near our regular base, and they are returned at the end of the week—if the Service permits. In between Parts 1 and 2 of the drama the following telegram, received by the first lieutenant that afternoon, was thrown on the screen :—

"To Lieutenant——, H.M.S.——. Urgent. 'Satan's Amazon' must arrive here to-day, Saturday. Contract to show film at Hull Picture-drome for week beginning Monday, 5th inst.—KINO."

As at the moment "Satan's Amazon" was some 400 miles from her home, in a place where the railway runs not, and as it was Saturday night, the above wire was not without its humour.

During kinema performances the younger members of the mess usually congregate on a life-saving raft at the back of the theatre. This position is known as the threepenny gallery, and the occupants generally keep up a running fire of candid criticism on the various films. In one of the intervals between the films the Captain laughingly told the first lieutenant that he would be obliged to cancel his licence as manager of the house if the disturbance at the back did not abate. The remark was greeted

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with loud cheers by the " gallery." Supported by the gunnery lieutenant, the manager announced his intention of clearing the hooligans out of the house. The two " chuckers-out" made a frontal attack on the position, which was easily repulsed. A parley ensued, in which the " gods " agreed to behave themselves if the undesirable characters down below were requested to leave the building. " We may be common people," dramatically shouted the young doctor, " but we are virtuous ; look at the people strolling round your promenade, and the Bishop of London was up here only ten days ago ! " A cheer went up from the gallery, and the baffled " impresario " returned to his seat in the " promenade," When the kinema was over we adjourned to the wardroom and a sing-song was started. ♣

The famous topical song entitled " Coal in the Sack," and dedicated without special permission to the Commander, was sung and resung. At about 11.30 p.m. it was suggested that a few parlour tricks might not be out of place. I had to leave the mess at five minutes to twelve, as I had the middle watch; but the last impression I received was that of a number of officers endeavouring to balance pokers on the ends of matches, a feat which the " Sub " declared to be quite feasible, and the secret of which he would impart to any gentleman for the very modest price of one whisky and soda.

Next morning breakfast was rather a frosty

THE GUEST NIGHT 99

meal and several people had "livers." At noon we suddenly went to sea and encountered a small gale. By sunset, to all save a few unfortunates, the guest night of the evening before was a memory of the past. To the few it was still a naked living reality.

A DROP OF LEAF¹

A GLEAM of light flickered up momentarily to the east and caught the tired eyes of a young lieutenant on his fore-bridge of a light cruiser.

He leant his back against the binnacle of the compass, and rubbing the eyepieces of his binoculars to remove the dew, he focussed them on the horizon. He knew that somewhere on Ids beam lay a squadron and that at dawn a signal was expected from the flagship of that squadron.

The hour was 3.40 a.m. and the day was at that stage of its career which is sometimes called "the false dawn."

The sea was perfectly calm, and of a leaden grey hue; such of the sky as could be distinguished was grey, the ships were grey, and to the young lieutenant, who had been standing by the compass since midnight, life seemed grey.

He was waiting for the signal with an anxious intensity born of nine months' arduous patrol and convoy work.

As he stared through his glasses a startling

¹ "Leaf" is Matelot's language for leave:

change took place in the eastern sky. At first a dull, red glow appeared, as from a big fire below the rim of the sea.

From this centre of light, which grew more luminous every second, purple and gold fingers stretched themselves tentatively across the sky, reaching towards the zenith. It was the birth of dawn. The young lieutenant was not without a sense of the beautiful, but he had seen the inauguration of so many days in the North Sea that his attention was chiefly concentrated upon four dark silhouettes which appeared for the first time on the horizon. It was the other squadron, and the leading ship was the flagship.

At the first sign of dawn a signalman in the flagship had announced the fact to the flag lieutenant, who was snatching an hour or two's sleep on the chart-house settee. Sitting up, he fumbled in his pocket for a signal written out the night before and countersigned by the Admiral.

"Take that to the *Belfast*, and report when through," he said, handing the crumpled paper to the waiting yeoman.

A couple of minutes later he was asleep again, and had to be awakened a second time to receive the information that the *Belfast* had received and understood "your 1545."

At 3.45 a.m. on the lower bridge of the *Belfast*, three signalmen had collided, due to their simultaneous attempts to reach the signalling shutter

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of a searchlight and reply to the calling-up signal of the flagship.

The young lieutenant on the after-bridge was just able to shout "Flagship calling us" when the metallic rattle of the shutter and the hiss of the arc light below informed him that his information was entirely superfluous.

In thirty seconds the signal had been received, in another ten the young lieutenant was shouting down a pipe, "Captain, sir! Captain, sir! Captain, sir! . . ."

"Yes?"

"Officer of the watch speaking, sir. From the Flag; 'Proceed in execution of previous orders' "

"Ah—well, alter course; have you got the new course?"

"Yes, sir, it's N.70° W., and the navigator is down for a call at 4 a.m."

"Very good. What sort of a day is it?"

"Fine morning, sir. Extreme visibility, B.C. and the glass is steady."

"Very good. Call me again when we're steady on the new course."

"Very good, sir," answered the young lieutenant, and closing the mouth of the speaking tube he took his stand at the compass.

"Pretty chatty the owner is this morning, ain't 'e?" remarked the helmsman to the petty officer quartermaster. Though they were on the lower bridge, the whole of the foregoing conversation had been audible to them, as a

branch to the Captain's fore-bridge voice-pipe led to the steering compass.

" You watch the ship's 'ead, young feller 1 " replied the quartermaster, who objected on general principles to familiarity with young ordinary seamen.

The helmsman accepted the rebuke and silently gazed into the magnifying prism on the compass bowl. This docility touched the heart of the quartermaster; he determined to unbend.

" Wotcher going to do wiv yer drop of leaf, my son ? "

The helmsman was about to reply when a voice from above shouted: " Port 25 ! "

The young lieutenant was altering course, and the *Belfast* was proceeding in execution of previous orders.

As the helm went over, the bow slowly swung round with increasing speed, her long low stern appeared to side-slip in the water, and as she " transferred " she left a sheet of glassy water on the inside of the turn.

The edge of this sheet of water lapped and folded in towards her swinging quarter with a curious sucking sound. As she was turning at speed, she " heeled inwards two or three degrees, and this, combined with the distinctive rattle of the steering engine, caused more than one of the occupants of cabin bunks, and serried rows of hammocks on the mess-decks, to wake and think for a moment as to the meaning of the turn.

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In a man-of-war at sea most of her inhabitants sleep very lightly, and a swift turh, especially during the daylight hours, makes every one pause for a moment and wait expectantly for the bump, or what a Hun officer of my acquaintance once described as the "characteristic jar of a torpedo on steel plating."

At night a turn probably wakes up half the ship's company. Things—unpleasant things—can happen so very quickly on a dark night when one's home is travelling at twenty-five knots without lights—it is always wise to be prepared.

On the occasion I have in mind, those of the *Belfast's* company who were awakened by the turn rolled over again with a happy smile on their lips. They knew what it meant. They knew that the rest of the squadron were steaming south and that they alone had turned to the westward for the purpose of making an East Coast port, wherein the ship would refit and from which they would proceed on leave.

As the young lieutenant steadied the *Belfast* on her new course and reported to the Captain, eight bells struck; half a dozen hooded figures in lammy coats turned over to the morning watch look outs and tramped below, negotiating the steep ladders to the upper deck with amazing swiftness in their heavy sea boots and masses of warm clothing.

A few minutes later the navigator came up and, as is the habit of navigators, fondled the compass and took a bearing of the sun.

To a navigator his standard compass is as a good wife, a pearl beyond price, for on the accuracy of his compass depends the safety of the ship and his professional reputation. In the North Sea, where opportunities for sunsights are often infrequent, much navigation must be done by dead reckoning. Three instruments are used for this—the compass, the log, and the lead—but the greatest of the three, and the most essential, is the compass.

Watch any navigator when he first appears on the fore-bridge. He goes immediately to the compass and looks at it. He will revolve the azimuth mirror, and if the glass over the compass bowl is dirty, he will remove the azimuth, and with his pocket handkerchief he will carefully wipe the glass clean, then look round the horizon to see if there is anything which "will give him a chance of taking a bearing. As he leaves the bridge he nearly always launches a parting shot at the officer of the watch, to the effect that careful steering is particularly necessary for the next few hours. Two or three hours later he will come up and repeat the performance, including the advice.

In the *Belfast* the navigator often kept the morning watch at sea, and it was to him that the young lieutenant turned over the safety of the ship, the Poldhu Wireless "Press message," the watchkeeper's electric kettle, a chipped enamel mug, and a tin of cocoa.

A few minutes later the young lieutenant

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was standing on the quarter-deck, looking with satisfaction at half a dozen wisps of smoke far astern and below the horizon, which marked the presence of the squadron which they had left for several weeks.

As he turned to go down the narrow hatch that led to the cabin flat, a sea-gull rose lazily from a pit prop upon which it had been sitting and flew to another baulk of timber. The young lieutenant paused on the top step of the ladder, and a hard look came into his eyes as he saw that over an area of several hundred yards square the sea was thickly covered with pit props of Norwegian pine. Upon the largest of these timbers a dark mass of what appeared to be clothing sprawled inconsequently, a cluster of birds hovered round it.

" Seems to have been some dirty work at the old cross roads," murmured the young lieutenant, addressing no one in particular, unless it was the sea-gull. The gull, disturbed from its second resting-place by the wash of the ship, rose and flew over to the dark mass.

" Brutes! " muttered the young man as he thumped down the ladder.

Four hours later a sentry knocked at his cabin door and, shouting through the curtain, slid: " We're inside the bar, sir ! and going up the river; the first lootenant's compliments, an' will yer look out for the wires aft ? "

A hasty toilet—sea boots, trousers, sweater, and monkey jacket were pulled on, and he went on deck.

The *Belfast* was slowly gliding up the very muddy waters of an exceedingly narrow river, but one of the wombs of British sea-power for all its small size. Gigantic cranes stood on both banks. The latter were covered with an endless succession of building slips, sheds and workshops.

The continued roar of thousands of pneumatic riveters filled the air; whistles blew, and long, lean, ugly pipes puffed jets of white exhaust steam into the smoke-laden atmosphere. High over all towered the enormous chimneys with the thick smoke of North Country coal streaming from their lips.

In the shadow of the chimneys, under the pall of the smoke, stood row upon row of small houses, hideously similar. These stretched in serried rows up the slopes of the valley. The highest row was shrouded in smoke and mist.

On the quarter-deck lay coils of wire with which the *Belfast* was to be warped into dock.

Close astern of her, like faithful hounds, splashed the *Rambler* and the *Buster*, two paddle tugs, captained by shabby but knowledgeable gentlemen, in seedy overcoats and bowler hats. At 9 a.m. the struggle began. Four tugs, two ahead and two astern, laboured to turn a ship, 450 feet long, in a river 370 feet broad. This apparent impossibility was achieved by gradually working her nose into the dock.

The real interest to a detached observer began when shipping tried to pass up or down stream,

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and many quaint oaths in English and in Scandinavian tongues were bandied to and fro.

At noon the dock gates were shut with a thud, and they began pumping out and shoring up.

The paymaster had a busy time paying the hands and acting as an interpreter between sailors, who wanted tickets to unheard-of corners of the British Isles, and two very worried railway officials.

The Commander informed the watchkeepers that one of them would have to travel, to London with the 10.21 p.m. as two hundred of the sailors were going by that, and he thought an officer should be available on the journey.

The lot falling on the young lieutenant, the rest of the wardroom wished him joy and went their several ways.

At 10 p.m. the young lieutenant arrived at the station, and was somewhat surprised to hear a brass band playing in the central hall. It turned out to be the ship's amateur band, which was the centre of an admiring crowd of some fifteen hundred people. As luck would have it, the band saw him and raised a loud cheer, and the crowd, suspecting hidden heroism somewhere, joined in heartily.

The young lieutenant, blushing furiously, fled to his sleeper, devoutly praying the band would miss their train. It was not so ordained. At 2 a.m. he was awakened by an agitated attendant. He looked through the window and saw they were at Bedford.

Above the jangle of empty milk-cans rose the distant strains of a band.

"What is it ? " said the lieutenant.

" Please, sir ! it's them sailors of yours, they're a-playing of the ' Rosary' on their hinstruments, and they're a-playing of it houtside the fore-most sleeper, and General Sir William Somme is hout on the platform in 'is pink sleeping-suit, cursin' somefink 'orrid."

" My good fellow ! I don't care if the whole Army Council are on the platform in purple pyjamas. Those sailors are on leave, and, as far as I know, there is no law preventing them playing the ' Rosary' or any other blinking tune. They probably think he likes, it . . . I'll have some tea at 7.30 a.m. Good-bye-e! "

¹¹ But, sir ! Sir William——"

" I said good-bye-e once," said the young lieutenant, with a touch of irritation in his voice.

The attendant withdrew.

The last mournful chords of "Where my caravan has rested" mingled with the guard's whistle and lulled the officer to sleep.

When he left his sleeper at 8 a.m. next morning not one of his unruly flock was to be seen.

Breakfast and a Turkish bath followed, and at 11.45 the young lieutenant shaped a certain course, which led to the " Sign of Capricornus."

It is permitted to follow him to the door of this very remarkable place, which excites the wildest curiosity on the part of many mothers

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and sisters, but the descriptive pen may go no further. "Members only" is a rule rigidly enforced.

Nor would it be fair to follow his movements during the subsequent ten days.

Sufficient to say that his passion for navigation led him to explore many reaches and backwaters of the Thames, and that he was not alone.

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Three weeks had elapsed since that first morning when the *Belfast* had parted company.

Once again it was early in the day—about 6 a.m. Once again the young lieutenant was on watch, but this time he searched the horizon for signs of the squadron, with somewhat different feelings.

At 6.30 a.m. light tapering masts showed up, followed by funnels and hulls as the range decreased.

Accurately the *Belfast* adjusted her course and speed to wheel into line behind the rear ship.

As she did so, the flagship ran up a couple of hoists of flags.

"The old man welcoming us back and hoping we have had a pleasant leave," jested the lieutenant to the sub.

"I do not think!" replied the latter.

A signalman jumped up the ladder: "Signal, sir."

"Read it," said the lieutenant.

" Flag to *Belfast*—make less smoke—prepare for ranging exercise/" announced the signalman.

" War is Hell! sub," laughed the young lieutenant.

The sub sang in a low voice as much as he could remember of " Let the great, big world keep turning" ; it reminded him of a girl he had met at a dance in town and temporarily caused him to forget the imminence of the ranging exercise.

THE SEWING-MACHINE

WE all know that in the "Early Days" we were very short of those munitions of war which at the moment of writing are being showered with prodigality upon the Hun in Flanders. In those early days light cruisers sometimes found themselves in harbour for two or three days. It wasn't much of a harbour, its chief advantages being that in one corner was a hulk in which mails and parcels accumulated, and that the sea inside the harbour was appreciably better behaved than the sea outside. *The* edge of the harbour was a long way off, and looked its best at a distance. The attractions on the beach were nil to anyone who had the least feeling of citizenship—that is, to a lover of cities.

It was generally blowing a bit, and anchor watch absorbed twenty-five per cent, of one's life. Hence a large number of officers found that, after the restful effects of the first twenty-four hours in harbour had passed off, a feeling of boredom supervened. Some clever person suggested that perhaps the Navy would like to jnake munitions in its spare time. The Navy said it would be charmed, and it was decided that we should

THE SEWING-MACHINE 118

make gromets to protect the driving bands of shells.

So successful was this venture that the Ministry of Munitions wrote a little letter in which they patted us on the back, and then said: " If we give you a sewing-machine, will you make lifting slings for shells ? " We said we'd do our best, and shortly afterwards a storeship came alongside us and dumped a large packing-case on our quarter-deck.

The supply note described its contents as " Single Treadle Machine Sewing, Patt. III., No. 1567." A carpenter's mate split open the packing-case and the duty hands reverently carried it down to the smoking-room. The news soon travelled round " Morality Row" and " Paradise Alley," our two streets of cabins, and the occupants, delighted to hear of the arrival of the strange instrument, hastened to the smoking-room. When I got there the visitors to the exhibition included the engineer commander, his senior engineer, the two doctors, the paymaster, and a couple of watch-keeping lieutenants, Brown and Williams.

We were gingerly fingering its various parts and speculating on their functions when " the Irrepressible" burst into the smoking-room. " The Irrepressible" is our sub, and he rather fancies himself at impersonating gunners' mates and drill instructors. True to his habit he immediately let off:

" Now what 'ave we 'ere ? 'Ere we 'as a sewing-

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machine. Now the object of this 'ere himplement is to sew, and I'll tell yer the reason fer why. Class, T'shun!"

"Dogs of war, out sub ! " remarked Brown.

As one man, every one below the rank of three stripes hurled themselves on the sub, and a Homeric struggle was in progress when the arrival of the Commander restored comparative peace.

"I understand the Service Sewing-machine has been fetched up," said the Commander.

"Yes, sir!" replied the sub. "We 'ave been fortunate enuff in this 'ere ship to secure one of the latest Marks, this 'ere magnificent hinstrument operating at 'igh pressure can sew thirty-five yards of Merchant Navy canvas to a similar piece in hunder one 'our, or halternatively it will sew seventeen and 'arf yards of canvas in 'arf a similar period."

"Always supposing we find some one who can work it," remarked the young doctor. "Now when I was at Bart.'s I had quite a lot of experience with stitching, and I think I could drive this gadget! "

"I may as well say without further delay," remarked the Commander, "that by virtue of my office as Commander of the ship and Mess President, / am going to dig the first sod, or drive the first stitch, or whatever one does when one christens a sewing-machine. Meanwhile——"

"Thank you, Chief, you have divined my innermost thoughts. I was just going to ask

THE SEWING-MACHINE 115

you to agitate the line of communication between this spot and the pantry. We have before us a task which cannot be tackled without stimulants. Now, sub, give me a chair."

A chair was placed in front of the machine, on which the Commander seated himself. Amidst breathless silence he placed his feet on the treadle and started the machine. His action was faintly reminiscent of a great organist trying a few preliminary chords. After a few revolutions he stopped the machine and, leaning back in his chair, remarked with much satisfaction : " So far, so good; it seems to have its gearing connected up all right."

" Don't you think, sir," said Brown, " we'd better trace the lead of the thread ? "

" Good idea," replied the Commander. " I take it, it goes like this—from the reel——"

" Or bobbin," interjected the sub.

" I said from the reel," continued the Commander.

" I believe the best seamstresses invariably refer to it as the bobbin, sir," said the sub in an aggrieved tone.

" If the sub puts me off my stroke again, sit on him, Brown," said the Commander. " Let me see, where was I ? Oh, yes, it leaves the bobbin—damme ! I mean reel, which presumably revolves on this vertical spindle. Thence by a leading block——"

" Do you mean this small pulley ? " inquired the Chief.

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" Yes, I do ! " replied the Commander pugnaciously. " It leads the thread along, doesn't it ? And doesn't a leading block lead a wire along the upper deck ? "

" Well, I suppose you could call it a leading block," admitted the Chief.

" From this block it proceeds," continued the Commander, " to er—er—er, let me see, oh, yes—to the head of the machine."

" The where ? " asked the paymaster.

" The head of the machine, Pay, this left-hand part containing this piston-like apparatus, on the end of which the needle moves up and down."

" Ah! But how does it get to the needle ? " triumphantly asked the Pay.

" How does it get there ? " scornfully ejaculated the P.M.O. " Why, any fool can see it goes down through these little rings.

" Look here!" indignantly remarked the Commander, " who is giving the detail of this machine, you or me ? "

" You are, sir ! / am not," pointedly replied the P.M.O.

" All right, then perhaps every one will let me get on. To summarize then, it seems to me the following theory fits in with observed facts. As soon as motive power is applied to the system by means of this treadle and crank underneath——"

" I tell you what, sir," jubilantly exclaimed Williams, " we could do away with the treadle,

THE SEWING-MACHINE 117

and gear up a neat little J-horse-power electric fan motor. We could use the one in the Pay's office; they love a fugg and never use it, and as a development of the idea we could fit a little indicating device with red and green lamps which would show us the number of beats of the needle per second."

" Nothing of the sort/" said the Commander. " You, in your enthusiasm for that most unpleasant stuff electricity, would make this machine a fruitful source of shocks; you wait until you've been through the long course at the *Vernon*, and then we'll allow you to monkey about with the electrical fittings of the ship. Till then you're a danger."

" Why not try to sew some canvas, Commander ? " suggested the P.M.O.

" Good idea. Sentry, ask the bo'sun to come this way, and to bring a couple of yards of canvas with him."

A few minutes later the bo'sun, a certain Mr Bolt, appeared on the scene. In the background lurked a hardy and ancient three-badged able seaman ; a bunch of keys attached to a lanyard round his waist proclaimed him to be the bo'sun's yeoman. His secretive and miserly cast of countenance were also indications that he belonged to that great band of robbers, the store-keeping fraternity. In his horny fingers he clutched a small strip of the thinnest canvas supplied to H.M. ships. The strip was about two feet long. As soon as Mr Bolt entered the

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smoking-room, he stopped dead as his gaze rested on the sewing-machine.

" *My Sewing-machine* / " he gasped.

" I beg your pardon, Mr Bolt," frostily remarked the Commander.

" I was only a-saying, sir, or in a manner of speaking, expressing surprise at seeing my—er, I mean the sewing-machine, which is one of my unconsoomable stores, standing like this 'ere in the smoking-room."

" Well, Mr Bolt, it's standing here because I intend to work it. Now, did you get my message about the canvas ? "

" Yessir. And I have brought two feet of canvas as you sent along for, but if I might make a remark, sir——"

" Well ? "

" I should say, sir, as 'ow it would be 'ighly injudicious to operate this 'ere machine before the 'and-book on the subject arrives."

" What hand-book, Mr Bolt ? "

" Well, sir," continued the bo'sun, making a gallant effort to retrieve the situation, " in all the thirty years I've been afloat, I never 'card tell of a new instrument arriving without a 'and-book of instructions, and more often than not an happendix as well."

" Do you mean to suggest seriously, Mr Bolt, that I, as Commander of this ship, need a hand-book to tell me how to work a simple sewing-machine ? " indignantly demanded the Commander.

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"No, sir. Of course not. I was only 'azarding an opinion, in a manner of speakin'."

"Very well, that's settled. Now let's have the canvas,"

The canvas was produced and placed under the needle. A reel of cotton was put in position and the thread led along to the needle, through which, after numerous unsuccessful efforts, the young doctor succeeded in threading it. His prestige rose so suddenly that he was emboldened to make another attempt to oust the Commander from his position of operator. It met with no success, the Commander taking refuge in the general statement that no bachelor could be permitted to try.

The canvas was divided into two strips; they were superimposed on each and placed under the needle. The Commander treadled vigorously, and the needle rose and fell and continued to rise and fall.

"It don't seem to be sewing, sir," said Mr Bolt in a voice from which he could not conceal satisfaction.

"Thank you, Mr Bolt, for the canvas. I think that's all we want," pointedly remarked the Commander.

Mr Bolt is no fool, and rightly interpreted this as a signal for him to withdraw. It was, however, soon plain to the whole party that the bo'sun's remark was only too true. The needle rose and fell in a most encouraging manner, but beyond puncturing the canvas, there was not

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the slightest sign of the two pieces being sewn together. A council was held, and after some discussion it was decided to reeve the needle "on the bight." This accomplished, the Commander started operations again.

He had been pedalling for about two minutes, again without result, when a piercing yell, followed by a torrent of invective, brought the padre hot foot from his cabin. He arrived just in time to see a Commander in the painful position of being pinned to a piece of canvas by a needle through the side of his thumb. The sub did not improve matters by turning the machine in the wrong direction when the Commander called on him for help.

Our Commander is an obstinate man and believes in the adage, "There is nothing the Navy cannot do." This contretemps increased his determination to conquer the machine. In a moving little speech, delivered while the P.M.O. was bandaging his finger, he accepted a cocktail from the Chief and called on all present to give their joint opinion.

"There is only one thing for it," said the Chief, "and that is to strip her right down."

"Yes, that's the best thing to do; strip her down thoroughly," agreed the senior engineer.

"We *will* strip the perisher," announced the Commander with an air of a surgeon deciding on an operation in a case of life and death.

"I'll send along for one of my artificers at once," announced the senior engineer. An

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interval of a few minutes elapsed during which period the officers gloomily surveyed the refractory machine.

The artificer arrived armed against all contingencies with a hammer, cold chisel, footrule, screw-driver, and an assortment of spanners. He threw himself into his task with enthusiasm, and soon the proud machine was lying in pieces on the smoking-room floor. Each part was carefully examined by every one, and it was whilst this was taking place that the quartermaster entered and, handing a small parcel to the Commander, said:

"A small boat has just come over from the store ship, sir, and they says as 'ow they forgot to leave this when they dumped the packing-case aboard a couple of hours ago."

The Commander looked at the parcel, then looked at the label, emitted a faint groan and sank into the nearest chair. The P.M.O. gently withdrew it from his nerveless grasp and read out the superscription on the parcel. It ran as follows:

"*For Singer Treadle Machine Sewing Patt. ///., No. 1567—Shuttles. Two in number—one spare—Patt. Va.*"

.

In the warrant officers' mess Mr Bolt was remarking to his friend the gunner:

"Wot'I sez is, stores are stores, but, Lor' bless you, *that* don't make no difference to ward-room officers, they does wot they likes. It

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reminds me of a poetry my dear mother used to versify with; it was a pretty little piece and went:

" ' For the rich gets all the pleasure
And the poor gets all the blame,
It's the same the whole world over,
It is a blinkin' shame.' "

ZEAL

[N.B.—*Though this story is based on an actual incident, the characters as described here are wholly imaginary.*]

"MY dear Nap," said the Captain of H.M. destroyer *Bloodhound* to his first lieutenant, "zeal is excellent in its right place. In the abstract it is, I suppose, always a desirable trait in either one's own or anyone else's character, but in real life it is often a dashed nuisance."

Lieutenant-Commander Airmach lit another cigarette, and continued :—

"Take the gunner."

At these words Lieutenant Clambos, sometimes called Napoleon, from the shape of his head, but more often known as "Nap," stirred uneasily on the settee upon which he was lying and murmured something that seemed to be in the nature of a prayer.

It was evident that thinking of the gunner moved him somewhat.

"Look at his effort the other day," gloomily remarked Airmach.

"Do you mean the grabby's¹ dinner-party
¹Sailors' nickname for a soldier.

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we gave ? " inquired the recumbent first lieutenant.

" Great Scott! There's not been anything else since, has there ? " anxiously demanded Airmach.

" Oh, only last night he fired a rifle bullet across a flag-officer's barge, which was taking the old boy back from a dinner-party in the flagship. The boat had engines that make a noise like a fashionable night club's rag-time band, so of course the coxswain never heard the hail, and our Mr Cocker assumed it was ' a Turkish destroyer or other 'ostile craft' and fired a shot across his bows. The flag-officer was in the stern sheets digesting, and though he was a hundred yards off, it was quite easy to see the colour of his face by the light of his cigar; they harmonized somewhat," eloquently concluded Clambos.

" Well, it might be worse," remarked the skipper. " He didn't hit anyone, did he ? "

" We haven't had the Service letter about it yet," said the first lieutenant, " so he may have done for all I know. Lord! It is blasted hot in this place. When is it our turn to patrol the Straits ? "

" To-morrow at dawn, my boy, will see you hauling the hook up on the fo'c'sle. We've got to patrol the West flank from 9 a.m. for twenty-four hours. I hope that perishin' field gun on Gaba el Wad has been flopped out by the Anzacs, Johnnie Turk will catch us bend-

ing with it one day. I bet they've got some swine of a Hun spotting for them."

"A propos of that gun," remarked Clambos, "Mr Cocker told me he had a scheme for silencing it."

"No doubt he has," replied Airmach. "Our Mr Cocker has a scheme for most enterprises. I shouldn't object to them if they didn't invariably recoil on my head," with which remark he rang the bell, and asked if there was any soda on board.

Mr Carlo Bimpero, Maltese steward, second class, answered the summons and replied in the negative.

"Have we any beer?" demanded the Captain.

"No, sah!" briskly replied Carlo.

"Why not, confound it," indignantly demanded the Captain. "Didn't I tell you last Thursday to get some from the store ship next time we were in the base?"

"Yes, sah! and that did I do. I tell you, Signor, I go myself to the store ship and I bring the beer. It was Monday, Signor. I remember the day, sah, because I getta a lettah from my wifa Rosetta. She tell me I haf a baby, a bello bambino, a verra fine—"

"Confound your baby, what about the beer?"

"Yes, sah, certainly, sah. I say, Signor, I bring de beer to zis ship, and then what 'appen? I tell you, sah. Dat damfool Giuseppe he putta de beer on de after boiler-casing, and de heat

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it affect de beer, sah, and de beer maka de pop-bang, and, Santa Maria, in a meenit he has gone! It gives me great regret to tell you dis story, Signor. It never shall happen again."

"You'll sack Giuseppe when we get back to Malta/" announced Airmach.

"Oh, sah! he verra good boy. His mother and my Rosetta are sistahs, Signor."

"Oh, get out of it, Carlo," wearily remarked the Captain, and Signor Bimpero, knowing Lieutenant-Commander Airmach, deemed it advisable to withdraw.

"No beer, no whisky, no nothing. *I'm* going to repose in my cabin. Let me know if any ciphers come through.¹¹ And with a colossal yawn the skipper left the sweltering wardroom for the slightly cooler shelter of his upper-deck cabin, on the fore-bridge.

Lieutenant Clambos reread *La Vie Parisienne* for the third, time, cursed his lack of application to the study of the French language in the earlier days of his youth, cursed the heat, the flies, Gallipoli, and life in general, and then gently dropped off into an uneasy sleep.

The perfect peace which brooded over the destroyer as she lay on the glassy surface of her base amidst half a dozen of her sisters was only broken by the low persistent rumble of the guns which rolled across from the blood-stained peninsula and echoed and re-echoed dully on the rocky and sun-dried shore of Rabbit Island.

The whole ship's company seemed asleep,

and though her bare iron decks were unpleasantly hot to the hand, recumbent figures were scattered fore and aft in such shadow as her ventilators, funnels and torpedo tubes afforded. There was one notable exception to this state of slumber.

The exception was Mr Cocker, Gunner (T). This gentleman was sitting in his cabin right aft, attired in a pair of duck trousers and a vest, and sweating profusely. Every few moments he absent-mindedly dabbed his forehead with a piece of Service blotting-paper. His dampness was due to two causes: first, the Gallipoli sun; secondly, he was writing a letter. When it is added that the letter was to a girl, much is explained. Mr Cocker was a big man, and looking at him in his cabin one was irresistibly reminded of those model ships inside bottles which used to adorn so many public-houses.

On this very hot afternoon Mr Cocker was endeavouring to write a letter to a certain young lady in Plymouth for whom he had a deep and abiding affection. It was a lamentable and deplorable fact, from Mr Cocker's point of view, that this affection was not entirely reciprocated. The young lady's affections wavered between Mr Cocker and Quartermaster-Sergeant Basher of the R.M.L.L., recently awarded the Military Medal for having throttled a Hun in a trench raid on the Western Front. It was this medal that seemed to lie like a shadow between Mr Cocker and his adored one, as he savagely bit his pen in his tiny cabin; for the young lady

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had intimated in a letter which lay before him that the gallant Basher was pressing his claims per medium of field post cards, and that, although she did not withdraw all hope from the more distant Alfred Cocker, yet her patriotism told her that his chances would be considerably improved were he to achieve some martial glory. "At least, Alf," she concluded, "if you really love nte you will get mentioned in dispatches. Bill has sent me his photo taken with the medal on. He looks a hero."

"Blinkin' Turkey¹ ; flat-footed grabby, that's what he is," muttered Mr Cocker as he continued to wrestle with the problem of convincing the damsel that he belonged to a service noted for its silence and in which potential V.Cs. might blush unseen and unheard of.

Mr Cocker had been aware of the lady's partiality for heroes for some months, and when he had left England in the spring to join the *Bloodhound* he had registered a mighty oath to distinguish himself in some manner or other.

The power of love is great, and in the two months he had been in the ship he had certainly distinguished himself, but not in a manner likely to bring a medal to his manly breast or even a mention in dispatches.

His first exploit had been to arrest and confine in the afterhold for three hours an individual who had strolled on board the ship at 4 p.m. one day in plain clothes in Malta dockyard.

¹ Sailors' nickname for a marine.

On Airmach's return from the club at 7 p.m. he had instantly ordered the release of the prisoner, and a dishevelled apparition, smelling strongly of tar, paint, and new rope, had emerged from the manhole. When it *could speak*, it transpired that Lieutenant-Commander Airnach had entertained unawares a highly respectable Member of Parliament, on a commission travelling through Malta to the Far East.

This episode was but the first of a series culminating in an awful *faux pas* at a military dinner, which cannot be described even here, and lastly, he had only the night before committed the *betise* of adhering strictly to the letter of the regulations in a matter concerning a flag-officer. At 6 p.m. Mr Cocker completed his labours and took to his bunk, there to revolve in his active brain fresh schemes whereby he might impress his Captain with a proper sense of Alfred Cocker's efficiency.

.

The next day at dawn, as ordered, the *Bloodhound* weighed anchor and proceeded towards the peninsula.

At 6 a.m. Mr Cocker came up to relieve Clambos, who warned him before turning over that it had been definitely established that German submarines had arrived, and a look out was to be kept accordingly. Mr Cocker's face lit up on the instant, and who shall say what visions flitted through his optimistic mind. Imagine then,

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if it be possible, what his feelings were when at 6.30 a.m., distant half a mile on the port bow, he sighted a small dark projection apparently standing up about a foot above the water. To ring " Full speed ahead " and starboard his helm was the work of an instant.

At ever-increasing speed the *Bloodhound* bore down on the suspicious object. Trembling with excitement, Mr Cocker, with glasses glued to his eyes, prayed the object would not dip. When they had but three hundred yards to go Mr Cocker dropped his glasses in amazement, then, staring wild-eyed, shrieked out at the top of his voice: " Submarine with *four* periscopes right ahead."

As Airmach reached the bridge the *Bloodhound* reached her quarry, and there was a slight bump and a perceptible report.

" We got her! I got her! We got her! " exulted Mr Cocker, executing a species of war-dance round the bridge.

" Got what, Mr Cocker ? "

" Submarine, sir! With four periscopes! Four of 'em, sir! Saw 'em with my own eyes. Must be one of their latest. Rammed her fair and square."

" Nonsense," said the Captain.

" But didn't you feel the bump ? " indignantly demanded the Gunner.

" Yes, I did feel something," admitted Airmach. " Turn the ship round at once," he concluded.

" Did you see anything, Johnson ? " queried Airmach, addressing the coxswain.

" Yessir! I see four hobjects a-sticking up in the water, and we 'it 'cm fair and square. Likewise I felt the blow and 'eard a noise, a kind o' underwater bang like."

" Great Scott! What an appalling stench ! " remarked Clambos, who arrived on the bridge at this juncture.

"Heavens! what on earth is it ? " said the Captain, as a fearful odour began to pervade the atmosphere.

The next instant every one who had a handkerchief was applying it to his nose. After a few moments of agony Clambos muttered through his handkerchief, " *It seems to come from fore'ard, sir.*"

An A.B. was dispatched to explore, and cautiously making his way on the forecastle, leant over the side.

He speedily withdrew his head, and, speaking with difficulty, was understood to shout that " We've gone and got the innards of an adjectival animaul round our bows/'

It was at this juncture that Mr Cocker really established his reputation. Without hesitating for an instant, he jammed both telegraphs to full speed astern. The *Bloodhound* came to rest, and then slowly gathered stern-way.

As she did so the honoured remains detached themselves from the bows, and the Mediterranean absorbed the carcass of a mule which had died

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for his country some weeks previously on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and had been drifting about with his legs in the air ever since.

As a result of this adventure Mr Cocker had a long interview with Lieutenant-Commander Airmach. The Gunner emerged therefrom wreathed in smiles; exactly what transpired was never officially published, but it may be noted that at the date of writing Lieutenant-Commander Airmach is a godfather in the Cocker family, that Mrs Cocker cherishes an official "strictly private" letter from Lieutenant-Commander Airmach which speaks in glowing terms of her husband's unremitting attention to duty and his stupendous zeal. It also insinuates that it was only Mr Cocker's extraordinary modesty that stood in the way of his being recommended for a V.C.

Mr Cocker is still serving with Lieutenant-Commander Airmach, so it may be presumed that his zeal has abated somewhat.

Quartermaster-Sergeant Basher is still throttling Huns in France with added viciousness.

DINING OUT

From LIEUTENANT FITZ PRICE, H.M.S. *Amiens*,
To LIEUTENANT JOHNSTON, H.M.S. *Hardy*.

" **E**XCUSE short notice. Will you dine with me to-night ? "

Such is a typical signal to receive at about the hour of 4 p.m. Always supposing Fitz Price is a friend whom one wishes to cultivate, one can, and personally I often do, counter the signal by replying: " Very sorry, can't get off. Please dine with me."

It is dangerous to go into details, such as " Very sorry, can't get a boat," or something like that, as should the Commander see the signal, he, knowing you haven't asked him for a boat, will take it as reflecting personally on himself, and also there is a slight danger that Lieutenant Fitz Price will reply: " We will fetch you."

It may happen that owing to some grave event, such as the supply of mess port giving out, you are not adverse to making the necessary effort and dining out.

Under these circumstances it is as well to ascertain:

(a) The probable state of the weather.

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(b) The distance the *Amiens* is anchored from the *Hardy*.

If the weather looks well, and the *Amiens* is within the two-mile radius, one would probably commit oneself to the great adventure, and send back a signal "W.M.P.", which, being interpreted, tells Fitz Price that you accept his invitation "With much pleasure."

I will now endeavour to describe, as accurately as possible, my own experience the other day, after sending the above signal to my particular Fitz Price.

At 5 p.m. I interviewed the Commander in *re* boats.

"What do you want," said he.

"I'm dining in the *Amiens*, and I'd like a boat, sir," said I.

"All right—send you over in the skiff—find your own way back—that suit you?"

"Well, sir, the *Amiens* is six ships down the line, and there'll be an ebb tide against me, so—^{so}—"

"Oh, I suppose you'll have to have the picket boat—well, you must be back by 11.15. What time do you want her?"

Drawing a bow at a venture, I said 7.20, as I imagined they dined at 7.30 in the *Amiens*. I was mistaken, for when I arrived there at 7.25 Fitz Price met me at the top of the gangway, and greeted me with the remark:

"Cheer-oh, old bird, I'd given you up—you're twenty-five minutes late—didn't you know we

were feeding at 7 Pip Emma, as the grabbles¹ say? "

I replied in the negative, and pointed out that wireless telepathy was still in the experimental stage.

George (no one calls Fitz Price by his surname) relieved the tension by announcing that, "Well, it doesn't matter a damn. I've only got as far as the fish, and I'd like to start again."

As we were walking across the quarter-deck he paused and, turning to me, said, "Oh, I say, how are you going to get back? "

"Well, I've got a perfectly good steamboat, and I've arranged for it to come and fetch me between now and dawn," I replied.

"You see," he continued, "it's a bit awkward——"

"What's a bit awkward," I inquired, for, knowing George since Osborne days, my suspicions were instantly aroused.

"Well, as a matter of fact," he said, "we got a signal at 6 p.m. putting us at half an hour's notice for steam, and there's a buzz floating round that we're slipping off at 8 p.m."

"The devil you did. And what the deuce do you suppose I'd do if you do shove off? "

"Oh, well, it will be all right," he answered in soothing tones. "Tommy was dining with me last week and we shoved off unexpected like, and we had to leave him on the buoy when we slipped. We gave him a bottle of sloe gin

¹ Grabbles, soldiers.

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and a box of matches, and as we went down harbour we signalled to his packet, 'Lieutenant Thompson is on number eight buoy, striking matches/ You'll be all right.'

Words failed me. George is irresistible, and I meekly followed him down to the wardroom.

"Excuse me, Mr President, and my guest, who's come at last," said George.

"Certainly," said the President. "Waiter, Mr Fitz Price has already had fish, so in the interests of national economy he will start at beef."

George protested volubly, and, as I expected, with entire success.

I need not enlarge on the subsequent entertainments, which consisted of a sing-song, followed up by a "rough house," in which a certain amount of furniture was broken.

At ii p.m. the *Amiens* showed no signs of going to sea, which was good, but my boat showed no sign of turning up, which was bad. Conversation with George languished, and I was not surprised to discover, in the course of conversation with the sub, that George had the morning watch. A guest after 11.30 becomes a nuisance if one is obliged to get up at 3.45 a.m. It was not until after 11.45 that my boat arrived. On going on deck I found it was raining and blowing, and that the picket boat had been obliged to take an urgent letter to the *Didon*, at the extreme end of the line—hence the delay. On entering the boat a playful wave covered

the bottom step of the ladder whilst I was on it. I called out to the coxswain, as a matter of form:

" Back to the ship, please."

A dripping figure in oilskins came aft:

" Please, sir, I've got to go to the *Quinten Castle* first to fetch the engineer commander, who went over at 9 p.m."

I groaned, and retreating into the cabin sat down in a pool of water.

A series of crashes, bumps, and hoarse shouts of:

" Give them the grass line."

" Why the devil don't you make fast forrard? "

" Put your helm to port, coxswain."

" Look out for our blinkin' ladder,"

apprised me that we were in the vicinity of the *Quinten Castle*. Groping my way out into the stern sheets, I requested the officer of the watch, who loomed high above us, the centre of a constellation of lanterns, to inform the engineer commander that his boat was waiting. Five minutes had elapsed when a voice from above sung out:

" I say. That officer in the boat—will you come down to the mess, please."

" No, thanks," I replied. " Did you tell our Chief I was in the boat ? "

" Yes, and our Commander said I was to bring you down."

I foresaw half an hour's wait, and as the motion alongside was decidedly unpleasant, I

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wearily clambered up the ladder and was taken below. A tremendous party was in full swing, the centre of attraction being our Chief, who was performing to the accompaniment of slow music his famous impersonation of a match-seller in Piccadilly Circus. It appeared that their chaplain had that day taken unto himself a wife, hence these festivities. The reverend gentleman was at the moment on his honeymoon, so the connexion seemed obscure, but such was the explanation given to me.

At 12.30 our engineer commander thought we'd really better go, and at 1 a.m. I got to bed, swearing I would never dine out again. And yet I know that if I got a signal from George to-morrow night I should go and dine with him. George is irresistible.

AT SEA

TIME: 11.50 p.m. Bang-bang on the cabin door, the heavy tread of a marine sentry, a crash as he trips over *the* chair, and then a flood of light bathes the tiny cabin.

Lieutenant John Smith, owing to long practice, is by this time thoroughly awake, but he closes his eyes and tries to believe it is all a dream and that it is only his imagination which is saying:

"Ten minutes to eight bells, and Mr 'ill's compliments, sir, and it—it's—rainin' and blowin' very 'ard—oil-skin and sea-boot weather, if I might 'azard a remark, sir ! "

This effort of chattiness on the part of the marine sentry rasps on Lieutenant Smith's sensitive nature.

Sitting up abruptly he remarks, " For Heaven's sake get out of my cabin ! "

The sentry withdraws and tells his own relief that " Smithy 'as the 'ell of a fat 'ead."

He also privately registers the resolve to mistake a quarter to twelve for ten minutes to the hour when next he calls Lieutenant Smith.

But let us return to this gentleman and observe

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attentively his movements and listen to his conversation.

Having carefully examined his wrist-watch he springs ponderously out of his bunk. The ship is pitching heavily, and it is with some bitterness that he notices a photograph of a girl—much esteemed—has fallen from its frame into his wash-basin.

He quickly dresses, putting on several layers of Shetland waistcoats, a special inflatable waistcoat, and, finally, sea boots, an oil-skin, a pair of reputed waterproof gloves and a sou'-wester hat.

He flings a pair of binoculars round his neck, and with a lingering look at his warm bunk, from which (O shame !) a hot-water bottle leers at him, he staggers on deck.

His progress to the bridge is lengthy and somewhat painful. Funnel guys and other wires strike him smartly across the face at regular intervals; a bluejacket hastening below for four hours' sleep rams him, then disappears in haste. Eventually Smith reaches Monkey Island,¹ where he and Mr Hill enter into a short conversation lasting a couple of minutes.

Mr Smith's contributions to this consist of a series of grunts, but it apparently satisfies his opposite number, for with a parting remark that the " sea-cows " are five miles on the port beam, Mr Hill retires to his bunk.

¹ Monkey Island is the name given to the fore upper bridge.

Let me explain, *en parenthese*, that the "sea-cows" are an extremely respectable squadron of cruisers, once attached to the Grand Fleet.

Amongst other yarns, passed from ship to ship, concerning the squadron, runs one to the effect that the "sea-cows" were late at a rendezvous. On inquiries being made by wireless, a reply was received as follows :

"We are zigzagging 90 degrees in each direction every quarter of an hour, in order to cope with the submarine menace."

But we have lost sight of our protege. Smith soon finds that it is in very truth oil-skin weather. About every ten seconds the cruiser buries her forecastle deep into creamy foam, then, without effort, she lifts, and her "flared bow" flings many tons of North Sea back along the upper deck.

Much of this is caught by the gale and, rising in a curved sheet, is hurled against the bridge.

Smith and his companion (for another unfortunate is also keeping a weary vigil) manage to dodge most of these by ducking behind a canvas screen at the critical moment, but every now and then they miscalculate and receive the penalty in the shape of stinging, blinding spray.

An indeterminate distance ahead a feeble blue light glimmers in the gloom. Smith watches it carefully—he must keep four hundred yards from that light, which marks the plunging stern of the next ahead. Whenever he can he sweeps the horizon and imagines dark spots, though

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common sense tells him that there is little chance of the Hun destroyer being out on such a night.

In such a manner the minutes pass, and slowly (oh! so slowly sometimes) they become hours.

As 2 a.m. rings out on the ship's bell, a dripping figure appears at his side, holding in one hand a pulpy mass of signal sheets.

" One or two signals come through, sir. Shall I read 'em ? "

" Carry on," says Smith.

The dripping one produces a shaded torch, switches it on, and intones various signals.

" One more, sir: ' Fleet will alter course at 2.15 to North/ "

" Thank Heaven for that/' comes from the other corner. " We shall have this sea behind us."

" 'Ear! 'Ear! to your sentiments, John, they does yer credit," adds Smith.

At 2.15 a.m. course is altered satisfactorily, though not before Mr Smith has gone through an unpleasant five minutes, during which he first lost his guiding stern light, then having increased to twenty knots in a flutter of excitement he suddenly noticed a black shape on his beam- However, with no lights showing such things often happen, and he drops into station without anyone being the wiser.

The rain has kindly stopped, and on the new course the bridge is comparatively dry.

Thoughts of cocoa obtrude themselves.

" Messenger! "

" Sir! "

" Go down to my cabin, and in my basin you will find a cup, saucer, and spoon, a coffee cup full of milk, another one full of brown sugar, a tin of cocoa, and an electric kettle. Bring it all up—got it ? "

" Yessir! "

In the fullness of time the small boy, aged about fifteen, reappears with the necessary impedimenta for cocoa. The kettle is plugged up, and the brew mixed.

Soon both officers are enjoying the cup that cheers but does not inebriate. Under cover of a screen pipes are lit, and Mr Smith, revived by the cocoa and soothed by the pipe, known as the " gum-bucket " to his pals, becomes quite affable.

" You know," he remarks, " that drop of leave we gathered in the other day seems like a dream, a vision punctuated with lovely ladies——"

" Yes," interposes the other, " it is like a dream until you look at your cheque-book. I had not observed mine closely until I got a screed from my bankers requesting me to do so. The shock was terrific."

" Ah, yes, Jacko ! but what a devil of a good time one had in those four days ! By the way, did you get engaged ? "

" No, thank Heaven, but I had a dashed narrow escape. It was on the river, and in the dusk, about the time you darken ships—savee ? and 'pon my word I just was losing my head, when our punt was rammed amidships by a tinker in

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a skiff, one of the 'grabbles,'¹ taking his young lady out for a row. Of course that brought me to. I sweated with fear when I thought about it."

Mr Smith murmured sympathetic condolences, then, apropos of nothing in particular, he remarked:

"It's marvellous how noble, how sympathetic some girls are! Now last leave I met——"

He was rudely interrupted.

"Look here, old chap, it's quarter to four. What about the reliefs?"

"Good lor! So it is. Here! Hi! messenger, nip down and tell the sentry to call Mr Blanche and Mr Burrell. Tell 'em it's a fine night, and see they turn out. . . . Signalmen, bring the books, and send a hand down to report 3.50 to the navigator! . . . Bosun's mate, send a hand up here to take the crockery down!"

At 4 a.m. a sleepy "figure arrives on the bridge, and takes over from Smith's companion. "Night, Smithy," says the latter, "I'll smooth your sheets for you as I pass your house."²

"See if that slug Blanche has turned out, would be more to the point," is Mr Smith's reply.

4.2 a.m.—"If there is one thing I abominate, it's being relieved late," remarks Mr Smith.

4.4 a.m.—"I say, Burrell, did you see if Blanche was turned out?"

"No, my eyes were not unstuck then," replies Burrell.

¹ Grabbles, soldiers.

² House, cabin.

4.6 a.m.—" Blast his sluggish liver ! Here, messenger! "

" Yessir."

" Take my compliments—*compliments*, do you savee, to Mr Blanche and tell him—Oh! here he is—wash out."

" Sorry, old sport," remarks the new arrival with forced joviality. " I'm a wee bit adrift."

" Not at all, I like it," says Smith, with heavy sarcasm. " Well, here you are. Course North, etc."

4.15 a.m.—" Sentry ! "

" Sir! "

" Call me at eight o'clock. A good shake."

" Very good, sir."

4.20 a.m.—Heavy breathing.

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