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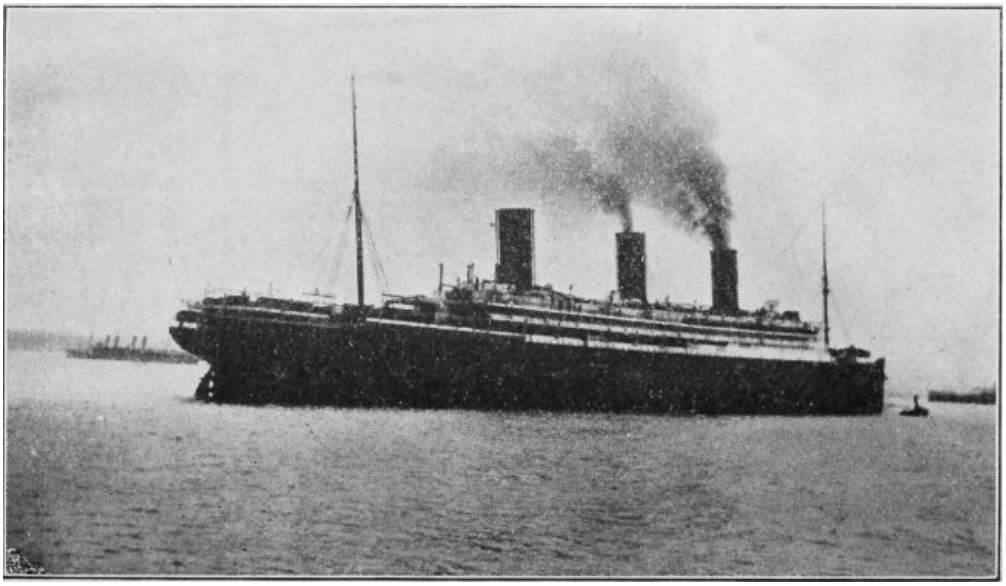
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE U. S. S. IMPERATOR, ONE OF THE TWO LARGEST SHIPS IN THE U. S. NAVY ***

A BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE

U. S. S. IMPERATOR

ONE OF THE TWO LARGEST
SHIPS IN THE U. S. NAVY



The U. S. S. IMPERATOR, one of the two largest ships in the world.

THE U. S. S. IMPERATOR

The Imperator was first commissioned in 1913, at Hamburg, Germany, by the Hamburg-American Steamship Line of Hamburg. She made regular passenger runs from Hamburg to New York from the time she was commissioned by her original owners up until the latter part of July, 1914. Her passenger quota was: 700 first class, 600 second class, 1000 third class and 1,800 fourth class. And on account of her up-to-date safety devices, she was one of the best patronized steamers belonging to the Hamburg American Line.

The Imperator was built by the Vulcan Steel Works of Hamburg. She has a length of 919 feet over all, a width of 98 feet 3 in., and a depth of 70 feet. She is electric lighted throughout, and has a very powerful wireless set—installed after being taken over by the Navy, and supplanting the old set—together with submarine signalling devices, watertight bulkheads and doors, which are opened and closed by hydraulic power. She carries 2,000 tons of permanent ballast.

The maximum speed of the Imperator is 22 knots, about 25 land miles, and she burns about 850 tons of coal per day. Her steaming radius is about 5,000 miles, and in port, under ordinary circumstances, she burns about 60 tons per day. The total capacity of her coal bunkers is 8,550 tons. The maximum draft when she is loaded and ready for sea is 40 feet and 6 inches, and in a single trip across the Atlantic her draft diminishes to 36 feet and 4 inches.

Her troop carrying capacity is 1,000 officers, 966 non-commissioned officers, and 7,939 enlisted men of the Army. Her total Naval complement is 2200 officers and enlisted men of the regular Navy.

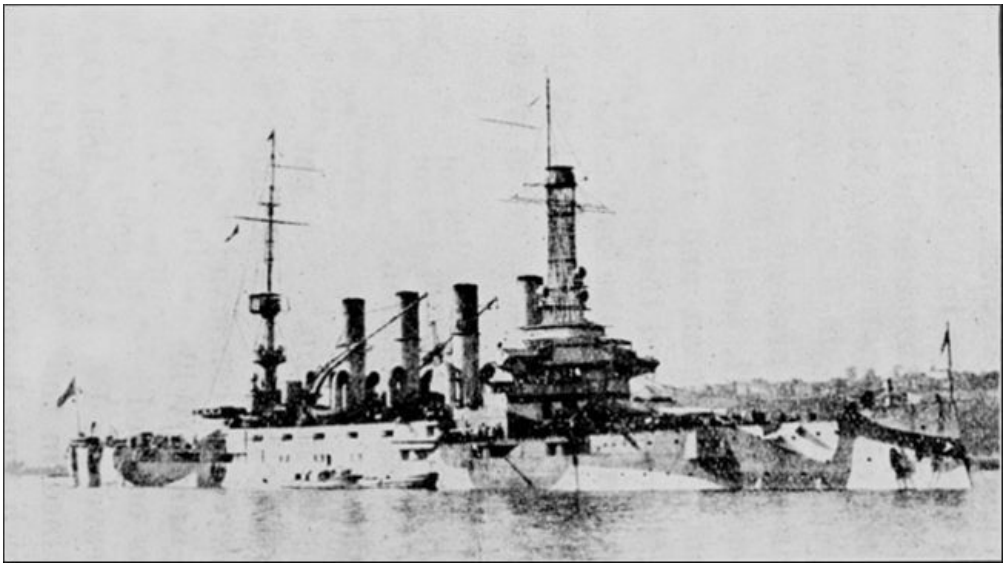
Captain Casey B. Morgan, Commanding.

CAPTAIN CASEY B. MORGAN, U. S. N.

The Commanding Officer of the Imperator is Casey B. Morgan, Captain, U. S. N. He graduated from the Naval academy in 1888, and his first cruise in a seagoing vessel of the Navy was in the U. S. S. Atlanta. He took part in a number of campaigns and received his first commission, that of Ensign, in 1890. While in this rank he served in the Alert, Dolphin, and the Michigan—now the Wolverine; the Raleigh during the Cuban blockade. He sailed for the Asiatic in the Raleigh in December, 1897, and arrived at Hong Kong, China, on Feb. 18th, 1898, and it was upon the arrival of the Dolphin that the destruction of the Maine was learned. He served with Admiral Dewey as a Lieutenant (jg) during the Spanish-American war, and took part in the Battle of Manila Bay, also the bombardment of the city of Manila and the capture of Subic Bay and Corregidor.

Captain Morgan served in many vessels since the war, his service has been both varied and honorable. He was promoted up the ladder of success steadily, and in 1910 he received his commission as a Commander in the Navy. Captain Morgan was the first officer in the Navy to take a ship of the Navy through the St. Lawrence River and canals to Chicago, that vessel was the Dubuque. Captain Morgan was the senior Naval officer present during the Cuban outbreak in 1911, and was S. O. P. during the Santa Dominican and Haitian Revolutions in that year and the one following. He was in command of the battleship Minnesota at Vera Cruz in 1914, and was at the War College, Newport, R. I., when we declared war on Germany.

His first command during the war was the Sixth Squadron, Patrol Force, with Hampton Roads as its base, and the Albany as the flagship. The patrol was ordered to the other side, and Captain Morgan was ordered to command the Agamemnon, the ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II. In April, 1918, he was ordered to the staff of Vice-Admiral Gleaves as Force Transport Officer, and remained in that capacity until May 23, at which time he took command of the Great Imperator.



The U. S. S. North Carolina which operated with the Force.

PLACING HER IN COMMISSION

It was a big job, placing the Imperator in commission for the first time by American Navalmen. Fresh from the hands of the enemy into the hands of proud Yankee sailors was the fate of this great leviathan of the deep. She had been tied up alongside the docks at Hamburg, Germany, for four years and nine months, and while her engines and boilers were in fair condition, they were, nevertheless new to the men who were first to sail her under the Stars and Stripes.

Getting a crew to man her was also a big proposition. Without men she would not serve us our purpose, so her first commanding officer had to draw his crew from several naval bases in France, London, and Cardiff, Wales. The Imperator was brought to Brest by a German crew, including a commodore, two captains and a score of other German officers. She was officially placed in commission with Old Glory flying proudly at her flagstaff on the 5th day of May, 1919. Captain John K. Robison, U. S. Navy, was her first commanding officer, and Commander Laird, U. S. Navy, was her first executive officer, and 2500 Yankee fighting men comprised her crew.

Many of the Imperator's officers and enlisted men had been on foreign station for some time, and her commanding officer was ordered from Admiral Sims' headquarters in London.

SHE SAILS FOR THE UNITED STATES

She sailed from Brest on May 15, with 1500 officers of the Army, 300 enlisted men of the Army, many distinguished civilians and 500 nurses on board. She left in company with the Leviathan, and the two vessels had an exciting trip across the Atlantic. While it was not officially announced as a race, it was a close run all the way over. The Leviathan won by a few hours, but be it remembered that the "Levi" had made about twenty trips over, they were hardened to the transport duty, and they knew their ship. When we get a little more accustomed to the packet, we'll show 'em how to put the old Imperator through the water!

The Imperator arrived in New York on the 22nd of May, after a delightful passage over, and she tied up to the dock along with her sistership, the Leviathan. Two of the world's greatest ships—Leviathan and Imperator—at the same dock, and best of all the dock was in the good old U. S. A., and greatest of all, they had the American flag floating over them.

The Imperator lay at the dock at Hoboken until June 3rd, at which time she sailed for Brest. During her stay in port she was given a complete overhauling, standee bunks were installed by the thousands, a new wireless outfit was placed on board, as was a complete and up-to-date printing department, installed by John F. Kennedy, chief printer, who was sent to her from the staff of Admiral Sims. She also took on board tons and tons of fresh provisions and supplies.

It was the next day, after her first arrival in the United States after an absence of nearly five years, that the Imperator received her present commanding officer, C. B. Morgan, Captain, U. S. Navy, and her present executive officer. Commander R. A. White. Many other officers to head important departments were also received.

THE CRUISER AND TRANSPORT FORCE

The Force to which the U. S. S. Imperator belongs and with which she has operated since being taken over by the U. S. Navy is the greatest force of vessels ever operated under any nation's flag. At the time the Cruiser and Transport Force was first commissioned, early in April, 1917, there were only a handfull of vessels ready to carry the thousands of soldiers who were then being assembled all over the country, to France. However, by the time the first sailing date arrived—June 14th, 1917—we had equipped and ready to sail thirty odd vessels.

The Force has been, and is to-day, under the command of Vice-Admiral Albert Gleaves, U. S. Navy, who commanded all of our troopships, transports and cruisers during our two years of war against the Central Powers of Germany; the untiring efforts of Admiral Gleaves, his staff of officers and enlisted men is now known to the world. Before the armistice was signed, and before the Force begun to diminish, there were one hundred and thirty-nine vessels in commission and extending their efforts in bringing our soldiers back to their homeland.

There are ships operating in six different divisions, the largest of which is the New York Division, with headquarters at Hoboken, N. J. To transport safely approximately 1,750,000 troops to France and England, together with their fighting equipment, their food and supplies and food for our Allies, who had been three years at war, was no small undertaking—it required hundreds of ships and thousands of officers and enlisted men to accomplish the feat, but it HAS BEEN DONE!

Not too much praise can be given to the officers and men of the Navy and especially those of the Cruiser and Transport Force, whether they made one trip or a dozen. Every man who had his shoulder to the great wheel which was pushed ahead until that spoke arrived which had inscribed upon it VICTORY, deserves a like amount of credit for the glorious accomplishments in the world's greatest struggle for humanity, justice and the final eradication of militarism and autocracy.

The "Y" gun, one of the valuable developments during the war.

HER SISTER SHIP

The sister ship to the Imperator, and largest vessel in the world, is the Leviathan. The Leviathan is 954 feet in length, and has a beam of one hundred feet. She displaces 68,000 tons of water and has a mean draft of 40 feet of water; has a speed of 24 knots, and carries 8,750 tons of coal when loaded and ready for sea. She was also one of the Hamburg-American Line steamers, and was known as the Vaterland before being taken over by the Navy.

The Leviathan was more fortunate in the cause of the Allied nations, as she was on this side of the Atlantic when war was declared. The Imperator was on the other side and she never ventured to sea again.

The "Levi," as she is affectionately known by her crew, transported more than 110,000 troops to France and England before the armistice was signed, and has been bringing them back at a 12,000 rate a trip ever since. The Imperator was not taken over—as has been said—and has only made three successful trips with troops, civilians and nurses since the armistice. There is one redeeming feature about the "Imp" and that is the fact that all the troops and passengers she does carry—are homeward bound! Home to their beloved land for which they fought and for which they unstintingly offered their lives to defend. The fact that it is home matters not so much, but the fact that their homes are in the great United States means all to them!

SECRETARY DANIELS VISITS SHIP

While in Brest, shortly after the ship was placed in commission, and before she sailed on her maiden voyage under the Red, White and Blue ensign, Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, visited the ship and made an address to the ship's company. He expressed himself as being sorry that he could not make the first trip with the new and all-American crew of one of the world's greatest vessels. "It is up to us (the Navy) to get the soldier boys home, and then we will go home ourselves," said the Secretary.

Transcriber's note:

The following corrections have been made:
"runs from Hambrug to New York" -> Hamburg
"Ensign in 1890" -> Ensign, in 1890
"is 1,000 offiicers" -> officers
"Santa Domincan" -> Santa Dominican
"be it reembered" -> remembered
"packet, We'll" -> we'll
"militarism and autrocracy" -> autocracy
"since the the armistice" -> superfluous "the" removed
"import-and departments" -> important

Spacing after punctuation standardized, inconsistent hyphenation and archaic spelling retained.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE U. S. S. IMPERATOR, ONE OF THE TWO LARGEST SHIPS IN THE U. S. NAVY ***

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