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## FROM DARTMOUTH TO THE DARDANELLES

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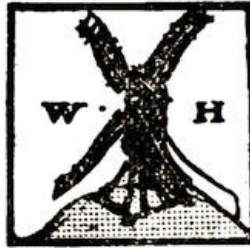
[iii]

# FROM DARTMOUTH TO THE DARDANELLES

A MIDSHIPMAN'S LOG

EDITED BY  
HIS MOTHER

LONDON



WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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[iv]

[v]

## FOREWORD

*THE responsibility for the publication of this book lies with me, and with me alone. I trust that that great "Silent Service," one of whose finest traditions is to "do" and not to "talk," will see in it no indiscretion.*

*To state that these pages make no claim to literary merit seems almost superfluous, since they are simply a boy's story of ten months of the Great War as he saw it. In deference to the said tradition the names of officers and ships concerned have been suppressed—those of the midshipmen mentioned are all fictitious.*

*The story has been compiled from a narrative written by my son during a short spell of sick leave in December 1915. Considering that all his diaries were lost when his ship was sunk, it may at least be considered a not inconsiderable feat of memory. Originally it was intended only for private circulation, but many who have read it have urged me to put it into print; and I have decided to do so in the hope that their prediction that it would prove of interest to the public may be justified.*

[vi]

*In so far as was practicable, I have tried to tell the story in my son's own words; but it may possibly be argued that at times words and phrases are such as would not normally be used by a boy of barely sixteen. To that charge I can only reply that in the main even the words are his own, and I have faithfully reproduced his ideas and opinions.*

*Those who have come in contact with the boys who left us as children, and returned to us dowered by their tremendous experiences with knowledge and insight so far in advance of their years, will find nothing incongruous in reflections commonly foreign to such extreme youth. It is one of the logical results of the fiery crucible of War.*

*Let it be remembered that these boys have looked Death in the face—not once only, but many times; and that, like our soldiers in the trenches—who no longer say of their "pals" "He is dead," but only "He has gone west"—they have learned to see in the Great Deliverer not a horror, not an end, but a mighty and glorious Angel, setting on the brows of their comrades the crown of immortality; and so when the call comes they, like Sir Richard Grenville of old, "with a joyful spirit die."*

[vii]

*What would be unnatural is that their stupendous initiation could leave them only the careless children of a few months back.*

*The mobilisation of the Dartmouth Cadets came with a shock of rather horrified surprise to a certain section of the public, who could not imagine that boys so young could be of any practical utility in the grim business of War. There was, indeed, after the tragic loss of so many of them in the Cressy, the Aboukir, and the Hogue, an outburst of protest in Parliament and the Press. In the first shock of grief and dismay at the sacrifice of such young lives, it was perhaps not unnatural; but it argued a limited vision. Did those who agitated for these Cadets to be removed from the post of danger forget, or did they never realise, that on every battle-ship there is a large number of boys, sons of the working classes, whose service is indispensable?*

[viii]

*It seemed to me that if my son was too young to be exposed to such danger, the principle must apply equally to the son of my cook, or my butcher, or my gardener, whose boys were no less precious to them than mine was to me.*

*In the great band of Brothers who are fighting for their country and for the triumph of Right and Justice there can be no class distinction of values. Those who belong to the so-called "privileged classes" can lay claim only to the privilege of being leaders—first in the field and foremost at the post of danger. It is the only possible justification of their existence; and at the post of danger they have found their claim to priority hotly and gloriously contested by the splendid heroes of the rank and file.*

*Presumably the Navy took our boys because they were needed, and no one to-day will feel inclined to deny that those Dartmouth Cadets have abundantly proved their worth.*

*For the rest, if there be any merit in this record, the credit lies with the boy who provided the material from which it has been written: for any feebleness, inadequacy, or indiscretion the blame must fall on that imperfect chronicler—*

[ix]



# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I DARTMOUTH COLLEGE	<a href="#">1</a>
II MANŒUVRES	<a href="#">12</a>
III THE BEGINNING OF THE "REAL THING"	<a href="#">24</a>
IV WE JOIN OUR SHIP	<a href="#">34</a>
V ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS	<a href="#">49</a>
VI WE LEAVE HOME WATERS	<a href="#">65</a>
VII FROM EGYPT TO MOMBASA	<a href="#">88</a>
VIII THE BOMBARDMENT OF DAR-ES-SALAAM	<a href="#">118</a>
IX ORDERED TO THE DARDANELLES	<a href="#">130</a>
X IN ACTION	<a href="#">140</a>
XI THE SINKING OF THE SHIP	<a href="#">152</a>
XII HOME	<a href="#">165</a>

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# CHAPTER I

## DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

My first term at Dartmouth commenced on the 7th of May 1914—previously I had, of course, been through the regulation two years at Osborne College in the Isle of Wight.

Most of my term-mates came down from London by the special cadet train, and I should have greatly preferred to have travelled with them, but my home was so far away that I had to do the journey in solitary state, and when I arrived at Kingswear Station at 9.30 on that beautiful spring evening, I found myself a belated last comer.

A servant had been sent to meet me, and when he had collected my luggage we embarked on the *Otter*, one of the steamboats belonging to the College, which was lying alongside the pontoon. The passage of the river Dart only took a few minutes, and we landed at Sandquay, where are situated the engineering shops, in which no small proportion of my brief time at Dartmouth was destined to be spent. Compared with the collection of low, one-storied, bungalow-like buildings which comprise the Osborne premises, the College, standing high upon a hill above the river, appeared to me a very imposing structure, and pleasantly suggestive of a distinct advance towards the goal of my ambitions—a goal destined to be reached so swiftly, and by such unexpected paths, as I at that moment little dreamed of.

[2]

A long flight of stone steps leads up through the grounds from the workshops, and after climbing these I found myself in the big entrance-hall of the College, where I was met by a warrant officer, who took me to his office, and, after filing my health certificate, showed me the way to the vast mess-room where the five hundred or so of cadets in residence have all their meals. Here I had supper, consisting of cold meat and bread-and-cheese; and when I had finished, the gunner took me to my dormitory, pointed out my sea-chest and bed, and then left me to turn in.

[3]

By this time it was about 10.30, my messmates were all asleep, and the long room was only dimly illuminated by the "dead lights" which are kept burning all night, as no matches or candles are allowed. Removing my boots, I tiptoed round the chests adjoining mine to see by the nameplates who my immediate neighbours might be, and then, folding up my clothes in regulation fashion, I jumped into bed and was soon fast asleep.

At 6 o'clock next morning we were all awakened by the *réveillé*, and trooped down in a body to the bath-rooms for the cold plunge with which, unless excused by doctor's orders, every cadet must begin the day. Then, having been informed by the senior cadets who were placed in authority over us that if we were not dressed in one and a half minutes the consequences would be unpleasant, we threw on as many clothes as possible, and ran out of the dormitory surreptitiously carrying boots, ties and collars, and finished dressing in the gun-room. Then we waited about, greeted friends, and exchanged reminiscences of the past "leave" until summoned to breakfast at 7.30.

[4]

This meal was served in the mess-room in which I had had my supper the night before, and we all scrambled and fought our way up some stairs to a gallery where were situated the four long tables reserved for the use of the junior term.

Breakfast over, the cadet captains (who correspond to the monitors of our public schools) showed us over the College grounds, and drew our attention to the various rules, regulations, and notices posted up at different points. We also paid a visit to the canteen, where may be purchased ices, buns, sweets, and similar delicacies dear to all schoolboys. As a more detailed description of my first day would not be particularly interesting, I will just describe one in mid-term as fairly typical of the College routine.

[5]

At 6 o'clock, roused by the *réveillé*, we scurry to the bath-room, take the prescribed cold plunge, and then dress. Hot cocoa and ship's biscuit are served in the mess-room and followed by an hour's study. At 7.30 "fall in" in the long corridor called the "covered way," which leads from the dormitories to the mess-room. All the other terms having gone in to breakfast, our particular batch of cadets is called to "attention." Then comes the order: "Right turn! Double

march!"—and helter-skelter, as fast as we can lay foot to the ground, we rush along the hundred yards of corridor to the mess-room door and fight our way through that narrow opening. Woe betide the unfortunate who falls in the *mêlée*! He will get trampled on by all behind, and when finally he is able to rise to his feet, dazed and bruised, after the rush has gone by, he will be assisted on his way by the unsympathetic toes of the cadet captain's boots. Moral: Keep your footing!

After a brief grace we fall to and devour porridge with brown sugar and fresh, creamy, Devon milk, rolls and butter, supplemented by kippers, bacon and eggs, or some similar fare.

As no grace is said after breakfast, each cadet is at liberty to leave as soon as he has finished, and to repair to his own gun-room until the bugle sounds for divisions at 9 o'clock. At the call we all "fall in" by terms in the big hall which is called the quarter-deck. The Lieutenant of each term then inspects his cadets and reports to the Commander that they are "correct," after which the Commander in his turn reports the whole six terms to the Captain. Then the Chaplain comes in, the Commander calls all present to "attention," and gives the order "Off caps." The Padre gives out the number of some familiar hymn, and, after a few verses have been sung, he reads some short prayers.

Then caps are replaced, and, in obedience to the word of command, the respective terms in order of seniority march off to the studies.

Let it be supposed that my term has to go to the engineering works at Sandquay on this particular morning.

Procedure is as follows: "Divisions" over, we fall in on a path outside the College and the Engineer Lieutenant marches us down to the workshops. Dismissed from marching order we go into the lobby and shift into overalls, after which we repair in batches to the various shops. Here we construct and fit together parts of the many different types of marine engines; dealing in the process with such work as the casting, forging, and turning of steel and brass.

After two hours of this practical work we shift out of our overalls, resume our uniform jackets and caps, and go to one of the lecture-rooms where, for the remaining hour an engineer officer instructs us in the theory of motors, and turbines, and various other engineering technicalities. Then we are again fallen in outside the shops and marched up to the College, where we have a "break" of a quarter of an hour in which to collect the books required for the succeeding hour of ordinary school work.

One o'clock finds us once more assembled in the covered way to double along to the mess-room for lunch.

After this meal every one must stay in his place until grace is said, when each term rises in order of seniority and doubles out of the mess-room to the different gun-rooms.

It may be here noted that everything at Dartmouth is done at the "double," *i.e.* at a run. Strolling around with your hands in your pockets after the fashion of most public schools is of course not allowed in an establishment where naval discipline prevails.

After half an hour allowed for digestion we collect our books and go to the studies for another two hours' work.

At 4 o'clock we are mustered again for "quarters" as at "divisions" in the morning, and when dismissed double away to shift into flannels for recreation.

The choice of play and exercise is very varied, but no one is allowed to "loaf." Every cadet must do what is called a "log," and the manner in which he has spent his recreation time is duly entered against his name each day. The "log" in question may consist of a game of cricket, a two-mile row on the river, two hours' practice at the nets followed by the swimming of sixty yards in the baths, or a set of tennis or fives.

Any cadet who cannot swim must learn without delay. The bath, eight feet deep at one end and three feet at the other, is thirty yards long. It is opened at 6 p.m., and there is always a large attendance. A spring board for diving is provided, as well as various ropes suspended six feet above the water by means of which the more agile spirits swing themselves along, as monkeys swing from tree to tree.

All exercise is purposely strenuous, for the four years' preparation is a test of physical as much as of mental strength, and

[6]

[7]

[8]

[9]



every year some boys are "chucked," to their bitter disappointment, because they cannot attain to the standard of physical fitness indispensable for the work they, as naval officers, would be expected to perform. Defective eyesight is one of the commonest causes of rejection, for it is obvious that full normal vision is essential for the Navy.

[10]

On the river there is the choice of two kinds of boat—five-oared gigs and skiffs. A long and muddy creek, known as Mill Creek, branches off from the river just above the College. Great trees overhang its banks on either side and, if one cares to risk disobedience to orders, a very pleasant way of passing an afternoon is to tie up one's boat in the shade and settle down with a book and some smuggled cigarettes. But it is well to remember that the tide here is very treacherous. Once I saw three cadets marooned on a mud-bank quite forty yards from the water's edge.

At 6.30 every one must be within the College buildings, and by a quarter to 7 all cadets must have shifted into proper uniform and be ready for tea.

[11]

At 7.30 there is "prep.," which lasts till 8.30, when the "cease fire" bugle sounds. Then the band plays on the quarter-deck, and there is dancing till 9, after which every one "falls in" for five minutes' prayer. Then the terms double away to their dormitories. At 9.30 the Commander goes "rounds," and every one must be in bed. As soon as he has passed lights are put out and the day is over.

[12]

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## CHAPTER II

### MANŒUVRES

THIS summer term of 1914, destined surely to be the most momentous in the whole history of the College, nevertheless pursued its normal course until July 18, on which date began the great test mobilisation of the "Fleet in being," to which we had all been eagerly looking forward for some weeks.

It is, perhaps, too soon to speculate on the influence which this most opportune concentration of sea power brought to bear on the course of the War. Was it due to foresight? Was it a deliberate warning to trespassers not to tread on Great Britain's toes? Or was it just a gorgeous piece of luck? Who shall say? Certainly not a mere "snottie"! Anyway, it is a matter of history that after manœuvres the Fleet was not demobilised, with the result that the swift, murderous assault on our open sea-coast towns which, judging by the light of subsequent events, was even then in preparation, was happily averted.

[13]

The cadets were all sent to Portsmouth, from where they embarked on the various ships to which they had been respectively appointed. As a description of my personal experiences I think I will insert here the copy of a letter I wrote to my mother on my return to the College, omitting only some personal details of no interest to the public.

"Dartmouth College, Devon: *July 25, 1914.*

"DARLING MOTHER—

"Thanks so much for your letter and enclosures.... Now to describe the mobilisation. It was the finest thing I've ever seen! I *did* enjoy myself. When we were just coming into Gosport in the train, we saw an airship and two aeroplanes above us. We went on board the tank-ship *Provider*, which took us to our respective ships. While we were waiting to start we saw flights of aeroplanes like birds chasing each other through the air, and a big airship was slowly hovering about low down on the horizon. The harbour was teeming with dashing little launches rushing about commanded by 'snotties'! Outside the sight was wonderful. Simply *miles* of stately battle-ships, and swarms of little torpedo craft. As we steamed out the *Astra Torres*, a huge airship, hovered over us. Just as we got abreast the line they fired a salute of 12-pounders to the King. It

[14]

was lovely seeing the little white spurts of smoke from the sides of the huge ships. We went alongside the *Irresistible*, and soon afterwards saw the *Formidable* signalling to us a message from my ship—the *Lord Nelson*.

“Almost directly afterwards her launch steamed alongside towing a boat for our luggage. There were no ‘snotties’ on board my ship and we had to take their duty, and were treated just like midshipmen. It was absolutely ripping! When we got on board we went down to the gun-room flat and deposited our bags and ‘macks.’ Then we went up on deck and a Petty Officer showed us the 9·2 and 12 inch turrets, and how they worked. Then we set to and started to explore the ship. Then came supper of sardines and bread-and-butter and ginger-beer in the gun-room.

[15]

“Then we went on deck and looked at everything and climbed up to the searchlight platforms till the searchlight display began. That was splendid. The beams seemed to pierce everywhere. They described arcs and circles in the sky and swept up and down, and round and round, and from right forward to right aft. This went on for about an hour, and then we turned into our hammocks. At first I couldn’t get into mine, but when I had succeeded, and as soon as I had kicked the foot out as the hammock was too short for me, I found that it was more comfortable than a bed. The only thing that kept me awake was the ship’s company ‘sing-song,’ but I did not mind as it was all very lovely and novel, and they sang such topping sea-songs.

[16]

“We turned out in the morning and had a bath and dressed, and had a topping breakfast, and then went on deck. We had to officer parties of seamen at ‘divisions.’ I was in charge of the ship’s boys. After that we had church, which was on the men’s mess-deck. I sat just opposite the galley whence emerged an odour of varied foods cooking, and I was so far away from the Padre that I never heard a word and nearly went to sleep. After church we shifted from our best clothes and started exploring again. We looked in the engine-room and went up a mast, etc. Then we had lunch. After lunch we went all round the Fleet in a little steam launch, and as the *Lord Nelson* was flagship of the 2nd Fleet we conveyed instructions to a lot of ships. When we came back we had tea, and then went on deck and ragged about for some time. Having had supper we went on deck and got into conversation with a sporting Lieutenant, who told us all sorts of things about the Navy. While he was talking to us the ‘liberty’ men came off from the shore, and one bandsman was so drunk he fell in the sea trying to get out of the boat. Then we turned in and I fell asleep almost at once. Next morning we got up early and watched them weighing anchor. Then we saw the 1st Fleet slowly get under way. When they had all passed we got under way and steamed down Spithead at the head of our line. When we got near the royal yacht, ship was lined and we fell in on the after turret to cheer the King. That was grand! To see the stately ships steam by and hear their ship’s companies cheering for their King!

[17]

“Then we went below and shifted into flannels and put on our overalls and had to get down into the engine-room and boiler-room to be shown round. In the upper part of the boiler-room the temperature was about 110° Fahrenheit, I should think! The rails of the steps were so hot that they blistered my hands. Then the 1st Fleet fought us in a sham fight out in mid-channel, and there was a beastly row when each ship started firing her 12-pounders.

[18]

“In the middle of it the 1st Fleet Destroyer flotilla dashed up to within 400 yards, intending to torpedo us, and we fired our 12-pounders as fast as we could load them. The flotilla then turned round and steamed away as fast as they could. I think we were supposed to have beaten them off. At 4 o’clock the battle ended and our Fleet remained at sea all that night. We arrived at Portland at 8 in the morning, and after breakfast we disembarked and returned to the College by train. I must stop now as it is time for prayers. Fuller details in the leave. Best love from

— — —  
“P.S. My shirts haven’t come yet, I’ve just looked.”

• • • • •  
That “leave” never came. How little we dreamed at the time of the mobilisation that we were so near to the “real thing”! But I must not anticipate.

[19]

• • • • •  
On the 25th July, three days after the events just recorded, the

examinations began.

The diplomatic struggle in Europe resulting from Austria's note to Serbia formed the chief topic of discussion in the College, but no particular excitement prevailed until Tuesday the 28th of July, when we learned that Austria had declared war on Serbia, and Russia had ordered a partial mobilisation of her army.

That afternoon when we were all fallen in at "quarters," and after the terms had been reported by their officers to the Commander, and were awaiting the customary dismissal, the Captain came on to the quarter-deck, and, going up to the Commander, said a few words to him in an undertone. The Commander saluted, and, turning to the ranks, gave the order, "Cadets, 'shun!"

Every one sprang to "attention," all eyes fixed upon the Captain. He said: "I have just received this telegram from the Admiralty." Then in a clear, ringing voice he read the dispatch, which, to the best of my recollection, ran as follows—

"In the event of war, prepare to mobilise at a moment's notice."

After a short pause during which a universal murmur of excitement rippled through the ranks, he continued:

"If I receive the order to mobilise the College, all cadets will be recalled immediately whatever they may be doing. You will proceed at once to your dormitories, where you will pack your chests, and move them out of the dormitories to the nearest pathway, and stand by to load them on the carts and wagons which will convey them down to the pier. You will then fall in in terms on the quarter-deck to draw your pay. I will have lists of the ships to which cadets are appointed posted up in the gun-rooms as soon as they are made out. The Hawke and Drake terms will go to Portsmouth; the Grenville and Blakes to Chatham, and the Exmouth and St. Vincents with the ships' company to Devonport. The Chatham batch will leave the College first, followed by the Portsmouth batch. Those going to Devonport will leave last. A year ago I promised the Admiralty to clear the College of all cadets and active service ratings in eight hours. I trust to *you* to make this promise good."

Then with a word to the Commander he left the quarter-deck.

The Commander turned to the ranks and gave the order "Stand at ease," and then to the officer of the sixth term he said: "Carry on, please."

On the way to the dormitories and while shifting wild speculation was rife. Very little cricket was played that afternoon. Groups of excited cadets collected about the playgrounds and discussed in all their bearings the two absorbing questions—"Would England declare war? SHOULD we be mobilised?"

Luckily for our education only two more exams remained to be done, since we were far too excited to give them much attention. What after all were examinations compared with the possibility of such tremendous adventures as had suddenly loomed up on our horizon!

At this time, as the reader will no doubt remember, portentous events followed each other in such quick succession that more excitement was crammed into a single day than into any ordinary week or even month. On the Wednesday morning when we assembled in the gun-room a rush was made for the notice board, on which had been posted the list of ships to which in the event of war we had been appointed. These were eagerly scanned, and excitement rose to fever pitch. To see one's name in print as appointed to a real definite ship seemed to bring it all so much nearer: to materialise what up till then had seemed more like some wild and exciting dream of adventure than a sober fact.

However, by Thursday morning no order to mobilise had been received and hope died down again, and by Friday, after the manner of the fox in the fable, we were all consoling one another for the unattainable by such remarks as: "After all, it will be much better fun to go on leave next Tuesday than to fight any beastly Germans."

[20]

[21]

[22]

[23]

[24]

# CHAPTER III

## THE BEGINNING OF THE "REAL THING"

"MOBILISE!" On Saturday the 1st of August, the Captain, standing at the main entrance to the College, opened the fateful telegram which contained only that one momentous word. It had come at last! Our dreams were realised: it was *war!* But—did *one* of us I wonder even dimly imagine the stern and terrible business that war would be?

The news reached me as I was leaning against the balcony of the gymnasium talking to a friend after a bout at the punch-ball. A dishevelled fifth-termer burst through the swing doors and shouted at the top of his voice "Mobilise!"

At first all were incredulous. Murmurs of "Only a scare"—"I *don't* think!" etc., etc., rose on all sides; but, after the messenger had kicked two or three junior cadets through the door with emphatic injunctions to "get a move on *quick*"—the rest of us were convinced, and we hurled ourselves out of the building and away to the College.

[25]

Already an excited crowd was surging through the grounds: some with mouths still full from the canteen, others clutching cricket-pads and bats, and yet others but half-dressed, with hair still dripping from the swimming bath.

Masters and officers on motor bikes and "push" bikes were careering over the surrounding country to recall the cadets who had gone out on leave, and to commandeer every kind of vehicle capable of carrying the big sea-chests down to the river.

In gun-room and dormitory clothes, books, and boots were thrown pell-mell into these same chests, which, when crammed to their utmost capacity, were closed with a series of bangs which rang out like the sound of pistol shots. Perspiring cadets, with uniform thrown on anyhow, dragged and pushed them through doors and passages with sublime disregard of the damage to both.

[26]

Once outside willing hands loaded them into every conceivable vehicle, from motor lorries to brewers' drays, and these conveyed them post haste to the pier, where they were loaded on the steamer *Mew*, and ferried across the river to Kingswear Station.

For two hours the work of transportation went on, and then all cadets turned to and strapped together such games, gear, and books as were to be sent home.

At 5.30 every one fell in on the quarter-deck, and as each received his pay went off to the mess-room to get something to eat before setting out on the train journey. After this we all repaired to the gunner's office to telegraph to our homes that we were ordered away on active service. My wire was as follows: "General mobilisation. Embarked *H.M.S.* '—,' Chatham. Will write at once"—and when received was a terrible shock to my poor mother, who had not had the faintest idea that we "first termers" would in any eventuality be sent to sea.

[27]

I belonged to the first, or Blake, term, which it will be remembered was due to go to Chatham, and consequently ours was the first batch to leave.

At 6.30 we "fell in" in two ranks outside the College, and our messmates gave us a parting cheer as we marched off down to Dartmouth. Here we had a sort of triumphal progress through crowds of cheering townsfolk to the quay. Embarked on the *Mew* we were quickly ferried across to the station, where a long train was in waiting. Ten of us, who had been appointed to the same ship, secured two carriages adjoining one another, and then scrambled hurriedly to the bookstalls for newspapers, magazines, and cigarettes. These secured, we took our seats and shortly afterwards the train drew out of the station, and our long journey had begun.

Thus it was that, three weeks before my fifteenth birthday, I went to war!

[28]

The journey to Chatham was likely to be long and tedious. After all the excitement of the last few hours a reaction soon set in and we longed for sleep, so we settled ourselves as best we might on the floor, on the seats, and even on the racks.

At first I shared a seat with another cadet, sitting feet to feet and resting our backs against the windows; but this position did not prove very conducive to slumber, and at 1 o'clock I changed places

with the boy in the rack. This was little better, for I found it awfully narrow, and whenever I raised my head even an inch or two, *bump* it went against the ceiling of the carriage.

At 2 a.m. I changed round again and tried the floor, where I managed to get an hour and a half's broken sleep till 3.30, when we arrived at Chatham.

Three-thirty a.m. is a horrid hour, chilly and shivery even on an August night. The train drew up at a place where the lines ran along the road close to the Royal Naval Barracks. [29]

Yawning, and trying to rub the sleepiness out of our eyes, we proceeded to drag our chests out of the luggage vans and pile them on the road, while the officer in charge of us went to find out what arrangements had been made for getting us to our ships.

In about twenty minutes he returned with another officer and informed us that none of the ships in question were then at Chatham, and we would have to stay at the barracks until further instructions were received.

For the moment enthusiasm had vanished. We were tired and hungry, and, after the perfection of clockwork routine to which we had been accustomed, this "war" seemed a muddlesome business. However, there was no good grousing. We left our chests in the road and proceeded to the barracks, where we were provided with hammocks and told to spread them in the gymnasium. This done, we took off our boots, coats, and trousers and were soon fast asleep. [30]

Of course, things looked a bit brighter in the morning—they always do. We were called at 7.30, told to dress and wash in the washing-place just outside the gym., and to lash up our hammocks and stow them away, after which we would be shown the way to the officers' mess.

Lashing up the hammocks was a job that took some time to accomplish, since it was one in which none of us was particularly proficient, and, moreover, there was no place to sling them. I eventually managed mine by lashing the head to the wall bars while I got a friend to hold the foot, which done, I performed the same office for him, and then we went to the officers' mess for breakfast. It was Sunday, so in the forenoon we went to service in the Naval Chapel. Here we had to listen to a most lugubrious sermon from a parson who seemed under the impression that we should all be at the bottom of the sea within six months, and had better prepare ourselves accordingly! Of the note, *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, which, however hackneyed, cannot fail to bring courage to those setting out to battle, there was not the faintest echo, so the whole thing was in no wise calculated to raise our spirits. [31]

This depressing episode ended, we fell in outside the barracks and were marched off to lunch.

We spent the afternoon exploring the vicinity, and I, with two friends, climbed up to the roof of a sort of tower, where we indulged in forbidden but soothing cigarettes.

That night we again slept in the gym., and next morning we were considerably annoyed to find that we should not be allowed to take our chests to sea. We were given canvas kit-bags, into which we had to cram as many necessaries as they would hold; but they certainly seemed, and eventually proved to be, most inadequate provision for a naval campaign of indefinite length, conducted in climatic conditions varying from tropical to semi-arctic. [32]

The rest of that day was uneventful and rather boring. We wrote letters home and indulged in more surreptitious smoking: the latter with somewhat disastrous results, for one of our number having rashly embarked on a pipe, was speedily overtaken by rebellion from within, and further, our Lieutenant, having detected us in this breach of Naval Regulations, threatened us with the direst penalties if we did not mend our ways.

Bright and early next morning (Tuesday the 4th of August) we were informed that half our number were to proceed to Devonport to join our ships; so at 9 o'clock we marched down to the station to set out on yet another long and weary train-journey. We had to change at Paddington, and arrived at Devonport at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, considerably bucked up by the thought that at last we should be in real war-ships, and, as genuine, though *very* junior, officers of His Majesty's Navy, be privileged to play our small part in what, even then, we dimly realised would be the greatest war in the history of our nation. [33]

From the station we marched through the town and embarked on an Admiralty tug, which took us to the various ships to which we had been appointed. Our batch was the last to reach its destination, but eventually the tug drew alongside the gangway of *H.M.S. "—"* and was secured there by ropes.

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# CHAPTER IV

## WE JOIN OUR SHIP

THERE are grey old Admirals in our land  
Who never have stood where now *you* stand:  
Here on your feet, in His Majesty's fleet,  
With a real live enemy close at hand!

*Punch*: Sept. 1914.

HASTILY we scrambled aboard, in the excitement of the moment nearly forgetting to salute the quarter-deck. Fortunately all recollected that ceremony in time with the exception only of one, who was promptly dropped on by the Commander—much to his confusion and dismay.

In obedience to the order of the cadet captain in charge we “fell in” on the quarter-deck while the Commander went below to report to the Captain. As we were awaiting further instructions the first Lieutenant, who was also the Torpedo Lieutenant (commonly known in naval slang as “Torps”), came up and spoke to us. He told us he would probably have to look after us, and said he hoped we should like the life on board. We all thought he seemed to be a very nice officer—an opinion we found no occasion to change, and we were all sincerely sorry when, three months later, he had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the enemy.

[35]

The Commander then reappeared and told us to go down to the Captain's cabin. We ran down the gangway he had just come up, and our cadet captain knocked at the door of the after cabin. A voice said “Come in”—and Carey entered, leaving us standing outside. In a few seconds he returned and beckoned to us to follow him. We did so, and came to “attention” facing the Captain, who was seated at a knee-hole writing desk.

He was a small man of middle-age, inclining to stoutness, clean shaven, slightly bald, with deep-set eyes, which appeared dark in the shadow of heavy overhanging eyebrows.

[36]

He eyed us keenly until we were all assembled, and then, leaning forward towards us, he rapped sharply on his desk with a ruler, and said in a deep bass voice—

“Young gentlemen, it is war-time, and you have been sent to sea as officers in His Majesty's Navy!”

He then continued, so far as I can remember, to express the hope that we might worthily uphold the traditions of a great service. Further he informed us that all our letters would be strictly censored; that our relatives and friends would only be able to write to us “Care of the General Post Office, London”; and that on no account must we write them one single word indicative of the whereabouts or work of the ship; for, under the Official Secrets Act, any infringement of this rule rendered us liable in the words of the Articles of War to “*Death*—or some such other punishment hereinafter mentioned!”

[37]

Then having asked our names, and chosen the two seniors—Carey, the cadet captain, and Baker—to be signal midshipman and his own messenger respectively, he curtly dismissed us. The almost complete severance from all home ties which the above prohibition implied came as a rather unforeseen blow. We knew how anxiously our people would be awaiting news of our doings; and to be able to tell them practically nothing seemed a hard condition. We went away feeling very small and rather crestfallen, and I am afraid we thought our new Captain rather unnecessarily stern and severe, though it was not long before we recognised the absolute necessity for such restrictions. It must be remembered that at that time we were only raw inexperienced boys and most of us barely fifteen years old. Later on, when we had worked under Captain— ‘s command—above all, when we came to know of the letters he, in spite of his many and onerous duties, had found time to write to our mothers—letters so kindly in their sympathy and understanding, so generous in their recognition of our efforts to do our duty—we appraised him at his true worth; and when he, together with so many of our ship's company, gave up his life for England in that disaster in which our ship was lost, those of us who survived mourned the loss of a true friend, and carry in our hearts for all time the honoured memory of “a very gallant gentleman.”

[38]

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When we once more found ourselves on deck, we were met by a petty officer, who escorted us down the ward-room hatch, and showed us the gun-room, which was then being stripped of all light woodwork which might catch fire or splinter in an action, and having the bulkheads shored up with heavy pieces of timber.

We placed our overcoats in a corner, and then went up on deck for a look round.

We were anchored in the centre of the Hamoaze, and the tide being at flood, our bow pointed down the harbour to Plymouth Sound. Various war-ships were dotted about, some, like us, in mid-channel, some alongside the wharfs. To port the town of Devonport could be seen through a mist of masts and ropes. To starboard wooded banks, clothed with the dense foliage of midsummer, rose steeply from the water. The hulls of several ancient battle-ships, dating from the time of Nelson, and some from even farther back, were moored close to the shore. Three old four-funnelled cruisers, painted black with yellow upper works in the fashion of war-ships towards the close of the Victorian Era, contrasted oddly with the sombre grey outline of the more modern ships preparing for action.

[39]

At 7.30 we had dinner in the ward-room, as the gun-room was not yet ready for occupation, and at 9 o'clock we turned in.

Next morning after breakfast the chief petty officer, who had shown us the gun-room the night before, took us round the ship, naming each flat and pointing out the various stores, etc.

By lunch-time the gun-room was ready for us, and, that meal over, we "fell in" on the quarter-deck and the Commander appointed us to our several duties. Carey and Baker having already received their appointments from the Captain as afore-mentioned, Jones, the next senior, was now told off to the Torpedo Lieutenant as his messenger. Browne became the Gunnery Lieutenant's A.D.C., and McAlister the Commander's "doggie." Wenton was "Tanky," *i.e.* the navigator's assistant, and Barton, Fane, Cunninghame, and myself were appointed watch-keepers.

[40]

As we were not expected to take up our duties until the following morning, we spent the rest of that afternoon watching the cutting away of such portions of the forebridge as were not absolutely indispensable for purposes of navigation, the removal of the forward searchlights to the shelter deck, and the pitching—literally *pitching*—of the ward-room and gun-room furniture into lighters alongside. This, I may mention, was performed without the slightest consideration for damage to the articles in question, for time pressed and every minute was of greater value than much fine furniture! It was *War*.

[41]

On the next morning (Thursday) we entered upon our respective duties, and I took my first "dog-watch."

In the forenoon the Gunnery Lieutenant had us all assembled in the gun-room and informed us that we should all be in the fore transmitting station (hereafter called the Fore T.S.) for action; that is, all except Carey, who would be in attendance on the Captain. Then he told us our different jobs and showed us how to work the various instruments for controlling the guns, after which he showed us the way down to the Fore T.S., and, having placed us in position before our instruments, gave us a trial run of ranges, deflections, and the various controls under which the guns could be operated in the event of the primary control position being shot away or the communications cut.

Then came lunch, followed by another two hours' practice in the Fore T.S., and after tea more of the same instruction.

[42]

At 5 a.m. on Friday we got under way to proceed into dry dock. At about ten yards from the mouth of the dock both engines were stopped, and our first and second cutters lowered. The ends of wire hawsers were then conveyed by the cutters from capstans, dotted at intervals round the dock, to the ship, where they were made fast inboard. These capstans had already been manned by parties of seamen attached to the dockyard, who were commanded by warrant officers. They stood by to back up the wire as soon as we gave the signal for the capstans to heave round, and in this manner the great ship was hauled into the dry dock. This seemed a ticklish business to the uninitiated, it being essential to get the ship exactly central in the dock, but the Captain controlled operations by signalling from the forebridge, and in due time it was accomplished. The ship floated motionless in the centre, the great caisson was hauled into

[43]



place, sunk and locked, and the powerful centrifugal pumps began to drain the water away.

After these two hours of hard work we went to breakfast with hearty appetites.

On looking out of a scuttle a little later I saw that the water had already dropped some six feet and the ship was resting on the bottom with about four feet of her sides visible below the usual water-line. As she had been lying up in Milford Haven for a year before the outbreak of war, she was in a filthy state, and her sides were thickly coated with that long ribbon-like seaweed often seen thrown up in masses on the shore after a storm. Already the dockyard men were placing large pieces of timber between the ship's sides and the sides of the dock, wedging them tightly so that she would remain upright when all the water had been pumped out.

At 9 o'clock we had to go to "divisions." Each of the watch-keepers had a division, and the messengers accompanied their officers on the rounds of their different departments. "Divisions" over, a lecture on first-aid was given by the Fleet-surgeon and occupied us until lunch-time. [44]

By 2 o'clock three-quarters of the water was out of the dock, and those of us who were not on duty went over the brow (*i.e.* the gangway) and down into the basin to explore and have a look at the bottom of the ship.

A dry dock is constructed with two galleries at the top built into the stone-work, and is reached by a flight of steps usually standing back about twenty feet from the edge.

Below these galleries comes a series of ledges, each one about three feet high and two feet deep, leading down to the bottom, which is about ten yards in width. On the centre of the dock are a number of wooden blocks, each about two feet high and four feet broad, and distant about three feet one from the other; on these the keel of the ship rests. A gutter just below the ledges drains off any water that may leak in. One end of the dock is rounded off in a semi-circle, the other narrows into a neck where an iron caisson, or hollow water gate, locks the entrance and keeps the water out. When this gate is to be moved, the water is pumped out of its interior, and it then rises to the surface and is hauled out of the way by ropes. Near this gate are two big, square holes, by means of which the dock is reflooded when the ship is ready to go out again. Parties of seamen on rafts were already at work scraping away the weed from the ship's sides, and others were painting the cleared spaces with red lead to prevent rust. [45]

The next day was Sunday, but as we had no padre on board there was no church parade, and since it was war-time, and we'd got to join our Fleet, which had sailed the night before, as quickly as possible, the work of scraping and painting was continued without intermission.

During the afternoon we inspected a new light cruiser which was in process of construction in an adjoining dock.

At 2 o'clock the following day, the work being finished, the water was let in. It came rushing through the square opening in a solid green mass, to fall with a dull roar into the rapidly filling dock. Two hours later the ship's keel gradually lifted, and as she rose higher and higher the timber props floated free, grinding and jostling each other in a manner somewhat reminiscent of a Canadian lumber river. Then the caisson was pumped dry and towed out of the way, and by 4.30 we commenced to warp out and went alongside a neighbouring wharf, to which by 6.30 we were safely secured by ropes. I remember that *H.M.S. "—,"* England's latest Dreadnought, which had just been launched, was lying in the basin, being fitted with engines, guns, etc. With her two enormous oval funnels standing out against a group of workshops and towering high above them, her huge turret guns which still lay along the wharf amid a litter of smaller guns, searchlights, and armoured plates, she made an impressive picture of Britain's sea power. [46]

A new navigator and two Royal Naval Reserve lieutenants joined that night, and their arrival completed our full complement of officers. [47]

It was 6 in the evening when finally our warps were cast off, and, running alongside, we coaled for half-an-hour, in that time taking in seventy tons, and then proceeded to sea with coal still stacked high on our decks. Through Plymouth Harbour the ship slid like a grey ghost—all dead-lights down, and in total darkness save for the

occasional flashes from the shaded arc-lamp which replied to the challenges of the torpedo-boat patrol and boom vessels.

Once outside we met the Channel swell, and the ship, burying her nose in a huge roller, lifted a ton of green swirling water on to the fo'c'sle, where it broke into creaming cascades at the foot of the fore-turret, smothering the guns in white foam and rushing aft on either side, until, thrown back from the closed battery doors, it sluiced overboard with a baffled roar.

All hands turned to and stowed the coal in the bunkers, after which the decks were washed down with hoses and we went below for much-needed baths.

Then came dinner, after which we went to night-defence stations.

[48]

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[49]

# CHAPTER V

## ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

As we turned out next morning the white cliffs of Portland loomed faintly through the mist ahead, and when we were within half a mile of the Shambles lightship the seven other ships of the fourth battle squadron of the 3rd Fleet, to which we also belonged, hove in sight.

We joined up in station as the third ship of the first division, and the whole squadron proceeded out to sea in single line.

When we were about two miles out the Admiral signalled from his flagship: "Form divisions in line ahead. Columns disposed to port."

So the leading ship of the second division drew out of line followed by her consorts, and crept slowly upon our port quarter till the two lines were steaming parallel at a distance of five cables.

[50]

At 4 o'clock we arrived off Cherbourg, and a signal was received ordering the second division to turn sixteen points and proceed down Channel to take up their patrolling positions, while the first four ships went up Channel to theirs.

Thus we formed an unbroken line from the Straits of Dover to the mouth of the Channel, each ship steaming slowly in a circle of five miles radius, and keeping always within sight of the next ship on either side.

That evening a beautiful August half-moon shone down on the heaving waters and the sky was studded with stars. The great arc of the Milky Way hung above us, and on the horizon the lighthouses of Cherbourg and the Channel Islands flashed their intermittent rays, at one moment throwing everything into high relief, and at the next passing on like great fingers of light across the sea before they faded to total eclipse.

Next day excitement ran high, for a rumour reached us that the great German liner, *Vaterland*, was going to try and rush the Channel under escort of five cruisers; but she never came; and after five days' patrolling the whole fleet reassembled, and forming divisions in line ahead, steamed into Portland, arriving there in the evening.

[51]

We started coaling at 6 o'clock the following morning and finished just before breakfast.

In the afternoon when I was on watch the officer of the watch sent me away in the picket boat with dispatches to *H.M.S.* "—." It was the first time I had been in command of one of these steamboats, so, thinking discretion the better part of valour, I didn't try to steer her alongside, but just took the wheel in the open and let my cox'un do the rest.

The whole of our squadron weighed anchor next day and put to sea for sub-calibre firing just outside the harbour. Sub-calibre firing is done by shipping a small gun (which fires a shell filled with salt) inside the bore of the big turret and battery guns. This necessitates the training and laying of the big guns to fire the small guns inside them, and gives practice to the gun layers and trainers without wasting the large shells and charges, which cost a considerable amount of money. We spent the whole of that morning in the Fore T.S. working out the ranges and deflections received by telephone from the control position, and passing these through to the gunners to set the sights by. After lunch it was assumed that the control position was shot away and the guns went into local control. This means that the officer of each group of guns, and of each turret, fires at his own discretion, and corrects the range and deflection after watching through his glasses the fall of the shells. When the Fore T.S. staff receives the order to go to local control, or can get no reply from the main control which is presumably damaged, they pass through the telephones to the guns the message "local control." Then they hurry up the hatch from the Fore T.S. to the ammunition passages above, their range clocks slung round their necks, and are hoisted up the ammunition hoist to the particular group of guns to which they have been stationed in the event of this emergency.

[52]

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Firing practice over we returned to harbour and anchored, and the following afternoon those of us who were not on duty were

allowed to go ashore on three hours' leave.

Next morning the squadron received a signal ordering all ships to complete with coal immediately, and to proceed to sea without delay. By 4 o'clock all had weighed and left harbour, forming into line in sequence of fleet numbers as they cleared the boom.

That night we steamed at full speed to an unknown destination. Everything quivered and shook with the pounding of the engines and the throbbing of the screws, as we ploughed our way through the dark waters, following the little white patch where our next ahead's shaded stern lamp lit up her creaming wake with a dim radiance for about a square yard.

The next morning we were up betimes, to find the whole squadron just entering Plymouth Harbour. [54]

As soon as we were anchored we filled up with coal again, and the collier had hardly shoved off when up came a tug crowded with marines in landing kit, and laden with entrenching tools, barbed wire, ammunition, rifles, field guns, and all the varied paraphernalia of a land campaign.

No sooner had we got this party, consisting of 400 men with their officers and equipment, safely on board, and stowed all their gear away in the batteries, than a provision ship came alongside and was quickly secured fore and aft. The stump derricks were swung outboard, and soon the deck was littered with biscuit barrels, sugar casks, cases of bully beef, etc., etc.—not forgetting the inevitable jam. Willing hands rolled and carried all this stuff to hastily rigged derricks and davits, whence it was lowered down hatches, and thrown through skylights to men below, who caught each case as it came, and passed it on to others, who stowed it all away in the gun-room, the ward-room flat, the Captain's cabin, and in fact anywhere and everywhere that space was to be found. Even so it was impossible to cope immediately with the steady stream which poured on deck from the capacious hold of the store-ship, although officers worked side by side with the men, issuing orders at the same time. Finally, when at last the store-ship was empty and had shoved off, and we weighed anchor and put to sea with the remainder of the fleet, our decks were still piled high with cases, and the work of stowing them away went on until 9 o'clock that night. There was no time for dinner, and while still working we ate ship's biscuit from a barrel that had been accidentally broken open. [55]

Once everything was safely bestowed below, we all went to night-defence stations.

The whole fleet was proceeding at top speed, leaving a gleaming phosphorescent track in its wake. Great clouds of luminous spray were flung aft from the fo'c'sle head as our ship buried her nose in the waves. The decks throbbed and rang to the stamping, pounding clang of the engines, and the stern quivered and shook with the throb, throb, *thrash* of the racing screws. [56]

All next day we dashed up the English Channel, and early the following morning passed up the Straits of Dover.

A little before noon on the succeeding day, the 22nd of August, we passed the United States cruiser *Carolina* returning from Antwerp with citizens of the States, flying from the oncoming Huns, and at 8 o'clock we dropped anchor in Ostend outer roads.

Half an hour later a Belgian steamer, a big two-funnelled, cross-channel boat, came alongside. Our party of marines, with their officers and equipment, were transferred to her, and she shoved off for the shore.

In the inner roads were lying at this time a squadron of battle-ships from the 2nd Fleet, an aeroplane base ship, and a flotilla of destroyers. This squadron weighed anchor next morning and proceeded to sea, and shortly afterwards we weighed and moved into the inner roads. An airship was sighted at about 11 o'clock low down on the horizon, and our anti-aerial firing party fell in with loaded rifles on the quarter-deck, and the anti-aerial three-pounder was manned. [57]

Tense excitement prevailed for about half-an-hour, while the imagined Zeppelin grew gradually larger and larger, and nearer and nearer; but it turned out to be our own *Astra Torres*, so the firing party dismissed and the ordinary routine was carried on, while the airship flew above us, and came to rest in a field to the left of Ostend.

In the afternoon an aeroplane, flying no flag, appeared over the

town, and was promptly fired at.

Subsequently it transpired that this, too, was one of our own, though I cannot imagine why she carried no distinguishing mark, and her celebrated pilot was reported to have used some very strong language about the marines who had forced him to a hasty and undignified descent. It was his own fault, anyway—and, luckily, neither machine nor airman sustained any serious damage. [58]

Later on one of our destroyers came alongside for provisions and oil, and remained alongside all that night.

Next morning a flotilla of enemy submarines and destroyers appeared upon the horizon. All our ships got ready to weigh, and our destroyers and light cruisers went out post haste to drive them off. The enemy squadron at once turned tail and fled! All of us midshipmen and cadets, who were not on duty, climbed up to the foretop with telescopes, and watched the pursuit, but only a few shots were exchanged, and neither side sustained any damage. The enemy made all haste in the direction of Heligoland, and our flotilla returned after a fruitless chase.

On that afternoon I remember that I witnessed, from the quarter-deck, a sad accident. Our picket boat had gone out with those of the other ships to sweep for any mines that might have been laid. In the evening the boat returned, and came alongside the port side amidships. There was a heavy sea running, and, as a wave lifted the boat, a reel of wire hawser used for mine sweeping, which had been placed in the bows, got caught in the net shelf, and was left fixed there as the boat descended into the trough of the sea. Next time she rose one of the bowmen got his leg caught under the reel, and it broke just above the ankle. He fell to the deck, but before he could be snatched out of danger, the sharp edge of the reel again caught his leg three inches above the break and half severed it, and the next time the boat rose it caught him again in the same place, and cut his leg right through. [59]

A stretcher was lowered over the side and the injured man was carried quickly and carefully down to the sick bay, where it was found on examination that the limb was so mangled that it was necessary to amputate it just above the knee. Poor chap! that was the end of his war-service. It was a tragic and sickening thing to witness, but it was no one's fault. In fact, the court of inquiry subsequently held brought in a verdict of "accidental injury," and absolved all concerned from any blame in the matter. [60]

The following afternoon we took on board a detachment of 800 marines with their equipment, and shortly afterwards weighed anchor and steamed out of Ostend roads.

When we went to night-defence stations at 8 o'clock that night there were marines all over the place—sleeping on the deck, and in the battery, and, in fact, anywhere there was room to lie down. We came across two sergeants who had been drill-instructors at Osborne College when we were there, and had a yarn with them over old times.

About 9 o'clock rapid firing was heard on our starboard bow.

I was then stationed at my searchlight on the port side just abaft the bridge, and I ran up the short gangway and across to the forward end of the shelter-deck to see what was happening. At first it sounded like big guns over the horizon, and I thought we had run into an action; but when I got on the bridge I saw that it was the flagship that had fired, and was now turning four points to starboard to give the other ships a clear range. Our helm was now put to port, and we swung off in the wake of the flagship. [61]

Then I heard the captain give the order to switch on No. 1 searchlight, which was in charge of Cunninghame, our junior cadet. This light was just forward of mine, and I nipped back in a hurry in case mine should switch on. No. 1 failed to pick up the object the flagship had fired at—which, by the *lights* it was showing, should by rights have been a fishing-smack—and his beam was very badly focussed. I knew my beam was all right, as I had tested it when preparing for night defence, and, as I had trained on the lights in question as soon as I had seen them, when the captain ordered me to switch on, my beam revealed the object at once. It proved to be two German destroyers: one showing the lights usually shown by a fishing-smack, the other showing no lights at all! Now the other searchlights quickly focussed on the enemy, and one of our 12-pounders fired two shots in swift succession. A few seconds later I saw two flashes in the beam of the searchlights where the shells [62]

struck the water close to their objective, and two white columns of water were flung high into the air. Then came a blinding flash, followed immediately by the sound of an explosion: a blast of hot air, smelling strongly of cordite, caught me unprepared and threw me off my balance. The six-inch gun immediately below me had fired without any warning. I never saw the fall of that shell although, as soon as I had recovered myself, I watched the enemy ships carefully. Only a minute later one of them fired a torpedo at us. For some way we could follow the track of bubbles in the gleam of the searchlights—then it passed out of the light, and there came a moment of breathless suspense. Had they got us? No! the brute passed harmlessly between us and the flagship.

[63]

Then our aftermost six-inch gun fired, but this time I was prepared, and, bracing myself against the blast, watched eagerly for the fall of the shot. It pitched some hundred yards from the torpedo-boats—ricochetted like a stone—hit the second of them right amidships and exploded: and the enemy craft simply vanished from the face of the waters! A jolly lucky shot! The other destroyer evidently thought so anyway, for, extinguishing her lights on the moment, she dashed away at full speed and was lost to sight in the darkness.

Presumably pursuit was useless, for shortly afterwards we extinguished our searchlights and proceeded on our way without encountering any more excitement.

The next day, which we spent at sea, was quite uneventful, and on the following evening we entered Spithead.

[64]

Here, with the last rays of the setting sun illuminating their pale grey hulls, lay the whole of the 2nd Fleet at anchor off Portsmouth. We had parted company with the two last ships of our division just outside, they having gone on to Portland and Plymouth respectively, and we entered Portsmouth in the wake of the flagship, lining ship and dipping our ensign as we passed the old *Victory*, and shortly afterwards dropping anchor in the harbour.

That night we disembarked all the marines.

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[65]

# CHAPTER VI

## WE LEAVE HOME WATERS

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away;  
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;  
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;  
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar grand and gray;  
"Here and here did England help me,—how can I help England?—say."

R. BROWNING.

NEXT day we took on 400 tons of coal, and in the evening weighed and proceeded to Portland, where we arrived next morning.

That evening the whole of the 2nd Fleet arrived and anchored, and on the following morning the second division of our squadron went out again for sub-calibre firing, the first division remaining at anchor. In the evening the Padre came on board to join. The second division returned to harbour at 4 o'clock, and at about 7 p.m. we received a signal ordering all ships in harbour to raise steam for fifteen knots and proceed to sea as soon as they were ready.

[66]

On our ship the hoisting in of all boats was commenced at once. The picket boat came in without a hitch, but, when the pinnace was hoisted clear of the water the after leg of the slings parted and she had to be lowered back. As we were in a hurry the Commander then took control of operations, and had a 3½-inch wire hawser rove three times round the stern of the boat, and then made fast to the ring at the head of the slings. When she was once more lifted clear of the water her stern was heard to crack, but we were already delaying the fleet and no time could be spared to lower her down again and readjust the hawser, so, though the stern continued to crack and give, and finally crushed in like an eggshell, the boat was hoisted and lowered into the crutches, and we proceeded to sea with the others.

[67]

This incident was pure bad luck and not due to faulty seamanship—had the pinnace been a new boat the stern would easily have withstood the strain, but she was nearly twenty years old and her planks were weakened by age.

On the next day the whole fleet did big gun practice in the Channel. Down in the Fore T.S. the sound was considerably deadened, but the violent vibrations and the increase of air pressure following on each discharge had a most jarring and unpleasant effect on the ear-drums. The ships did not fire all together, but each in succession had a "run" of one hour. When we had finished our "run" all of us midshipmen and cadets went on deck to watch the firing of the flagship of our division, which was just ahead of us. Although the actual cordite charge is practically smokeless, the silk bag in which the sticks of explosive are encased gives off a dense light-brown smoke, which often hides the whole turret from view, and the flash of the explosion, even in daylight, causes a vivid glare almost like lightning. The gases do not burst into flame until they have passed some ten feet from the muzzle and come in contact with the oxygen in the atmosphere, when they flare up in a fraction of a second. Occasionally a gun will blow a huge smoke ring which, gyrating rapidly, ascends to a considerable height, gradually expanding until it is dispersed by the air. This phenomenon was very noticeable later on in the Dardanelles.

[68]

The following day we did fleet tactics (pronounced "Tattics") off the Isle of Wight. These consist of manœuvres executed in columns. Each successive evolution is signalled by the flagship and is performed as soon as the whole fleet has repeated the signal and the flagship has hauled down the flags indicating the same. Throughout each operation the ships must keep within a specified number of cables' lengths of each other.

That evening found us off Beachy Head, and having finished tactics we headed for Portland, proceeding in divisions in line ahead, columns disposed abeam to starboard. We dropped anchor in Portland the following day. Then the colliers came alongside and the whole fleet coaled.

[69]

As we had not yet done our second run of sub-calibre firing we left harbour next morning, and spent the day at sea for purposes of same. During our absence the whole *personnel* of the 2nd Fleet and the remaining division of our squadron went for a route march.

At 4 o'clock we returned to harbour, anchored, and took in coal

until our bunkers were filled to 97 per cent. Next morning our division landed its ships' companies for a route march at the Camber. The men fell in in marching kit under their respective officers, and according to the seniority of their ships in the Fleet. (Seniority of ships is determined by the seniority of their commanding officers.) When all were present, and had been duly reported to the officer in command, the band of the flagship led off with a lively march tune, closely followed by her ship's company. Then the other ships' companies followed in succession, and soon the whole 1500 men were proceeding along the white dusty road from Portland to Weymouth. Presently an order to "March at ease!" and "Carry on smoking!" was passed down the line, and the men produced their pipes, lit up, and were soon laughing, chattering, and singing as they marched, keeping, however, always in correct sections of four. On entering Weymouth the order "'Shun! Out pipes!" was given, and the whole column swung along in absolute silence, broken only by an occasional order, and the tramp, tramp, tramp of the heavy marching boots on the dusty road.

[70]

We marched through the town to the pier, where we embarked on penny steamboats, commandeered for the purpose, which conveyed us back to the Fleet in Portland.

On the following day special steamers were run to Weymouth for the convenience of those who wished to go ashore; and, our leave-book having been signed, all of us junior officers who were not on duty forthwith donned our best clothes and embarked for the beach. On arrival the first thing we did was to storm the well-known establishment of Messrs. Gieve, Matthews, and Seagrove, Naval Outfitters (better known perhaps as just "Gieves's"), and there order tin uniform cases, as already those silly kit-bags had proved most inadequate, as well as highly destructive to clothes. Not much chance of a swanky crease down your best trousers if you have to keep them in a kit-bag! You'll get the creases all right—plenty of them, but they won't be in the right place. The Navy is particular about these things, and does not allow slackness in detail even in war-time. It's the same in the Army—our men's anxiety to wash and shave whenever possible has been a source of some astonishment to our Allies; but somehow cleanliness and neatness seem to be an essential part of a Briton's makeup—the outward and visible sign of a heart for any fate.

[71]

When we had finished our business at Gieves's we went round the town; looked in at cinema shows, bought many small necessaries we needed, and devoured eggs, cakes, and cups of chocolate at various confectioners'. Leave was up at 8 o'clock and we reembarked on the steamer. Several of the seamen had imbibed more strong drink than they could carry, and three marines had a free fight on deck surrounded by sympathetic friends. One of the combatants on being "downed" violated Queensberry rules by kicking his opponents in the stomach, whereupon the victims of this outrage determined to throw him in the "ditch." ("Ditch" or "pond" is naval slang for the sea.)

[72]

This resolution was heartily applauded by the audience, and would undoubtedly have been put into execution had not the steamer just at this juncture run alongside their ship. Still fighting they disappeared up the gangway. Five minutes later we drew alongside our own ship, and, having reported ourselves to the officer of the watch, we went down to dinner.

[73]

Two more days were spent in harbour, and several of the uniform cases arrived, but as yet no sign of mine. On the evening of the second day we weighed anchor and proceeded to Devonport, arriving there next morning. By this time our damaged pinnace had been sufficiently patched up for a short journey, and it was hoisted out and towed ashore carrying a demand for another.

We then coaled.

The light cruiser "—," which we had previously seen in dry dock, being now completed, was lying alongside one of the wharves, looking very workmanlike in her fresh grey paint.

Presently our new pinnace arrived, and as soon as she was hoisted inboard we went to sea again.

Sunset on the following evening found us off Falmouth, where we sighted five old two-funnelled cruisers. We stopped and waited while the flagship sent her steamboat to the cruiser's flagship for dispatches, and then we relieved them on the Lizard patrol.

[74]

Soon the cruisers were on the horizon steaming towards



Devonport, and, spreading out from the rest of our division, we took the second billet from Land's End, and patrolled up and down all that night. From time to time we caught a glimpse of the loom of the Lizard light, and on this we kept station, being unable to see any of our consorts.

Our present duty was to stop any ships proceeding up Channel and to examine their papers and cargo. Any ships containing contraband of war of whatever description were promptly escorted into Falmouth Harbour and handed over to the port authorities, who detained or confiscated them according to the requirements of the case. Fane, one of our midshipmen, was one of the boarding officers, and very quaint and warlike he looked! He was quite a little chap, and was armed with a huge cutlass and a revolver nearly as big as himself!

On the next day we stopped several tramps and cargo-boats, but discovered nothing suspicious. Two days later, however, the boarding officers were summoned at 4 a.m. and disappeared on deck armed to the teeth, and at 6, when the rest of us were just turning out, they came clattering down the hatchway with the news that we had caught a big Dutch liner called the *Gebria*, and that she had 400 German reservists on board. [75]

As soon as we were dressed we dashed up on deck to have a look at her. She was a large ship with two yellow funnels, with a light blue band round each, and must have displaced quite 20,000 tons. She was lying about a mile away on our starboard quarter. We put a prize crew on board and proudly escorted her into Falmouth, where we handed her over to the port authorities.

After this we coaled, and the same evening put to sea. Just as we were clearing the harbour a torpedo-boat signalled us asking to come alongside, and stating that she had on board a subaltern of marines for us. We stopped both engines, and a few seconds later the torpedo-boat lay-to about a hundred yards off. The second cutter was lowered and pulled across to her and returned shortly afterwards with the marine officer. Then the cutter was hoisted to the davits, the ship got under way again and we went to night-defence stations. [76]

When we were about two miles clear of the harbour we sighted on our starboard quarter the lights of a steamer which was rapidly overhauling us.

We challenged twice according to code, and then signalled her to stop. She returned no reply, but continued on her course. As by this time she had passed us and was some way ahead, the Captain gave the order to fire a 12-pounder blank cartridge. The first gun misfired and the crew moved away to the second and loaded it, leaving the cartridge that had misfired in the other gun in case it should go off later. Sure enough, just as the second gun fired, the first went off on its own, and the two together produced a row almost like a turret-gun firing. This, however, only made the suspect increase her speed, so our Captain rang down to the engine-room "Full speed ahead!" and we again gave chase. But she had the legs of us. As we did not overhaul her the Captain ordered another blank to be fired, and telephoned the engine-room to get every possible ounce of speed out of our old ship. The third blank failed to stop the runaway and a shell was then fired across her bows, but *still* she did not stop, and since she was now out of range we were reluctantly compelled to abandon the chase. [77]

At this time all we midshipmen and cadets were not doing night watches, and at 10 o'clock we had turned in as usual, but at 11.30 we were awakened by Browne, who told us all to get on deck at once as Night Action had been sounded off half-an-hour before, and he wanted to know why on earth we hadn't turned out at 11 when the sentry had called him. As a matter of fact the sentry had only awakened half of us, and those had gone up on deck leaving the rest still sleeping in blissful ignorance of the summons. However we were all feeling very tired, and after consulting among ourselves decided that we were not going up on deck for *anybody*—and, as they had managed without us for half-an-hour, they could jolly well manage without us for the remainder of the watch! With which incipient mutiny we turned over and went to sleep again. But not for *long*! In a very few minutes the Gunnery Lieutenant appeared on the scene, and brusquely rousing us up told us to dress at once, fall in on the quarter-deck, and wait there till he came. A few minutes after we were fallen in he came aft through the battery and asked us [78]

what the devil we meant by not turning out when Browne told us to, and went on to give us a proper dressing down, ending with the disquieting remark that he would probably have to report us to the Commander. Then telling us we were to keep the whole of the middle watch as a punishment, he sent us off to our searchlights.

[79]

We were all somewhat nervous as to what might be the consequence of our silly little show of independence, but it is to be presumed that "Guns," in consideration of our youth and inexperience, kept the matter to himself. Anyway we heard no more about it, and having duly kept the middle watch, went back to our interrupted slumbers—a thoroughly chastened quintette. In the light of a fuller knowledge of the strictness of naval discipline I know we were jolly lucky to get off so lightly.

The following day was spent at sea, and, save for the stopping of an occasional tramp or small sailing vessel, passed without incident; but the next evening we sighted a large German four-masted barque and gave chase at once, and we were just drawing within signalling distance of her when we received a wireless message ordering us to proceed at once to Gibraltar.

Reluctantly abandoning the chase of our prize we signalled to *H.M.S.* "—," which was patrolling on our starboard side, to capture her, after which we went south full speed ahead for Gib.

[80]

I know I should here give dates, but since all my diaries lie with the good ship "—" at the bottom of the sea, and I am reconstructing this narrative from memory, I find it a little difficult to be certain of actual dates. However, it would be on, or about, the 9th of September, or thereabouts, when we were ordered abroad.

Great excitement prevailed in the gun-room, as this was our first trip out of home waters.

The dreaded Bay of Biscay belied its sinister reputation, for we had a very calm passage, and two days later sighted Cape St. Vincent. Here we saw several whales frolicking about and blowing quite close to the ship. We passed so near to the Cape that we could distinguish the figures of the lighthouse keepers on the roof of their house.

In the afternoon we sighted the smoke of several steamers right ahead of us, and prepared forthwith to go to action stations in case they should prove to be hostile war-ships. However, on closer inspection, they turned out to be a convoy of our own troops from India, bound for Southampton.

[81]

The following noon we entered the Straits, and soon afterwards turned into the Bay of Gibraltar. Warping through the narrow entrance by means of wire hawsers, we arrived in the outer basin, where we were secured head and stern alongside one of the coaling wharves.

The sun was sinking, and the town was already grey in the shadow, but the summit of the famous Rock was flooded with rosy light.

On the afternoon of the next day the captain of marines kindly volunteered to take us to a good shop he knew of where we could buy some white-duck suits, which we were likely to need in the near future.

Arrived at the shop in question, the proprietor thereof informed us, with much shrugging of shoulders, waving of hands, and similar gesticulations expressive of regret, that he had no ducks in stock, but that at another shop a little farther on we might be able to obtain them. The owner of the place indicated could only produce some very badly cut civilian duck suits, and asked exorbitant prices for the same. With these we had to make shift, and after much bargaining each of us managed to procure two pairs of trousers and three coats for the sum of £4.

[82]

We then proceeded to the barracks, where after some delay we managed to secure fairly cheap sun helmets.

It being now only just 3 o'clock we decided to ring up the ship from the dockyard gate, and ask for leave for the rest of the afternoon.

After trying for half-an-hour to get on, and then to drive the nature of our request into the thick head of the signalman at the other end of the 'phone, we thought it would be best to return to the ship to obtain the required permission. On the way, however, we were lucky enough to meet our Captain, who asked if we had managed to get our white suits, and on our replying in the

[83]

affirmative he inquired what we intended doing with ourselves for the rest of the afternoon. We told him that we were on our way back to the ship to ask the Commander for leave, whereupon he at once told us we might have leave until 7, and having advised us to try a bathe in Rosia Bay, he passed on.

Joyfully returning to the town, we hired three of the funny little cabriolets, which are practically the only public vehicles to be had, and drove off to the bathing-place.

Rosia Bay is a small inlet with very deep water, and is surrounded by walls to keep out sharks. It is reached by a long spiral staircase which winds round an old tower and through an ancient stone archway. A broad stone promenade runs round the bay, and at the extreme end of this, on the left-hand side, are situated the gentlemen's dressing-rooms. Here an old Spaniard, locally known as "José," hires out towels and bathing-dresses. Several wooden rafts are moored in the bay for the convenience of bathers, and there are also two or three spring-boards as well as a water-chute. The water is cold, even in September; but the sun was so hot that we were able to lie on the stone and bask in its rays until we got warm again and were ready for another plunge. After an hour's swimming we split up into parties of twos and threes and returned to the town for tea. Fruit hawkers dogged our steps, and but little persuasion was required to induce us to buy the delicious grapes, pears, and peaches they pressed upon our notice. After tea we walked through the town and bought curios at the quaint little native stalls and shops.

[84]

That night forty boys from the Naval Barracks joined the ship, and, there being nowhere else for them to sleep, they were told to sling their hammocks in the gun-room flat, while we, its rightful occupants, were ordered to go up above to the ward-room flat and the Captain's lobby. At first we were mightily indignant at thus being turned out of our sleeping quarters, but later on, when we got into the Tropics, we saw that we had the advantage, for it was ever so much cooler up there, and we were correspondingly thankful. After dinner we went over the brow on to the wharf, and thence on to the sea-wall, which was hidden from the ship by a high brick parapet, which ran along behind the coaling sheds, and here we settled down to smoke and fish. Presently two sentries came along. On seeing us they stopped and palavered together for some minutes. Then one of them advanced towards us and shouted out, "Halt! Who goes there?" Considering that we were all quietly sitting down, this seemed remarkably silly; but I suppose he was a raw recruit, and just brought out the regular challenge which he had learned by heart, and never thought of varying it to suit the occasion! However, we informed him that we were naval officers and not German spies, and he retired seemingly much relieved in his mind.

[85]

Leave was given again on the following afternoon, and after another bathe in Rosia Bay we had a look at the surrounding country, went a little way up the Rock, returned to the town for tea, and so on board again at 7.

Early next morning we bathed from the ship's side, and, after breakfast, coaled; and that afternoon we warped out.

After rounding Europa Point our course was set parallel to the African coast; and then we steamed away, our wake crimsoned by the rays of the setting sun.

[86]

The morning found us still in sight of land, but gradually it faded away on our starboard bow until, on the following morning, the coast-line had vanished and we steamed along on a glassy sea and beneath a cloudless sky. I remember I had the forenoon watch, and from my post on the bridge I could see the flying fish leaping away on either side as our ship forged her way through the deep blue waters, and a shark appeared on our port bow, swimming lazily alongside, his dorsal fin every now and then breaking the surface into tiny ripples. The water was so clear that every detail of his long, wicked-looking body was distinctly visible.

[87]

That evening we sighted Cape Blanco, and shortly after dark passed between the lights of Cape Bon and the southern point of Sicily.

[88]

# CHAPTER VII

## FROM EGYPT TO MOMBASA

At 2 a.m. on the following morning we stopped both engines just outside Valetta Harbour; the guard-boat came alongside and gave us instructions to proceed to Port Said, and there, after an uneventful voyage, we duly arrived three days later.

Entering the harbour at sunrise, and passing between the long breakwaters which run out into the sea to mark the dredged channel, we anchored close to the eastern shore. Then lighters, filled with coal and manned by natives, came alongside and were secured four to each side of the ship. Presently gang-planks were placed between the inboard lighters and the deck, and the natives filled little baskets with coal, balanced them on their heads, ran up the gang-planks and tipped the coal into the bunkers. It was our first experience of Eastern methods—frankly we thought them rather finicky! However they got the coaling finished by 2 o'clock and we asked the Commander for leave to go ashore. This, however, he firmly refused, and made us draw a section of the ship instead, which seemed adding insult to injury!

[89]

Note by Mother: *Half-a-score of wild middies on the loose at Port Said of all places! What a wise commander!*

In the evening we weighed anchor and, taking on a pilot, proceeded through the Canal. Great expanses of open water, broken occasionally by long sand-spits, stretched away on either side. The banks of the Canal are raised some six feet above the water level and are about twenty feet wide. On our starboard, or the Egyptian side, ran a caravan road overshadowed by plane and palm trees, and we saw several camels being driven along by Arabs in picturesque flowing garments. Presently the sun dipped below the horizon and turned the wide expanse of water to the colour of blood. Gradually this faded away and slowly disappeared, and only a beautiful rosy glow was left in the sky above us.

[90]

Little signal stations connected with each other by telephone are placed every mile or so along the Canal, and at each of these it has been widened to allow of two ships passing each other, but in order to do this it is necessary for one of the ships to tie up to the bank. We, being on special duty, were allowed to go straight through, and any craft we encountered was obliged to tie up and make way for us.

At this time we had taken to sleeping on deck because of the heat, and in the middle of that night I woke up just as we were passing three Indian troopships which were tied up to the eastern bank of the Canal.

A gorgeous full moon was shining down on the desert, silvering the sand, and making everything almost as clear as in daylight. There was no sound to break the silence save the gentle lippety-lap of our wash against the banks. I got up and leant over the shelter deck watching the desert as we slipped by. I used to imagine somehow that the desert was flat, but of course it isn't!

[91]

Every now and then we would pass a tall palm tree showing up in deep relief against the rolling sand-hills, and sometimes a sleeping Arab and his camel. Presently we passed into the Bitter Lakes, when all around us stretched placid water, the channel being marked out with red and green lights dwindling away in dim perspective to the horizon. Towards dawn a little chill, sighing breeze sprang up, and I returned to my slumbers.

Next morning, as we drew near Suez, the view was glorious. Mile on mile of billowing sand, golden now in the fierce rays of the sun, stretched away on either side, the banks being clothed with sparse vegetation.

Soon after breakfast we passed out of the Canal and into Suez Bay, where a large convoy lay at anchor waiting to proceed to Port Said.

[92]

That evening found us far down the Gulf of Suez, and Mount Sinai appeared on our starboard beam. Next day we were in the Red Sea, where we found it appallingly hot. Every morning we used to bathe in a canvas bath which was rigged up on the quarter-deck and filled with sea-water. We had our first experience of that most

objectionable thing called "prickly heat" here, and did not like it at all!

Three days later we received a wireless message saying that it was believed that the *Koenigsberg*, a German raiding cruiser, was coaling in Jidda, a port in Arabia, on the banks of the Red Sea. At the time that we received this message, Jidda bore about six points on our starboard bow, so setting our course straight for it, we arrived off this little harbour about 4 p.m. It is the port for Mecca, and is very difficult to navigate owing to its many shifting sandbanks.

By 5 o'clock, having worked our way in as far as it was advisable to go, we lowered our pinnace, which, under the command of one of our lieutenants who was accompanied by a subaltern of marines, proceeded into the harbour. All eyes were eagerly fixed on the one steamer visible in the harbour, but even the most sanguine among us could see that it was not a war-ship of any description. However, we all hoped for some definite news from the British Consul as to the whereabouts of the German cruiser. But we were doomed to disappointment, for soon after dark the pinnace returned, and the Lieutenant reported that the said Consul—a rather sly Arab—denied that the German ship had been there. The Lieutenant had also interviewed the port authorities, but they could—or would—give no news, and he had examined the solitary steamer, which proved to be a British cargo-boat which had come in the day before. So we hoisted the pinnace, weighed anchor, and proceeded on our way, horribly disappointed and rather disheartened. We felt it was high time that something other than mere voyaging, however pleasant, should come our way.

Two days later we sighted *H.M.S. "—,"* and shortly after passing Perim Island we went through the "Gates of Hell" in her company.

The narrow straits bearing this sulphurous nickname, and properly called the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, are situated at the end of the Red Sea and at the entrance to the Gulf of Aden.

When we got clear into the gulf we sighted a steamer and our consort went in chase of it, leaving us to continue our course for Aden, which we reached at 5 o'clock.

Here we had to anchor by the bows and moor our stern to a buoy, but by the time we had lowered the cutter, which was to take the wire hawser to the buoy in question, our stern had swung round and was nearly half a mile away from it, and the crew could not pull against the long length of sagging wire behind them.

The picket boat was lowered as quickly as possible and took the cutter in tow, but by this time our stern had nearly drifted aground. Rapid orders were passed from the bridge to the quarter-deck, and at last we saw one of the cutter's crew leap on to the buoy and shackle the hawser to the ring. Then the after capstan began to heave round, and slowly the wire rose out of the water and tautened. Very gradually the stern began to swing back; but it was a long, slow job, as much care was needed to prevent the hawser from parting. By 9 o'clock, however, everything was secured, the ship lay peacefully on the still waters of the harbour, and we all went down to dinner.

We were up early next morning for our first good look at Aden. What an arid place! Great mountains tower above the town to a height of several thousand feet. Not a leaf, not a tree to be seen—no crap of vegetation, no glimpse of green save only a small patch of some kind of grass, just opposite the landing stage. Truly the place is suitably immortalised in the name of that famous pipe-tune, "The Barren Rocks of Aden!"

In the afternoon we went ashore to have a look at the town. The streets are very dusty and camels provide practically the only means of transport. The houses are mostly built of stone quarried out of the mountains behind, and in the native quarter the architecture is somewhat after the pagoda style. We returned to the ship to find natives already busy coaling her, and that night, as the wind was blowing the right way to carry the coal-dust over the bow, we thought we might safely sleep on the quarter-deck.

Coaling went on all night and the wind must have shifted, for, when I woke in the morning, the first thing I saw was my next-door neighbour with a face like a sweep's! He looked most awfully funny, and I started roaring with laughter at him before suddenly realising that I was myself in a similar plight! So, indeed, were we all. You

never saw such a disreputable, dirty-looking lot of ruffians in your life! Hair, hands, faces and clothes simply smothered in coal-dust; and amid much mutual chaff and laughter we went below to wash.

That afternoon we weighed anchor and sailed for Bombay, arrived there about a week later, and dropped anchor in the early morning while it was still dark; and coaling by native labour began again at once.

Daylight revealed a huge convoy of over sixty ships assembled in the harbour and shepherded by one of our battle-ships.

In the afternoon native merchants came aboard bringing deck-chairs, mosquito-nets and other less useful things for sale. By the advice of the surgeons we all supplied ourselves with mosquito-nets, and many of us also bought deck-chairs and mats.

That evening the whole of the convoy mentioned above got under way, and we, together with *H.M.S. "—,"* formed their escort. After a voyage of little more than a week we sighted *H.M.S. "—,"* who took our place, while we, separating from the main body, took half the convoy down towards Tanga. One of the troopships was very slow and could only do about seven-and-a-half knots, which delayed the convoy a lot.

Four days later we crossed the Equator, and here the time-honoured ceremony of "crossing the line" took place. All who have not been over the line before, officers and men alike, have to be ducked and submitted to various other indignities before they can be considered "freemen" of the Sea King's domain.

On the previous night officers and men impersonating Neptune and his Court had paraded the ship with an impromptu band, and in the morning a huge canvas bath was rigged up on the fo'c'sle, with a rude throne for Neptune at one end. After lunch the fun began. The bears were already splashing about in the bath ready to duck the neophytes when Neptune and his staff had finished with them. One of our lieutenants was the first victim. The Sea King, gorgeously arrayed in red and yellow bunting, with a cardboard crown set on his hempen wig, asks each in turn if he has ever crossed the line before, but no sooner does the unfortunate open his mouth to reply, than a large brush dripping with whitewash is slapped in his face! He is then liberally whitewashed all over by Neptune's merry men and tipped over backwards into the bath.

Here the bears seize upon him and pass him along to the other end, each one ducking him as he goes, after which his ordeal is finished, and he can watch his messmates being served in the same way.

Our Gunnery Lieutenant at first hid, but he was soon routed out and carried, kicking and struggling, before the tribunal. He had reason to regret his attempt to shirk, for by this time the whitewash had run out, so he was treated to a plastering of black paint, sand, and water instead; and, further, given a spoonful of "medicine" made up of mustard, pepper, salt, oil, and sea-water all mixed together, after which he was duly tipped backwards into the bath!

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*Maybe sober-minded people will think all this very silly—childish—almost improper in view of the serious business on which they were engaged. But let it be remembered that, in the words of Kipling: "The Navy is very old and very wise." She cherishes her traditions, and knows well that the observance of an old ceremony in which officers and men take part without distinction of class tends to foster that immortal spirit of comradeship which is one of the most valuable assets of the service, and by no means the least important secret of our sea-power. For the rest, time enough to think of War when the call to "action" has been sounded off. They work best who know how to play.*

. . . . .

The performance lasted until 4 o'clock, when we all went below, changed, and had tea.

We had now been at sea for a little over a fortnight, and fresh water was getting very scarce. By order of the Commander all washing of clothes had already been forbidden; but on the next day the rain came. It was practically the first since we left Bombay, and it rained in a truly tropical manner, coming down literally in sheets.

All officers who were not on duty turned up on the quarter-deck in a state of nature, with large bundles of dirty clothes under their arms, which they promptly set to work to scrub and wash. Our

quarter-deck awning was spread, and soon quite a lot of water collected in it. When I had finished washing my clothes it occurred to me that the awning would be a good place for an impromptu bath. I had just finished and surrendered my place to Wenton when the Commander came through the battery door, and was considerably annoyed at finding the awning being put to this use, and he promptly gave orders that no one else should bathe there.

The welcome downpour lasted for a little over an hour, and was greatly appreciated. [102]

On the following day our starboard condenser developed several leaky tubes, and for that day we had to draw out of line to port and paddle along with only one engine while it was repaired. Unfortunately, no sooner was this completed than the other condenser gave out, and we had to haul out of line again on the other side, with only our starboard engine working. This left us with only two days' boiler, and three days' drinking-water, and we were still a good four days from Tanga, so we sent out a wireless message to *H.M.S. "—,"* a cruiser which we knew was in the vicinity, to come and relieve us.

As the Captain had to go over on business to the s.s. *Karmala*, one of the convoy, we were lowering a cutter to take him there when the forward falls parted and the boat promptly swung down perpendicularly, hurling the crew out. All but one of the men managed to grab hold of the life-lines and haul themselves into safety; but for the one in question the life-buoys were immediately let go, and the other cutter in charge of the navigator was hastily lowered. However, after all, the man had managed to grab one of the bottom lines, and clambered up the side of the ship, safe and sound; but it took us a long time to recover all our life-buoys! [103]

Next morning the cruiser to which we had wired appeared on the horizon in answer to our summons, and steamed towards us. She lay to about half-a-mile away, and our Captain, with the captain of marines, went away in a boat to the *Karmala*, to confer with her captain and the captain of the cruiser. They returned about 11.30 a.m., and that evening we got under way and proceeded to Mombasa, which was two days' voyage distant, the convoy being left in charge of the cruiser.

On the following morning Barton and I were fallen in on the quarter-deck, and the Captain rated us midshipmen, which entitled us to wear the coveted white patches, indicative of that rank, on the collars of our uniform. Up till then we had only been rated as naval cadets, though some of the seniors had received their step earlier. It also entitled us to a slight—very slight—increase in the rate of our not too munificent pay! On that day, too, we all changed round duties, the messengers becoming watch-keepers, and *vice versa*. [104]

I was appointed messenger to the Gunnery Lieutenant, who sent for me next morning and told me that our ship was going to act as defence ship to the harbour while she was in Mombasa, and, since it was impossible to see anything of the open sea from the port, it had been decided to send three officers out to Ras Kilmain, the lighthouse point, and that they should camp there and set up a range-finder and dumaresque. They would be able to communicate with the ship by telephone to Kilindini, the landing-place in the harbour, where signalmen would be posted to pass on any messages. "Guns" said he was sending the assistant gunnery lieutenant on this job, as well as Browne, who had been his messenger for the first three months of the cruise, and myself. I was delighted with this information, as it promised to be an interesting job, and camp-life would in any case be a very pleasant change after the long weeks we had been on board ship. Then he told me to help him to make a large map of the island. The plan was that one of us should take the range and bearing of any enemy ship that appeared, another should plot it on the chart, which was divided into squares, while the third telephoned through to our ship, saying what square the enemy vessel was in. Each square was lettered, and one spread salvo from our ship's guns would cover its area, so that at least one of the shells was bound to hit. [105]

That evening we entered Mombasa. The approach is exceedingly difficult to navigate owing to two large reefs which run out on either side of the island, having only a narrow passage of deep water, forty yards wide, lying between them. Along this channel we advanced until we were within little more than a stone's-throw of the lighthouse; then, turning sharply to port, we went along parallel [106]

with the shore of the island, keeping so close in that we could see every pebble on the beach. After continuing on this course for about four hundred yards we turned to starboard and steamed between the mainland and the island. On both sides the shore was fringed with palm trees right down to the water's edge. Beautiful little bays opened out, revealing still, deep, blue water; and as the channel gradually twisted to starboard, the open sea was soon completely lost to view.

When we had gone about a quarter of a mile, the banks slowly receded, and we entered the harbour, which in its widest part is about half-a-mile across. Another large harbour, which is about a mile wide and two miles long, opens out further on and stretches away inland. The channel surrounding the island is not navigable all the way for big ships, but small ones can quite easily go right round it. Further on there are two more islands, called respectively Port Tudor and Port Mombasa, but H.M.'s ships rarely make use of these ports. Port Kilindini consists only of the Customs House, one or two railway offices, and a large coal-shed.

[107]

The day after our arrival the three of us who were to be stationed at the lighthouse packed our tin cases and disembarked, taking with us a portable range-finder, a dumaresque, and some cooking utensils. Having piled all the luggage on a taxi which had been hired for us, we started for the lighthouse, which was on the other side of the island.

At first the road, bounded on one side by a high embankment and on the other by the harbour, was slightly uphill, but presently we passed into a grove of trees and then under the Uganda railway bridge, and so along a straight and level road bordered by palm and various other tropical trees. Then came a native village composed of mud huts set back in a clearing to the left. Here a foolish ostrich, which I imagine belonged to the natives, fled across the road in front of the car and narrowly escaped being run over. A little later we reached the outskirts of the town, and after passing through it for a short distance turned to the right, and leaving the native barracks and the prison on our left, proceeded along a level track raised above the surrounding scrub, and flanked by trees wherein hundreds of birds'-nests hung, until we came to the hospital. Here we again turned to the right, and shortly afterwards we arrived at the lighthouse, where we unloaded our luggage and dismissed the taxi.

[108]

Finding that the tent in which we were to live was still in possession of the soldiers who had lived in it hitherto, we left a message with the native look-out boy, requesting them to remove themselves before nightfall, and we went off to the town for some tea. After tea the Lieutenant and Browne went to buy a stove and a kettle and one or two other things we required, while I walked back to the camp to look after our gear. I found the soldiers had gone and the tent was ready for us, so I set about moving in our things. Presently the Gunnery Lieutenant came up to see the camping place and to arrange with us where we should set up the range-finder, etc. I told him the others were shopping in the town, and we sat down and talked until they turned up. Then it was decided to set up our instruments on top of the look-out house, and to carry the flexible voice-pipe from there through the window below to the plotting-table where the chart was. This done "Guns" departed, and we set to and arranged our beds and made the tent ship-shape and habitable.

[109]

When in town Browne and the Lieutenant had bought some shorts and some navy-blue putties, which they thought would be much cooler and more serviceable than duck suits; so during our time in camp our uniform consisted of shorts, putties, and shirts, and of course sun helmets, which are indispensable in that climate. At half-past seven we cooked some eggs we had brought with us and got our supper ready. Browne caused us much amusement, as his only idea of cooking eggs was to put them all into a saucepan full of *cold* water and stir them vigorously until they boiled! However, I must admit that none of us knew *much* about cooking, and we conducted some fearful and wonderful experiments in that line while we were in camp! After supper we were quite ready for bed, so we turned in.

[110]

Next morning there was much to be done, so we were up by 6 o'clock; and before breakfast we fixed up our range-finder and dumaresque on the roof of the observation hut and rigged up the flexible voice-pipe. After breakfast we repitched the tent a little



further round, where the prevailing breeze would blow through it and keep it a bit cooler. Apparently the "Tommies" who preceded us were a stuffy lot with no undue craving for fresh air!

Then we contrived a pantry in the back of the tent on a wooden table, and here we installed the filter we had brought from the ship, as well as all our plates and dishes and the stove. Further, we engaged a native boy as general factotum to help with our *ménage* and do such cooking as we could not manage on the stove.

We also hired a bike from the ordnance officer at the port.

When all this was accomplished a trial run of ranges and deflections with the ship occupied us until lunch-time.

During the day a native kept the look-out from the watch-hut, reporting to us as soon as anything was sighted at sea.

Next morning I was sent to the pier on the bicycle to catch the 11.30 boat and to go to our ship and obtain from the bo'sun a broom and one or two other things we needed. I caught the boat all right, lunched on the "—" after putting in a "chit" for the broom, etc., and returned to the shore in the 1.30 boat.

The broom proved a most awkward thing to convey by bike, and it was horribly in the way of my knees. When I was about halfway to the camp I got so tied up with the beastly thing that I fell off, bike and broom on top of me! When I picked myself up I found that the crank of the left pedal had been bent in the fall. However, the machine, though more wobbly than ever, was still rideable, so I finished the journey gingerly and without further accident.

Perhaps it might be well here to describe the camp and its surroundings more minutely. It was pitched about two hundred yards back from the cliffs; and the watch-house, past which the road ran, was about ten yards in front of our tent. The lighthouse was situated some three hundred yards from the cliff's edge to our left; and right opposite it, on a small point running out into the sea, stood a green beacon some fifteen feet high. Our native boy had built his kitchen of sand-bags on the cliffs just in front of the watch-hut.

The soldiers were now encamped in tents some hundred yards away to the right, and immediately behind our tent was a sort of large stone reservoir for water, with, in front of it, the flagstaff. Rough paths connected the beacon with the lighthouse and the watch-hut.

On our third morning in camp we received a telephone message from a port a long way up the coast, saying that a hostile war-ship was coming down in our direction. We did not attach much importance to this information until the following day, when the enemy was again reported—this time off Kismayne; and as the next morning she was stated to be passing Malindi, we calculated that she ought to be in sight by 3 p.m. Sure enough, almost exactly at 3 I saw smoke on the horizon, and immediately telephoned our ship.

Now we were all three eagerly watching the smoke, and presently the stranger's masts came into view. They certainly appeared to have "tops," so she might well be a war-ship of some kind, and our excitement grew until a single funnel hove in sight, whereat our spirits drooped a little, for very few ships of war have only one funnel. Still, as the lower parts of her masts lifted above the horizon, they looked at the distance so like tripods that hope rose high again. Very slowly her hull emerged, and in another ten minutes she was wholly visible. Then the powerful magnifying lens of the range-finder revealed her as unmistakably a collier.

We telephoned the information through to our ship, and very shortly afterwards saw our picket boat manned by an armed crew, and with a 3-pounder in her bows, coming at full speed out of the harbour.

Despite the fact that she was seventeen years old the picket was a very fast boat, and as we watched through our telescopes we soon saw her run alongside the collier, and several figures in duck suits jumped out and ran up the stranger's gangway. Then our boat shoved off again, and they both came steaming towards the harbour. Shortly afterwards the collier hoisted the code-flag for the day, thereby proving that she was not after all an enemy, and she asked permission to proceed into Kilindini. What a sell! After all our excitement, too! But one gets accustomed to that sort of disappointment; and, after all, there was always the chance that the next alarm would prove genuine.

The collier could not be allowed into Kilindini for some time, as there were already at the moment two ships in the channel on their way out, but as soon as the course was clear she rounded the curve of the island and anchored in the harbour—and *that* incident was ingloriously closed.

We tried that night, I remember, to communicate with our ship by means of an electric flash-lamp fixed to the top of the flagstaff, but it was not a success, for the key was so badly insulated that after getting many violent shocks we had to give it up.

We had heard from the soldiers that somewhere to the left of the watch-hut there was a cave containing a deep pool of water in which it was quite safe to bathe, so Browne and I, being off duty, one morning went down to try and find it. We crossed the road, and going downhill for a bit over long grass and through various stunted shrubs, came presently to a large rectangular hole in the ground, which, by a long slope, very slippery and covered with loose stones, communicated with the said cave. At the end of the slope was a very small hole, through which we crawled on hands and knees, and found, when our eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, that we were standing on a little ledge of rocks. At our feet lay a small sandy cove, which extended for some fifty yards to the mouth of the cave, across which stretched a reef about three feet high. As the waves rolled in the water every now and then poured over this reef into a large pool, and the ledge on which we were standing ran round the cave at a height of about three feet above the sand.

We soon stripped and had a delightful bathe in the pool.

About a quarter of a mile away we could see a large French liner stranded on the reef. I don't know how long she had been there, but there is something awfully forlorn and desolate-looking about a wrecked vessel. Her stern had broken away and fallen off into deep water; and there was a great hole in her side through which every now and then the waves splashed, as though purposely deriding her and mocking at her downfall.

On the following day the whole convoy came in from Tanga after having disembarked the troops. It was my morning watch, and I saw them on the horizon just as the dawn was breaking.

[116]

[117]

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[118]

# CHAPTER VIII

## THE BOMBARDMENT OF DAR-ES-SALAAM

Your troth was broken ere the trumpets blew;  
 Into the fight with unclean hands you rode:  
 Your spurs were sullied, and the sword you drew  
 Bore stain of outrage done to honour's code.  
 And you have played your game as you began,  
 Witness the white flag raised ...  
 . . . . .  
 And the swift stroke of traitor steel for thanks.  
 . . . . .  
 The world (no fool) will know where lies the blame  
 If England lets your pleadings go unheard;  
 To grace of chivalry you've lost your claim;  
 We've grown too wise to trust a Bosche's word.

O.S.

*Punch*: February 16, 1916.

IN all we were about three weeks at the camp, and we spent some very happy days there; but the end came rather unexpectedly one evening, when we suddenly received an order from the ship to pack all our gear and get on board by 9 the following morning. We were a little sorry, and yet in a sense relieved, for after all we were out to fight, not to picnic—and we had hardly seen a shot fired since we left home waters.

[119]

We telephoned to the port officer to have a car ready to take us and our effects down to Kilindini Harbour by 8 a.m., and that night we were busy packing up all our cooking utensils, our range-finder, clothes, etc.

Next morning we were up early, packed our bedding, had a good look round to see that nothing had been forgotten, dismissed our native servant, and then awaited the car we had ordered.

But time went on, and there was no sign of any car, so at 8.15 I was sent off on the same old bike to commandeer the first taxi I came across. Fortunately I managed to get one just inside the town, and went back with it as quickly as possible. We loaded up in a frantic hurry, and got down to the pier just in time, and so on board our ship.

[120]

By noon we were clear of the harbour, and steaming at full speed southwards.

Now we learned that we were under orders to destroy all the shipping in the harbour of Dar-es-Salaam, the capital of German East Africa, which lies about twenty miles south of Zanzibar. It appeared that the Huns in that port had been surreptitiously supplying food, etc. to the crew of the *Koenigsberg*, that German raider which had been safely bottled up in the Rufigi river some weeks previously, and it was designed to cut their claws by disabling such merchant shipping as they possessed.

That evening we dropped anchor in Zanzibar, and started coaling by native labour. Here we saw the masts of *H.M.S. Pegasus* sticking up forlornly out of the water half-a-mile on our port bow. They were very much battered and smashed, for she had been sunk by the *Koenigsberg* in September.

Early next morning we weighed anchor, and proceeded out of the harbour in company with *H.M.S. "—"*.

[121]

At 8 a.m. we sighted Dar-es-Salaam, and all hands went to general quarters. Half-an-hour later we dropped anchor in the roads outside Dar-es-Salaam, and when all the guns were cleared away, and ready for instant action, we were allowed to go on deck for a few minutes.

The town, with the Governor's house, a handsome building, standing out prominently on the foreshore, looked very peaceful and harmless in the brilliant tropical sunshine. It was rather an awful thought that we might have to shatter and destroy those quiet-looking houses in which lived women, and worst of all—children. War is a ghastly thing, and it seems so wantonly *stupid*.

A large white flag was hoisted at our fore-mast. We meant to play a square game anyway, and give them a fair chance. Then we signalled to the Governor of the town to come on board and receive our ultimatum.

The said ultimatum was as follows—

[122]

If our boats were allowed to go unmolested into the harbour, there to destroy the shipping in accordance with our orders, we would not bombard the town. But—in the event of hostile action against our expedition we should open fire on the town without further warning.

The Governor, in reply, said that he could not accede to our demands without orders from the commander-in-chief of the military forces, and he then returned under safe conduct to the shore. Shortly afterwards another boat appeared with a German military officer in the stern-sheets. He came on board and stated that our boats would not be molested, but he asked us in the event of our finding it necessary to bombard, not to fire on the Protestant Mission House, or on the Cathedral, as all the women and children would be sheltered in those buildings. This looked a bit suspicious, but of course we agreed, without demur, not in any case to fire on those particular buildings, an agreement which I need hardly say was faithfully adhered to. [123]

The German then returned to the shore, and shortly afterwards our picket boat was lowered. The demolition party was on board in charge of the Commander, who was accompanied by the Torpedo and Engineer lieutenants, and she proceeded towards the shore.

Unfortunately she ran aground, so the pinnace was hoisted out and sent to take off the officers and men, after which they proceeded into the harbour under a white flag as agreed upon. *H.M.S. "—"s* steamboat, and a steam tug commanded by one of our lieutenants, also went in under the white flag.

General quarters was then sounded off, and we all went to our action stations.

At this time all of us midshipmen, together with the A.P. (Assistant Paymaster), were stationed in the Fore T.S., which was our appointed action station, so we could see nothing of what was happening, and were dependent on the telephone for news. In about ten minutes the officer in charge of one of the batteries telephoned through to us that rapid firing had broken out from the shore, although the Germans were still flying the white flag! [124]

The treacherous, dishonourable devils!!!

Almost immediately the order came through from the control position: "Range 4500, deflection 3 left—both turrets load with common—object—the Governor's house"—followed quickly by "Commence!" The A.P. who worked the turret telephone gave the order "Stand by—Fire!" And about one minute later we heard from the battery that the Governor's house had been hit and totally destroyed! Jolly good shot! Hurrah!

Now all guns which could be brought to bear on the town were firing rapidly.

About noon we heard that the tug had reappeared in the mouth of the harbour and was heading for *H.M.S. "—"*. She had a bad escape of steam from her boiler, and had signalled for assistance, reporting at the same time several wounded on board as well as twenty German prisoners. The bombardment continued the whole afternoon. Down in the Fore T.S. the heat was stifling—we were all stripped to the waist and streaming with perspiration. [125]

At 4.30 we heard that the remaining steamboats were making for the ships under heavy fire from Maxims, pom-poms, and rifles.

Shortly afterwards the "Cease fire" sounded, and, hastily changing, we ran up on deck to see what damage had been done.

The town was on fire in two places, and the Governor's house, which had stood out so conspicuously only a few short hours before, was now nothing but a mass of blackened ruins. But there was no time for any feeling of compunction or regret *then*, for a few minutes later our pinnace ran alongside with the Commander and the coxswain lying on the deck simply smothered in blood and barely conscious. They had both been hit no less than eight times in various places, and had stuck to their posts until they collapsed from loss of blood. Three others of the crew were wounded, though able to walk; and there was no sign of the demolition party and the other three officers. The wounded were carefully hoisted on board, and carried down to the sick bay, and we at once put to sea. [126]

At 2 next morning we anchored in Zanzibar Harbour, and the wounded were transferred to the hospital.

By this time we had learned what had taken place while our boats were in the enemy's harbour. They had no sooner entered the

mouth than, despite the *white flags*, a heavy fire broke out from the shore. Nevertheless, gallantly proceeding with their duty, they had managed to destroy two ships, and had then run alongside a large hospital ship. Three of our officers, accompanied by the demolition party, had hardly boarded her before three Maxims were unmasked on her deck, opening a murderous fire on the boat, which was forced to retire.

[127]

One of our party—the surgeon—managed to fight his way back to the gangway; and, leaping into a small boat alongside, presented his revolver at the heads of two natives who were in it, and ordered them to row him back to the pinnace. They had only pulled a few strokes when the surgeon was hit in the head and fell down in the bottom of the boat, apparently dead. The natives at once turned the boat round and in terror of their lives rowed back to the treacherous hospital ship.

The pinnace was then forced to abandon all hope of recovering the prisoners, and with much difficulty fought her way out of the harbour and back to the ships.

For his gallantry on this occasion our Commander eventually received the V.C. The cox'un was awarded the C.G.M., and the lieutenant in command of the tug, who was also wounded, received the D.S.C.

At 6 next morning we put out from Zanzibar and proceeded again to Dar-es-Salaam, where we demanded the surrender of the prisoners, threatening in the event of a refusal to again bombard the town. The Germans, however, had no intention of relinquishing their captives, so at 9 a.m. we commenced fire. I think I forgot to mention that the Torpedo Lieutenant who had greeted us boys so kindly when we first arrived on the ship from Dartmouth was one of those taken prisoner on this occasion, to our very deep regret.

[128]

We ceased fire at 2 p.m. and put to sea for the night in case an attempt should be made to torpedo us. This second bombardment was not quite so successful as the first, but it started two more serious fires in the town—so we had our revenge all right!

That evening it was decided that on the following morning a party should be sent to attack and demolish the lighthouse, which was situated on a small island at the entrance to the harbour. For this purpose there was detailed a landing party, consisting of seamen and marines, officered by a lieutenant and the subaltern of marines. Browne, one of the "snotties," was also to accompany this expedition. However, much to the general disappointment, the sea on the next morning proved too rough to allow of any boats being lowered, and we had to abandon the project and return to Zanzibar.

[129]

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[130]

# CHAPTER IX

## ORDERED TO THE DARDANELLES

WE left the Cape about the 16th of February 1915. For several days previous to our departure we were busy taking in a quantity of stores suggestive of a land campaign.

These included hand-grenades, entrenching tools, water troughs and tanks, provisions of every description, and a whole lot of empty biscuit-tins, the eventual usefulness of which I, for one, failed to fathom. When finally we weighed anchor and steamed out, having the Vice-Admiral and his staff on board, we encountered some very heavy weather. A stiff south-easter had been blowing for some days past, and off Cape Agulhas and in False Bay it was very rough indeed; but, save for the general discomfort which such weather always brings in its train, our voyage was without accident or incident, and a week later we dropped anchor in Port Natal—the port of Durban.

[131]

Leave was given in the afternoon, but as half of us had to stay on board, and as it was improbable that we should get leave again in this particular place, we cast lots in the gun-room to determine who should go ashore. Baker and I were among the lucky ones, and we went off together and took the tram into Durban.

We got down at the town station and walked along the main street, looking into all the shops. It was jolly being in such a very European place again. The quaintest feature of Durban seemed to us the native rickshaw-boys, who paint their faces and wear head-dresses of enormous many-coloured feathers, gaudy dresses sown with beads, and huge copper rings on their wrists and ankles.

Presently we took another tram, and were looking out for an attractive tea-shop as we went along, when a lady and gentleman got into the tram, and the lady at once introduced herself to us, saying that she had a son at Osborne, so could not help being interested in us. After a little conversation she very kindly asked us to have tea with her. We very gladly accepted the invitation, and a little later we all got out of the tram and went to a hotel by the sea. Here we had a ripping tea, and at 6 o'clock said "good-bye" to our kind hosts, and then did some shopping in the town until 7 o'clock, when we were due to return on board.

[132]

Next day we still remained in harbour, so the others got their leave after all. During the day, much to our curiosity, we took on board three rickshaws. No one could imagine what they could be wanted for! Further, we accumulated some more biscuit-boxes and some tins of petrol.

That evening we weighed anchor and proceeded out to sea. Just at the mouth of the harbour we were confronted by a big bar which—as the tide was running the same way as the river, *i.e.* ebbing—had not been there when we came in, and consequently it took us unawares. It was nearly dark, so the bar was not noticed until we were almost on top of it. The Captain yelled a warning to the first part of the watch on deck, who were still on the fo'c'sle securing the anchor, telling them to hang on tight, and the next moment we dipped our bow and shipped an enormous sea. Messengers had been hurriedly dispatched to give orders for all scuttles and dead-lights to be closed immediately, and for the crockery in the pantries and messes to be secured firmly; but some of the scuttles could not be closed in time, and many cabins were flooded as the sea passed aft. The lieutenant-commander in charge of the party on the fo'c'sle just grabbed one man in time to prevent his being washed overboard. Four of these huge rollers came before we were safely out in the open sea, but no real damage was done, although the owners of the flooded cabins were mightily indignant and disgusted.

[133]

We now discovered that we were under orders to blockade the *Koenigsberg*, that German commerce raider which had been trapped in the Rufigi river some two or three months before, and whose crew, entrenched on the banks, had hitherto defied capture. It was now rumoured that in all probability troops would try and attack her by land, and that there would also be a landing-party of seamen and marines from our ship. The petrol we had taken on board would be needed for a seaplane which was to assist in the operations; but the use of those fantastic rickshaws was still "wropped in mystery"!

[134]

During the voyage up the coast, the Admiral had us all in turn to breakfast with him. This was a great treat to us, for not only was Vice-Admiral—a most kindly and genial host, but the fare at his table, though not, perhaps, luxurious according to shore and *peace* standards, was a vast improvement on the bully beef, liquefied margarine, and very nasty bread which was all that was to be had in the gun-room. Perhaps this sounds rather greedy, but it is really extraordinary how awfully important quite ordinarily nice food becomes when it is no longer an every-day matter-of-course!

[135]

Ten days after leaving Durban we sighted Mafia Island, and stopped for two hours to communicate with various ships stationed there, after which we went on to Zanzibar. Here we stayed for twenty-four hours; were allowed to go ashore, and enjoyed ourselves immensely. The following day, the 1st of March, we put to sea again, and proceeded to the mouth of the Rufigi river, where we anchored.

For reasons, naturally not confided to junior “snotties,” we got under way again a few hours later, and went back to Mafia Island. Here the cutter was lowered, and Fane took the captain of marines, who was our intelligence officer, in to the beach to try and obtain from the natives information of the *Koenigsberg*. On their return we found that Fane had managed to procure a quantity of fresh coconuts and mangoes, which were greatly appreciated in the gun-room.

[136]

A curious optical illusion, caused by heat and the vibration of the atmosphere, was very noticeable in these latitudes. The horizon line seemed completely obliterated, and ships and islands appeared as though floating in the air.

Some days later *H.M.S.* “—” made the discovery that a German officer, accompanied by ten native German infantry, were encamped on an outlying island; so she lowered her cutter, and landed a party of marines on the island in question. The Germans surrendered after a half-hearted opposition, and the following day the officer was sent to our ship as a prisoner, and we took him to Zanzibar and handed him over to the military authorities.

When we returned, the Admiral having decided to hoist his flag in his former flagship, he and his staff were transferred to *H.M.S.* “—.” Carey, our senior mid, was appointed to that ship, and two sub-lieutenants came to us in his stead. All boats were lowered to convey the Admiral and his party, and a consignment of small arms, which we had on board, was transhipped at the same time.

[137]

A few days later we went down the coast to Lindi, a German town, and threatened them with a bombardment unless they surrendered 400 black and 200 white troops. They refused to comply with our demand, and so at 2 p.m. we went to action stations and commenced fire.

At 6 o'clock, the town being on fire in several places, we considered we had “strafed” them sufficiently, and also the light was beginning to fail, so we ceased the bombardment and weighed anchor. Just at this moment a cruiser appeared in the offing, and for some minutes it was thought she might be a hostile craft; however, on being challenged in code by searchlight, she proved by her reply to be British, so we went back to Mafia.

Three days later we learned that we were not after all to be “in at the death” of the *Koenigsberg*. Bigger, far bigger work was in store for us. We had received orders to proceed at once to the Dardanelles.

[138]

Immense excitement prevailed in the gun-room, for we guessed this new move predicted action which would throw all we had hitherto experienced into the shade—and subsequent events more than justified our conjecture.

First we went to Zanzibar, where we arrived in the morning. All that day was spent in disembarking the extraneous ammunition, petrol, and so on and so forth (not forgetting those mysterious rickshaws), which we had taken on board for the purposes of the *Koenigsberg* operations. Then in the evening we weighed anchor, and as we passed slowly out the Flagship gave us a right royal send-off. Her band played *Tipperary*—that pretty music-hall tune which, by the curious psychology of the British soldier, has been raised to the dignity of a battle hymn, and then followed it up with *Auld Lang Syne*, while the Admiral from the stern-walk wished us “Good luck,” and waved a parting farewell; and the old ship steamed away on what for her, and most of her ship’s company, was to prove the last

[139]

long voyage.

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# CHAPTER X

## IN ACTION

Two days after leaving Zanzibar we reached Mombasa, and since no native labour was available, and the heat was too great to allow of our working by day, we commenced coaling at 4 p.m., and coaled all night, taking in about 1200 tons. Early next morning we were under way again, and a fortnight later we dropped anchor at Aden. We went ashore on leave while the ship was being coaled by native labour, and in the evening proceeded again to sea. Next day we sighted the coast of Somaliland, where a furious sand-storm was raging, and a huge wall of red sand hung above the cliffs, extending some distance over the water. Little more than a week later we arrived at Suez, having accomplished the passage of the Red Sea without any incident worth recording. We stayed the day at Suez, and in the evening got under way and traversed the Canal by night, dropping anchor at Port Said on the following morning. Again we went on leave while coaling was in progress, and next morning resumed our journey. Two days later we received a wireless message ordering us to put back to Port Said and there prepare to repel an expected attack by Turkish infantry on the Canal; and, further, we were instructed to make preparation to receive the Admiral of the port, who intended to hoist his flag in our ship. We at once set to work to protect our bridge and tops by means of sand-bags, hammocks, and grass ropes; and all the Captain's furniture was removed from the after-cabin. Also the 12-pounders and searchlight positions were screened with thin steel plates. However, before we sighted land all these orders were cancelled, as, apparently, the Turkish attack was no longer anticipated.

[141]

We now spent three days in Port Said, and while there I distinguished (?) myself by running our steam-pinnace aground!! It happened in this way: I had offered to relieve Barton in charge of the said pinnace, and owing to imperfect knowledge of the harbour, a very tricky one, I steered the boat firmly on to a sand-bank which lay within a biscuit's throw of the ship. Three native boys endeavoured to assist me by jumping into the water and shoving at the boat, but they only made matters worse. Eventually, after going full speed astern for a good five minutes, I got her off, and went alongside the ship. I was greeted by the Commander with a proper slanging, and ordered to pay the native boys, who were clamouring for *backsheesh* in reward of their fancied assistance. In my agitation I grossly overpaid the interfering brutes, and the Commander then told me to do penance for my carelessness by keeping the dog-watch. As a matter of fact it was my dog-watch *anyway*; but I did not feel called upon to tell him so!

[142]

. . . . .

On the morning of the fourth day we again got under way for the Dardanelles, and arrived there on the 25th of April.

[143]

We steamed round the island of Tenedos, and took up our station at the end of a line of some ten or more ships already anchored there. During the voyage over I had been appointed in charge of the picket boat, and as soon as we had anchored my boat was lowered to take some officers to a cruiser which was going to take them over to the Dardanelles to have a look at the positions we were going to attack on the following morning. There was a considerable sea running, and as soon as the slings were slackened, and the boat began to ride to the waves, the starboard funnel, which was hinged to allow of its being laid flat when she was in the crutches, and had not yet been raised and secured, was so shaken by the violent motion of the boat that it snapped off close to the deck and rolled overboard. This made steering with a head wind very difficult, as the smoke all went into the steersman's eyes instead of being carried over his head; but I was not the sufferer on this occasion, as I did not take this particular trip, being busy on some important work in another part of the ship, and a substitute was sent in my place.

[144]

By this time a change had been made in our routine, and none of us were now officers' messengers, with the exception of Cunninghame and Baker, who were A.D.C.s to the Captain and the navigator respectively. The remaining seven were watch-keepers, and in this way there were two "snotties" to every watch but one.

Soon after my boat had gone away, having on board the Captain, Commander, captain of marines, and officers of turrets, a collier came alongside and we commenced coaling. My boat being duty steamboat (known in the vernacular as D.S.B.), I did not have to assist in coaling, and as soon as she returned from the cruiser "—," I was sent away in her with dispatches for the Flagship. One of my bowmen did not turn up when the boat's crew was piped, and when he eventually appeared the silly fool went and fell into the ditch! He was soon pulled out, however, and we started down the line. On the horizon I could see the mouth of the Dardanelles and one or two ships firing at intervals. As we passed down the Fleet I noticed one ship with half her funnel-casing blown off and another with a bit of her stern-walk missing, which showed we didn't always get it all our own way with the Turk.

[145]

After I had delivered my dispatches I returned to the ship and was promptly sent away again to take the gunner to the store-ship *Fauvette* to get some gunnery instruments. By this time the sea was very big for a small steamboat, and was almost dead on the beam. We were rolling nearly 60° each side, and constantly shipping seas, which poured down the stump of the broken funnel and nearly put the furnace out. The store-ship was a good two miles away, and it took us nearly half-an-hour to reach her. At last we got within about twenty yards of her, and I ran my boat down the leese, looking for a ladder or gangway; seeing none, I ran under her stern and went alongside to windward of her. Here the seas were enormous, and as we rose on a huge wave the gunner leaped for the ladder, missed his footing, hung on for a second, and then dropped into the sea between the boat and the ship's side. We managed to haul him out at once, but it was a bit of luck that the boat was not carried in towards the ship's side by a wave, as it would most certainly have crushed, and probably killed him. Once he was safe on board again I hailed the ship and asked them to put out a ladder on the leese, as I could see it was much too dangerous work going alongside to windward, and I didn't care to risk it again. Eventually the gunner's mission was safely accomplished, and we returned to our own ship without further incident.

[146]

After lunch I had to get my boat coaled and watered, and at about 5 p.m. the cruiser with our officers on board came back to her moorings, and I was sent to bring them off to our ship again. Then at 6.30. I had to take the Torpedo Lieutenant and the gunner (T.) over to *H.M.S.* "—," and to wait an hour for them, lying off in the dark with a big sea running. Thank goodness I am a good sailor—don't know what it is to be sea-sick; but anyone less fortunate in their interior economy would have had an uncommonly miserable time! As it was I was only rather cold, very hungry, and very bored. At last they reembarked and I returned on board and got my dinner, which I was much in need of.

[147]

That night we put to sea, and at 2 on the following morning "Action" sounded—the great landing at Gallipoli had begun. All water-tight doors were hastily closed and all electric light cut off.

We had to go up on deck to get to the Fore T.S., and away to the right could be seen the first faint streaks of dawn, and the land showing very faintly against the sky.

[148]

Down in the Fore T.S. we worked by candlelight, eagerly awaiting the sunrise when the great bombardment would begin.

• • • • •

*Of that bombardment he spoke but little, and wrote not at all. I think he felt it too big a thing to tackle.*

*The epic of the Gallipoli landings will, let us hope, one day be written by a pen worthy to depict that immortal tale of heroism, but I doubt if the whole truth can ever be spoken or written. There are some things of which men cannot and will not speak. A word, a sentence here and there, may lift for a moment a corner of the veil, but only those who went through that inferno will ever fully realise its horror.*

*Of my boy's own small part in it all I know a little—but only a very little. The ship was concerned in the landing at— Beach, and at 10 o'clock one morning he was sent away in his boat to fetch the wounded from the beach in question. Of course other midshipmen were doing the same thing in other boats.*

[149]

*Batch after batch of men horribly wounded, hideously mutilated, were rescued under fire, and conveyed to the hospital ships. He*

*spoke—brokenly—of the terrible wounds, the all-pervading stench of blood rising up beneath the fierce rays of the sun from his reeking boat; of the magnificent, indescribable heroism and patience of men mangled, and shattered, and torn.*

*Once for a time the ship had to go away down the straits for two miles, and he had to read the signals giving orders where to convey the rescued—and so—work on. One day he was on that duty from 10 in the morning until half-past 1 at night.*

*"What did you do for food?" I asked—perhaps foolishly.*

*"Oh, they threw me down a lump of cheese and a ship's biscuit, somewhere about midday, when I happened to be alongside."*

*"And was that all you had in all those hours? Surely they might have seen you had at least something to eat!"*

*"Eat—" he exclaimed scornfully, and then very patiently: "Don't you see, Mother, it was a question of men's lives! Some were bleeding to death; every second counted— How could we think of eating!"*

*So—shamed—I held my peace, hearing only that "it was a question of men's lives."*

*And these were the boys of whom a certain well-meaning but hysterical Member of Parliament wrote to the papers just after the sinking of the Aboukir, the Cressy, and the Hogue. He said it was monstrous to send such mere children to war, and that in point of fact they were of no use on the ships, and only a source of worry to their superior officers! One could wish that he had been present at Gallipoli. Some of those same boys won decorations which they may well wear proudly to-day, for they won them by deeds of magnificent fortitude and valour. Others again gave all they had—their health and their youth, and in some cases their lives, and I think the names of all those "children" are written in letters of flame on the Roll of England's Honour—England's Glory.*

*Some days later they were once more in comparative security. How comparative only those who have realised a fraction of that hell will recognise.*

*The ship was guarding the French flank when the end came—but—let it be told in his own words.*

[150]

[151]

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[152]

# CHAPTER XI

## THE SINKING OF THE SHIP

CRASH!—Bang!—Cr-r-r-ash! I woke with a start, and sitting up in my hammock gazed around to see what had so suddenly roused me. Some of the midshipmen were already standing on the deck in their pyjamas—others, like me, were sitting up half dazed with sleep. A party of ship's boys crowded up the ladder from the gun-room flat, followed by three officers; one of these, a sub-lieutenant R.N.R., called out: "Keep calm, and you'll all be saved."

Up to that moment it had never dawned upon me that the ship was sinking, and even then I thought it improbable until I noticed that we were already listing to starboard. Then I got up and walked up the hatch to the quarter-deck. The ship was now heeling about five degrees to starboard, and I climbed up to the port side. It was nearly pitch dark. A seaman rushing to help lower the boats charged into me, and I turned and swore at him. [153]

Gradually a crowd gathered along the port side. "Boat ahoy! Boat ahoy!" they yelled; but, as the ship listed more and more, and there was no sign or sound of any approaching vessel, the men's voices seemed to get a bit hopeless. The Commander was urging on a gang who were trying to get some heavy timber overboard; but, as we listed further and further over, they found it impossible to get it up on the port side and couldn't get round to starboard, as the capstan and the Captain's hatch and skylight were in the way. At last they gave it up, and going to the side joined their voices to those of the crew, who were trying to attract the attention of any vessel that might be in the vicinity.

Inside the ship everything which was not secured was sliding about and bringing up against the bulkheads with a series of crashes. Crockery was smashing—boats falling out of their crutches—broken funnel-guys swinging against the funnel casings. She had heeled over to about twenty degrees, then she stopped and remained steady for a few seconds. In the momentary lull the voice of one of our officers rang out steady and clear as at "divisions": "Keep calm, men. Be British!" [154]

Then the ship started to heel rapidly again, and I felt sure there was no chance of saving her. I turned to jump overboard. The Commander, who was standing a few paces away on my right, went over a second before me. Raising my arms above my head I sprang well out board and dived. Just before I struck the water my face hit the side of the ship. It was a horrid feeling sliding on my face down the slimy side, and a second later I splashed in with tremendous force, having dived about thirty feet.

Just as I was rising to the surface again a heavy body came down on top of me. I fought clear and rose rather breathless and bruised. I swam about fifty yards away, to get clear of the suction when the ship went down; then, turning round and treading water, I watched her last moments. The noise of crashing furniture and smashing crockery was continuous. Slowly her stern lifted until it was dimly outlined against the deep midnight sky. Slowly her bows slid further and further under until, with a final lurch, she turned completely over and disappeared bottom upwards in a mass of bubbles. [155]

She had been our home for nearly ten months—she was gone—vanished—in less than four minutes.

Turning over and swimming a slow side-stroke I made for *H.M.S. Cornwallis*, which I could discern faintly silhouetted against the sky about two-and-a-half miles distant. Suddenly something touched my leg, and the thought of the sharks we had watched from the bridge the previous afternoon flashed shudderingly across my mind—but it was only a floating potato! Soon the shrieks of the drowning grew faint in the distance and I swam on with three others near me. When I had been in the water for about twenty minutes I looked up and saw what I thought to be a boat. I shouted out, "Boat ahoy!"—and turning on my side swam for some time a fast side-stroke. When at last I rested and looked for the imagined boat, which ought to have been quite near by now, I discovered that I had somehow misfocussed the *Cornwallis*, and so come to imagine she was a small steamboat quite close instead of a battle-ship a mile and a half away. However, I felt quite confident of reaching her if only I persevered, so I continued to swim a slow side-stroke. Soon after [156]

this my pyjama jacket came undone, and I took it off as it hindered me. A few minutes later I sighted a huge spar about twenty feet long, probably the topgallant mast or lower boom from our ship. It must have been thrown a tremendous way by the force of the explosion to be so far down the channel. The current was very strong, and of course that was a great help to those who were swimming. I hung on to the spar for a minute or two to get my breath back a bit, and rubbed myself all over in order to restore the circulation, as by that time I was getting very cold. After a short rest I started off again to try and reach *H.M.S. Cornwallis*. Presently it seemed to me that I was not approaching her as rapidly as before, and almost at the same moment she switched on her searchlights, when I saw by their light that she was out of the main stream of the current, and that to reach her I should have to swim half a mile absolutely unaided by the flow of the tide. I tried to get in the beam of her searchlight, thinking she would be sure to have some boats out and that they would see me; but I found I was unable to manage this, and after about five minutes I gave up trying. Then I turned round and looked about for some other ship to essay and make for. About a quarter of a mile behind me, and slightly up stream, I saw another ship with all her searchlights going and I determined to try and reach her. I swam towards her, and presently saw two steamboats push off from her bow and make off up stream for the scene of the disaster, but they were too far off to hail. Five minutes later I heard the welcome plash of oars, and looking to my left saw a cutter approaching with a man in the bows sweeping the surrounding water with a hand lantern. I yelled out, "Boat ahoy!" and back came the cheering answer: "All right, we're coming. Hang on!"

[157]

[158]

A minute later the lantern flashed in my face, a pair of strong arms grasped me by the shoulders and hauled me clear of the water.

I must have fainted then, for I remember nothing more until I became dimly conscious as in a dream that I was in the stern sheets of a boat lying alongside some other vessel. A man's voice said, "Here's a midshipman, sir," and next moment I was picked up and set down on the deck.

[159]

Barely conscious as yet of my surroundings, I was taken into a sort of cabin, where I was given some neat rum. It was very fiery and nearly choked me, but it bucked me up a bit all the same. Then I was conducted down to the boiler-room, where some one stripped off my pyjama trousers (my one remaining garment), and I sat down on a locker before the furnace and soon got a degree of warmth back into my body.

Presently I heard the voice of one of our lieutenants speaking up above, and called out to him to know how he'd come off. Then I was helped up the gangway again and into a small sort of saloon in the stern. Here I was given some more rum, a very large sweater, and a pair of blue serge trousers belonging to one of the crew, and when I had put them on I lay down in a bunk and immediately fell asleep. About an hour later I woke up and found the saloon full of officers and men.

The Lieutenant to whom I had spoken in the boiler-room was sitting at the table. He was dressed in a jersey and a seaman's duck trousers. Two other survivors, a marine and an armourer, were also at the table, and across the saloon in the bunk opposite mine lay a gunner's mate. I asked the Lieutenant what time our ship was struck. He said his watch had stopped at 1·29 a.m., when he jumped into the sea, and so he presumed we were torpedoed at about 1·27, as the ship only took *three and a half minutes* to go down. She had been struck on the starboard side by three torpedoes fired from a Turkish torpedo-boat, which had drifted down the straits keeping close inshore, and thus eluded our destroyer patrol. To give the enemy his due it was a jolly smart piece of work.

[160]

It was now somewhere about 3·30 a.m., and, as I did not feel inclined to sleep any more, they gave me some hot cocoa and some bread-and-cheese. I drank the former, but the bread-and-cheese was more than I felt equal to just then. About 6 o'clock the Lieutenant was transferred to another ship for medical treatment, as his back was badly bruised by drifting wreckage; and half-an-hour later the rest of the survivors were reembarked in *H.M.S. Lord Nelson's* cutter, the same that had picked us up; and leaving the trawler she took us to the *Lord Nelson*.

[161]

When we got on board I was at once taken down to the gun-room, where I found four more of our "snotties" who had also been rescued. One more was reported as having safely swum ashore; but there was no news of the other three, and subsequently it transpired that they had been lost.

The survivors were mostly sleeping—the sleep of exhaustion. We had all had a pretty tough fight for it, and I realised then how uncommonly lucky we had been in escaping not only alive, but for the most part uninjured. Cunninghame had a nasty cut on his head, but the rest of us were only suffering from minor bruises, and of course to a certain extent from shock.

One of the *Lord Nelson's* middies kindly lent me some old uniform, and after I had dressed I made a parcel of the clothes I had been lent on the trawler and took them to the ship's corporal, and asked him to see that they were returned to their owner.

I remembered, with an odd sense of unreality, that the last time I had been in the *Lord Nelson* was at the manœuvres the previous July!

On my way up to the deck I met three more of our lieutenants, and we exchanged accounts of our experiences. From them I learned that our Commander had been saved, and was also on board; but there was no news of the Captain. Some days later I heard that his body had been picked up, and it was thought that he had been killed by the falling of the pinnace when the ship turned over just before she sank.

At 7:30 we put to sea and proceeded to Port Mudros. On the way, and after divisions, the lower deck was cleared, the whole ship's company, together with the survivors from our ship, mustered on the quarter-deck, and then took place a mournful ceremony, which poignantly brought home to us the fate we had so narrowly escaped.

Through the battery—very softly—came the sound of muffled drums, growing gradually louder as the band advanced. Then appeared a procession of seamen from our lost ship, headed by the *Lord Nelson's* chaplain, and carrying three stretchers, on each of which lay a body covered with the Union Jack. The first was that of our Fleet paymaster, and the other two those of a seaman and marine respectively. The bodies were lifted from the stretchers and laid reverently on a platform slanting towards the water, which had been erected on the port side. Clearly and solemnly the chaplain recited the beautiful Burial Service, and as he uttered the words "we therefore commit their bodies to the deep," the staging was tilted and the weighted corpses slid feet foremost into the sea.

The service ended with three volleys fired over the side and then the long sobbing wail of the "Last Post" rang out across the still waters in final farewell.

When we were dismissed we went below in silence, awed by the solemnity of this last committal to the deep of those with whom we had lived and worked side by side for ten long months.

[162]

[163]

[164]

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[165]

## CHAPTER XII

### HOME

At 4 o'clock that afternoon the *Lord Nelson* anchored in Mudros Harbour, and shortly afterwards we were mustered on deck and then disembarked and taken to the store-ship *Fauvette*, where cabins were allotted to each two of us midshipmen.

The following day two torpedo-boats came alongside, and the Lieutenant-Commander of the whole squadron of T.B.s based at Malta came aboard to lunch. It was the great ambition of each of us "snotties" to get appointed to one of these sporting little craft; but we feared there was but little chance of such a stroke of luck, as they do not, as a rule, carry midshipmen. However, there was no harm in hoping!

Next forenoon one of our lieutenants told us that two of our number were to go to an armoured liner which was lying in the harbour, and suggested that we should draw lots to determine which of us it should be. Browne was away somewhere at the moment, and, as there was no time to be lost, we had to do the drawing without him. Baker and I seemed to be rather lucky at lotteries, for, as once before, we drew the winning numbers. I was not, however, particularly elated as I was still secretly hankering after service on a T.B. [166]

We packed up the few articles of clothing we had obtained from the *Lord Nelson*, and, together with the Lieutenant, who was also going to the auxiliary cruiser, we were just embarking in the cutter, when, as we were about to shove off, Browne came alongside in another boat. Hastily we drew lots again, but the result was the same, and we went off to our appointed ship.

When we got on board we were asked our names, and then the Captain informed me he had orders to take Browne instead of me; so I returned to the *Fauvette* and told him he was to take my place. No sooner had I lost this billet than, with human cussedness, I began to regret it. After all, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and the job would have been quite a good one. [167]

However, my discontent was short-lived, for I soon found that, after all, my luck was "in." That afternoon I was leaning over the stanchions looking at the shipping in the harbour, and wondering what fate might have in store for me, when the Lieutenant-Commander of the T.B.s and the Captain of the *Fauvette* came along the deck and stopped close to where I was standing, and I heard the former say that he intended—if he could get the Admiral's permission—to take one of the rescued midshipmen to act as second in command of his torpedo-boat. I pricked up my ears at that, and, a few minutes later, when Captain— had gone below, I summoned up all my courage (call it cheek, if you like), and, regardless of the snub I was undoubtedly asking for, I went boldly up to the Lieutenant-Commander and told him I had overheard what he had said, and asked him if he would not take me if he could, as I was most awfully keen to serve on a T.B. [168]

He was frightfully kind, and did not seem a bit annoyed or surprised, nor did he hand me the snubbing I had invited; but he explained that, although at the moment the job I coveted was pleasant enough and not too strenuous, it was likely to be a very stiff service later on, and he asked if I really felt I should be equal to it.

Of course I declared that I felt perfectly fit and equal to anything, and would do my level best if only I could get the billet; so then he said he would ask for me.

As soon as he had left me I dashed below to tell the others of the glorious luck which might be in store for me.

Next morning Lieutenant-Commander— came aboard again, and to my intense delight told me I was duly appointed to his T.B. and could join that afternoon! Further, he invited me there and then to go off with him and have a look round the boat. I found it a very different proposition to the big ship to which I had been accustomed. To begin with, there was only one tiny cabin, called by courtesy the ward-room, in which we would live and eat and sleep, and my new skipper warned me that when we were at sea it would often be three feet deep in water. However, I felt it would require much more water than that to damp my ardour for this new and [169]

exciting work.

Then he gave me a brief explanation of the duty on which the T.B.s were then engaged. That night, he said, we would in all probability go out on patrol duty just outside the boom until relieved at 6 the next morning. Then we might proceed to sea and patrol the waters surrounding the island of Lemnos. Doubtless we should anchor in some small bay for the night, and early next morning return to harbour, when we should have a day off, and so on and so forth. Twenty-four hours' patrol and then twenty-four hours' rest. Forty-eight hours' rest was the general rule, but, as one of the T.B.s had run aground the week before, and had had to be sent to Malta for repairs, we were short-handed.

[170]

Presently I returned to the *Fauvette* to get what necessaries I could obtain from the steward in charge of the stores. All he managed to provide me with was a set of pants and vest, of the coarsest and most horsehair description, a pound of yellow soap, and a pair of enormous and most dreadfully ugly boots. However, even these were better than nothing, and, with the borrowed plumes in which I stood up, they had to serve; and, moderately thankful for small mercies, I said "good-bye" to my former messmates and went off to my new ship.

That night I slept on one of the settees which served the single cabin for seats and lockers by day as well as for bunks by night, and early the next morning we put to sea on patrol duty, carrying a crew of sixteen in addition to the Commander and myself.

When we got outside the harbour the engines were stopped, and all hands bathed. No particular incident occurred during our patrol, and the next morning, after being relieved by another T.B., we proceeded for duty off the island.

[171]

My enjoyment of the three weeks I spent in this service was due in no little measure to the personal charm of my skipper, who was not only the most considerate and tactful officer to serve under, but a most charming and interesting companion. The work was mainly routine on the lines indicated above, and although there was plenty of variety, and at times no little excitement, to enlarge further on our doings would be waste of pen and ink, as any more detailed account would probably be "omitted by order of the censor"!

It had not occurred to me that those august, and occasionally paternally minded, powers who preside over the sailor-man's earthly destiny, would think it necessary to send me home on leave. "Leave" had long since been relegated in my mind to that dim and distant future "after the war." Doubtless the said powers in their wisdom realised—as at that time I certainly did not—the inevitable strain following on my narrow escape from the sinking ship.

[172]

It was, however, with some surprise and much regret that I heard from the Commander on the 1st of June, that he had been ordered to send me at once to the auxiliary cruiser *Carmania*, on which ship I was to proceed to England.

Very reluctantly I took leave of the T.B. and her genial Commander, and went on board the armed liner, where I found most of the survivors from my old ship. Alas! they were tragically few, for out of a ship's company of 760, only 160 men and 20 officers had been saved.

The *Carmania*, which still bore scars resulting from her tremendous battle with the Cap Trafalgar earlier in the war, weighed anchor on the following day, and four days later reached Malta, where she coaled. Here I went ashore and managed to buy a ready-made reefer suit and other necessary garments; and I was uncommonly glad to feel once more respectably clad.

[173]

Our voyage was uneventful. Now that there was no duty to be performed I think most of us began to feel a bit slack, but our spirits rose as they turned homewards. We had not seen our people for nearly thirteen months, and the necessarily strict censorship of all our letters had of course increased the sense of separation.

On June 12 we arrived at Devonport, and our Commander went ashore and shortly afterwards returned with the welcome information that we had all been granted a fortnight's leave.

Leave! Cheer-o! We wasted no time in getting ashore, and I at once wired to my home telling my mother that I had arrived, and was going straight to London to the house of some cousins who had offered me hospitality whenever I might need it, and that I would there await instructions as I did not know where she might be. A fast train landed us at Paddington about 5 o'clock, and I took a taxi

[174]



to S—— Place.

• • • • • • •

*The Admiralty had informed me that he had sailed for England on the 2nd, and I knew he would go to London according to instruction, so I was able to be there to meet him.*

*I had not seen him since he left for Dartmouth, nearly fourteen months before. Then he was a round-faced, rosy boy....*

*Up the steps, dragging a seaman's canvas kit-bag, came a tall, thin figure, white of face, drawn, haggard—incredibly old. I had not quite realised this. For a second my heart stood still—— Where was my boy?*

*Then he saw me waiting in the hall, and his face lighted with half-incredulous joyous wonder: "Mother! You here!"*

• • • • • • •

*My boy was gone for ever—but my son had come home.*

Te Deum Laudamus.

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—Obvious print and punctuation errors were corrected.

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