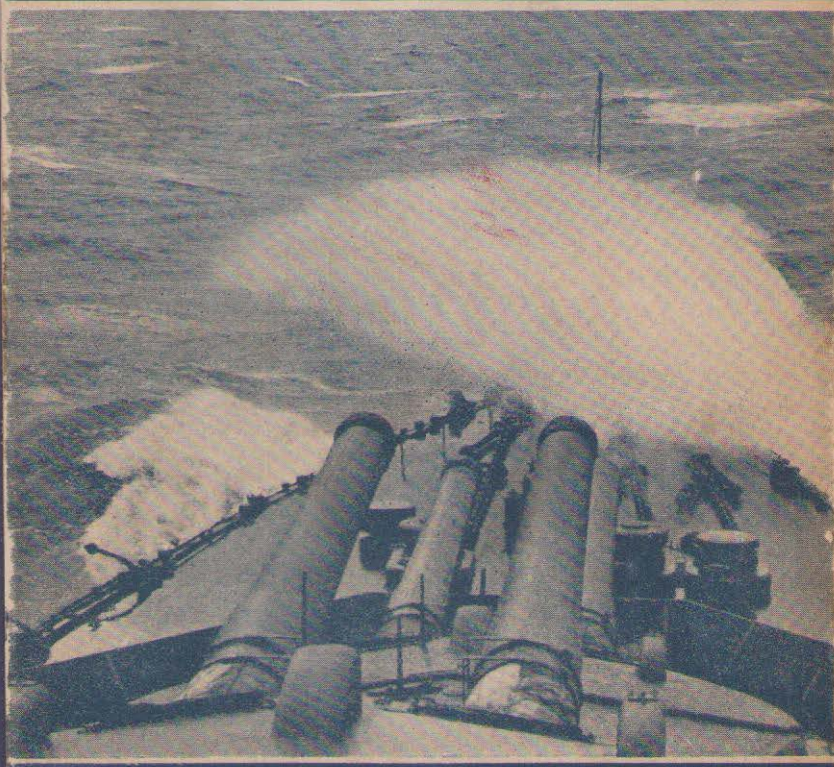


# "BREAK!"

HOW THE BRITISH SEAMEN  
PREPARE FOR WAR



By A NAVAL OFFICER  
Illustrated

Price One Shilling Net

ENLARGED AND REVISED EDITION



H.M. THE KING AND MR. ASQUITH ON BOARD  
H.M.S. "QUEEN MARY."

6018.

"THE FLEET" SERIES. No. 1.



# "Break!"

How the British Seamen Prepare for War

By A NAVAL OFFICER

With Articles by E. Hallam Moorhouse  
and Lionel Yexley



Illustrated

LONDON  
"THE FLEET"  
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“ BREAK ! ”

**B**REAK the pennant ! Britain is ready on the sea.

Here a fleet of enormous battleships show themselves, by their broken pennants, ready to resist the attack of the torpedo, for smartly they have obeyed the order, “ Out nets.”

There a cruiser squadron rushes out of harbour at a wireless order, and as they go by, their breaking pennants show their “ Clear for action ” order is being smartly obeyed.

Before them rush the “ assassins of the sea ” —the destroyers. At an unexpected signal they prepared for sea, and as they broke their pennants of readiness, slipped their buoys, and with loaded torpedo tubes, went forth on their secret errand.

Yes, the ships and the men are ready.



## INTRODUCTION

BY LIONEL YEXLEY

**E**FFICIENCY—that is the watchword of the Navy. Not a pseudo-efficiency measured by the smartness by which this or that evolution can be carried out, but a war efficiency which at the signal “Break” can place our fleet fully manned and fully equipped on the seas at once. It was not always so. When the Crimean War broke out sixty years ago it took weeks and weeks to fit our ships for sea, and their efficiency, when at last they did start, was of a very low order indeed. But for the past ten years peace smartness has given place to serious preparation for war, and to-day practically within forty-eight hours we can man and equip our reserve ships ready to take their place if necessary in the line of battle.

Evolutions are the method of preparation, and the articles in this book, written by one who lives and has his being on board ships of war, should give the lay reader a fair idea of how the navy prepares for war. When not at evolutions, time is spent in carrying out some item of the usual routine. By it every moment of a naval man's life is governed. It provides for individual comfort, is essential to procure efficiency; it provides for the proper care of

nine years ago there was introduced what was called a nucleus crew system, whereby every ship in reserve had on board a nucleus of the principal officers and skilled ratings. Stores and ammunition were also on board and so every reserve ship was ready at a moment's notice for the signal to "Break." The residue of the crews, whether these were the unskilled portion of active service ratings or reserves, knew to a man to what ship or depôt they belonged. The unskilled active service ratings would be either at the gunnery or torpedo schools or the great naval barracks under training, each of these knew the exact ship he belonged to, and where to fall in should the word be given to "mobilise."

This evolution is carried out periodically, the men mustered with bags and hammocks ready to be marched off to their respective ships, which could by these means be fully manned and ready for sea within twenty-four hours.

The Reserves, that is pensioners and Royal Fleet Reserve and Royal Naval Reserve men, each knew the particular depôt he had to go to on the word mobilise. In July, 1914, we put this to a partial test for a purely peace evolution, and at once placed 22 miles of warships at Spithead for his Majesty King George V. to review. Then with a startling suddenness war was hurled at us, and on Sunday, August 2nd, "My Lords" put all the machinery of war into operation by calling out all our Naval Reserves as follows :

## MOBILISATION OF NAVAL RESERVES

- Royal Fleet Reserve, Immediate Class.
- Royal Fleet Reserve, Class A.
- Royal Fleet Reserve, Class B.
- Royal Naval Reserve, all classes (including Trawler Section).
- Naval Pensioners.
- Marine Pensioners.
- Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

The Admiralty have given orders that the above classes of Naval Reserves and Naval and Marine Pensioners shall be called into actual service.

## NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

by their Lordships that all Naval and Marine Pensioners under the age of 55, and all men of the Royal Fleet Reserve and Royal Naval Reserve are to proceed forthwith to the ship or establishment already notified them, or, failing any previous orders, they are to report themselves in person immediately, as shown below, viz. :—

- Naval and Marine pensioners, including men of Class A, Royal Fleet Reserve, to their pensioner centre officer.
- Royal Fleet Reserve, Class B. to the registrar at their port of enrolment.
- Royal Fleet Reserve, Immediate Class, in accordance with instructions already issued.
- Royal Naval Reserve, all classes, to the nearest registrar of Naval Reserve (superintendent of a Mercantile Marine Office).



Men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve are all to report themselves immediately to their officer instructor or volunteer mobilising officer, irrespective of whether they have been previously appropriated or not.

All men should, if possible, appear in uniform, and bring with them their regulation kit, certificate book or service certificate, and in the case of pensioners their pension identity certificate.

Men who, through absence at sea or for other unavoidable cause, are unable to join immediately are to report themselves as soon as possible.

Reasonable travelling expenses will be allowed.

By command of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

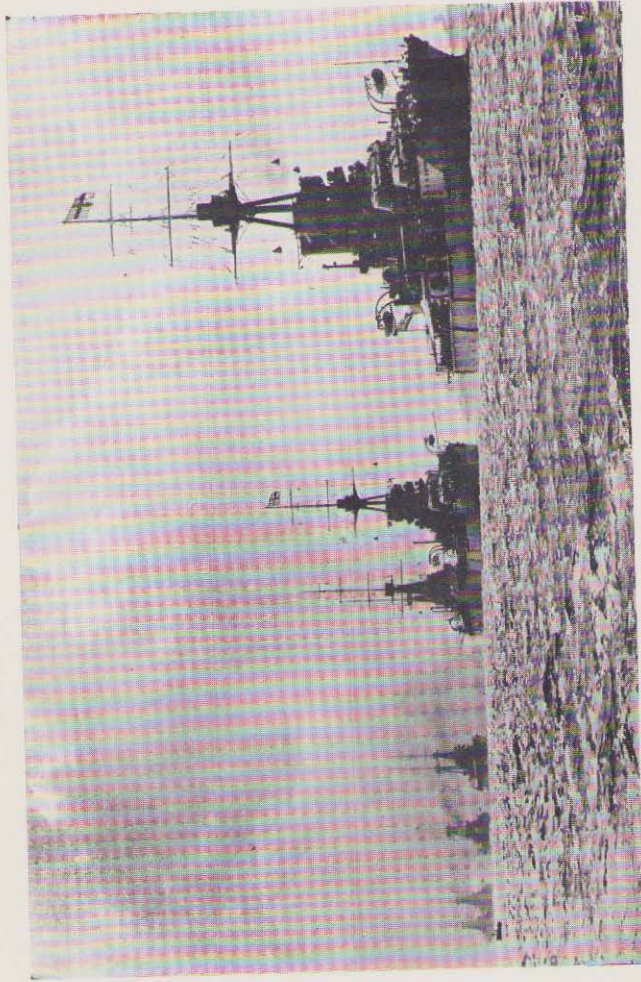
\* \* \* \*

At last the sinister order has been given :  
“ Break ! ” and the pennant of war flies unfurled  
at the mast-head. Britain is ready on the sea.  
With what ceaseless activity and strenuous  
endeavour she has prepared herself for her  
task this book tells.





H.M.S. "MONARCH" CLEARED FOR ACTION, FIRING A BROADSIDE.



H. M. S. "IRON DUKE," FOLLOWED BY H. M. S. "MARLBOROUGH" AND SHIPS OF THE  
FIRST BATTLE SQUADRON.

## THE BRITISH BLUEJACKET

By E. HALLAM MOORHOUSE

FINE old crusted traditions surround the British bluejacket—surround and hide him to a certain extent, so that while his countrymen are aware that the "wooden walls" of England are no more, and that complicated ironclads take the place of the old first-rates they are slow to realise that as the ships have changed so have the men. The modern man-of-war's man is a totally different being to the tar of Nelson's day: his life, his training, his duties, all are different. Only in one respect is he the same: he is still as ready to fight and die for his country—and die, too, in unpleasant ways—as was ever the typical bull-dog seaman of the past. Indeed, it may be questioned whether men who in the old days faced boarding or broadside without flinching might not shrink from the horrors of a destroyer's stokehold, or the "blindfold game of war" in a submarine.

It may be taken for granted that English people as a whole think a lot of the bluejacket—they admire his proved courage, his adaptability, his gaiety and grit, not less than the picturesque freedom of his appearance. But to admire is not necessarily to understand. There is only one way to get to know the British "blue," and that way is to drop all suspicion of patronage or



"naval slumming," to dissever oneself from that portion of the public which, as Kipling says, "is apt to lump everything that does not carry the executive curl on his coat-sleeve as some sort of common sailor"; and when you have seen the bluejacket not only ashore but in his proper surroundings afloat, when you have watched him handling guns and torpedoes, where a mistake may mean death, with careless ease and surety, and have listened to him as he expounds muzzle velocities or favours you with his views on the canteen system—then you will feel with Kipling that "he is no longer a unit; but altogether such an one as yourself—only, as I have said, better."

The true bluejacket seems constitutionally incapable of recognising danger when he sees it, and it is this temper which shows up so finely amid the dangers and discomforts of war. The fleetmen are not given to heroics: they do things simply without magnifying them into magnificence, and will give a humorous twist to an action that strikes a landsman as superb. This reticence runs right through the Navy. Everyone remembers the words of Commander Egerton when both his legs were blown off by a Boer shell at Ladysmith, "There's an end to my cricket, I'm afraid," he said as he was carried away to die. And in the same siege a Petty Officer who was looking through a telescope just vacated by Commander Limpus had a portion of his thigh blown away by a shell fragment, but he sat down and lit his pipe, telling the officer that

it was lucky he left when he did. Praise was showered on the Naval Brigades during the South African War, one General going so far as to say that the bluejackets "were worth their weight in gold." But those who know the severity of the naval standard will feel that there was a finer concentration in Commander Ogilvie's quiet statement that the behaviour of the brigades was "quite up to the standard expected of all seamen." There you have the Navy—which talks little but does much.

There is a curious continuity in naval tradition, and though the sailormen have changed in training and outlook, a certain recklessness of temper so far as danger is concerned remains unaltered. In the Crimea, for instance, as is related in Mrs. Kelly's *From the Fleet in the Fifties*, the men of the Naval Brigade "grumbled if they were not allowed to offer themselves as a certain pot shot at 30 yards to the Russian sharpshooters. They had their own way of firing, and they would stick to it. The N.B. *would* fire broadsides. There was always something the matter with the guns till the last one in the battery was loaded, then, with or without orders, away went the broadside and the gunners jumped up on the parapet, each to watch his own shot."

Nearly fifty years later in South Africa the same spirit was again manifest. "Linesman" describing the battle of Almond's Nek says:

"It was at this juncture that the perilous situation of the Naval Artillery became apparent. Accompanied only by their scanty infantry



escort, they forged right ahead of the main body, and actually arrived upon the dominating top of the plateau, with nothing between them and the Boers but empty ether, and the sublime self-reliance of the mariner on shore."

This "sublime self-reliance" is the direct result of the naval system of training which teaches the bluejacket to stand light-heartedly upon the very edge of danger. The ordinary circumstances of his daily life are passed among sleeping powers of destruction. There are so many accidents that may—and that do—happen on board a man-o'-war; that more do not occur is simply due to the efficiency with which these masses of steel and iron are handled. In getting up an anchor the capstan may "take charge" and smash in the ribs of half a dozen men; or a "misfire" may kill and injure a whole gun's crew in casemate and barbette; and everyone will remember the terrible things that happen sometimes in the stokeholds and engine-rooms of our Navy. These, and many more, are the daily and hourly risks of the men wearing the blue jumper, and they are one and all brushed carelessly aside to gain the satisfaction of beating a "chummy ship" at prize-firing, coaling, or any other form of evolution. No effort is too great to win that little flutter of bunting from the flagship which spells the Admiral's approval, "Evolution creditably performed." The civilian guest watching the marvel of speed and discipline would have asked a stronger word than "creditably"—but then he is only a civilian! For that

cool little word of the Admiral's a ship's company have panted and strained and flung themselves into the boats or upon the torpedo nettings, recking little of trapped feet or torn hands; and it is this spirit of emulation, this determination to be first, which makes the British Navy what it is. The Navy does not wait till war comes to test its efficiency, but in peace time tries ship by ship and man by man upon the touchstone of peril. In this stern service officers and men alike are conscious that there is no room for mistakes, that if they blunder disaster ever waits close upon their heels.

Mr. F. T. Jane once extolled the magnificently reckless type of naval officer—Drake *redivivus*—who command our fleet of destroyers. He must be young because he must above all things be daring, and older nerves cannot stand the strain. But what of the men who alone make his command possible? The Lieutenant-Commander of the destroyer may be, to all intents and purposes, a mere boy; but his crew, the gunners and torpedo men, the engineer and the stokers who commit their lives to his keeping aboard "300-feet of shod death" are not boys but grown men who often have many dependent on them. Why do they do it? Not because they are pressed, for they volunteer in greater numbers than are needed, but partly because of the extra pay, and principally because of that everlasting naval desire to "know things." And it takes more to check his desire than such disasters as overtook the destroyers "Thrasher,"



"Cobra," or "Daring," or the terrible fate that has befallen the crews of several of our submarines. But whatever risks he has run in the Service you won't get a naval man to enlarge upon his notions or his feelings. The writer was talking to a Petty Officer who was one of those saved (as was also Admiral Jellicoe) when the "Victoria" went down, and referred to the magnificent conduct of the ship's company. "There didn't seem much call to be afraid," said the bluejacket quietly. And on another occasion a Torpedo Instructor, speaking of his lengthy experience in destroyers, admitted that the life "was 'orrid dirty, but the work's interesting, and we can't let them furriners get in ahead of us."

It is discipline that binds the Service into one solid whole, and it is discipline which has produced the finest body of men, in the *personnel* of the Royal Navy, that any nation can boast of. Taken collectively or individually, the British bluejacket is not to be beaten or even matched, for as Mr. Bullen says, "Loyal, earnest, and fearless, the man-o'-war's man of to-day is the fine flower of the sea."

## TO THE DEATH

"Predestination in the *clank* o' yon connect-in'-rod."

THE time has passed for the engines of our war navy when connecting-rods clanked, but the poet's words hold good even now when they "buzz." They now suggest infinity as their predestination, but not to the unsentimental people in charge of them. The latter think not of destination, for even now, in this cruiser of 16,000 tons hurrying along the Indian Ocean to meet the enemy in battle, the stoker moves about the engine as he did in peace time; he does not think of the terrible possibilities of war, so the engines "buzz" at their hundreds of revolutions per minute, and the stokers "oil" and "feel" for four hours, then "relieve" and "go up" to sleep, though many of them are doomed to an everlasting sleep in the near future. We are to prevent an ambitious movement of a great European power anxious to secure a port by any means in her power to vie with those of British India. We have the power of commencing a war; we hope also that we have the power of stopping it in the bud.

The enemy is before us—two cruisers similar to ourself in guns, in armour, and in size, but they are under a flag which has not been dis-



tinguished by glory on the sea. Their seamen have no great examples of naval bravery to follow, whilst we are under the white ensign, the crosses of St. George, St. Andrew and St. Patrick; our men are the English, Irish and Scots, whose forefathers swept the Spanish main and crushed great combined navies at Trafalgar, the Nile, and other parts of the world. And now we beat to quarters; no long yarn from the newspapers has been "piled into us" by our blunt but beloved "skipper." At divisions he merely said, "Give 'em hell!" He could not have said better what he meant; he could not have told us better what to do, so the words must be excused their objection. We are nearing the enemy at full speed. We are not yet at war with them, but the outlook for peace is bad. The two ships are unmoored, and they are clear for action; and so are we. It seems doubtful as to whether there will be any parleying until they or we capitulate or sink. And it proves so. A white haze drifts away from the larger ship, a shrieking shell falls short of us; war by that shot has been declared.

Still we move on at full speed, while crews stand at their guns, men wait in the ammunition passages, the captain stands in the conning tower engines rush madly round, and stokers shovel and rake.

Now the enemy spurt towards us; our little steering engine rattles round, and we swing a broadside towards them. Simultaneously barbetstes and casemates shoot a rain of shrapnel.

Funnels fall in the enemy, light upper works disappear. But we receive an answer, though from our smart manœuvring the enemy can bring but few guns to bear. Crash! our quarter-deck becomes a twisted maze; thud! the ship trembles, half an "armour-piercer" is embedded in our belt; but now we are warmed to the work. Zig-zagging along at topmost speed, ten rounds from this broadside, ten from that, we are doing as requested—"Giving 'em hell!" but, at the same time, we are far from coming through scathless. The after-screen bulkhead has been penetrated; for five minutes escaping steam defied the seamen to use the barbette, and now an engineer, half boiled, lays delirious in a bathroom, but the barbette again twists and turns the black snouts of its guns ever on the enemy.

Now we try a torpedo. "Click" goes the little electric key in the conning tower, "swish" rushes the compressed air, and the glittering messenger of death speeds towards the enemy. It fails; we will not waste time in such uncertain warfare. On and fight them with the honest gun, race them in ammunition supply. Well placed by the captain, we are fighting two ships at no disadvantage, for one is on one side, one on the other, and such a distribution is a sign of their approaching demoralisation. If we can keep going the day is ours, but the fight is fierce. The buffets of the shells are terrific, the crashes of dismounted guns, the cries of unconscious wounded are frequent. And now we hear the



fire-bell, but the fire we will leave to the stokers of the watches off. We hope they will conquer it, but it must be serious, for smoke is pouring up the ammunition hoist; but our mates below do not desist in sending up ammunition by the same path, though they are choking, and far below we hear the grunting engines, strained to their utmost, shaken on their beds by terrific shocks—they are "on their last legs." Steam pours from them everywhere, but in the blinding scalding fog still the stokers grope and oil, excepting those who have slipped their scalded hands, and now lay heedless while crank and lever tear them limb from limb. In the stokehold the scene is one of fury. Men strained to the utmost fall on glowing "clinker" and remain while coal-skids trundle over them; steam bursts from every seam, from every valve; sparks fly from heated fan-bearings, but in the midst of the turmoil the hands of the steam gauges remain at "full steam," and still the ship rushes on between her enemies, turning this way and that, pouring destruction wholesale. But now a fresh disaster overtakes us. A shell has unseated the conning tower, and our skipper is in it; but, thank goodness, he has been dragged out, and now bravely stands unprotected in the diminishing fire of the enemy, a twisted voice-pipe at his mouth, on the ruins of what was lately his security, still directing the ship. We who can catch an occasional glimpse of him cannot forbear a cheer; the cheer is taken up by the other guns. It is the last act of a good

fight, for as our cheer penetrates through the roar of the guns to the enemy, their ensigns flutter down—they strike, strike to England, the Mistress of the Sea.

All wars are not bad things. They are the storms of God stirring up the stagnant nations to new purity of life. The people that cannot fight shall die.—H. FIELDING HALL.



## FIRE QUARTERS

“**B**E ready for anything!” is a standing order of the Navy; but “be absolutely prepared for war” is its chief aim. And war means fire—the fire of guns, of shell explosions, of disarranged electrical gear, of overheated battened-down combustibles, and of unforeseen accidents. When plucky Japan first fought with modern warships against China, fire was her ally. Fighting China’s more powerful battleships in their own strongholds, Japan’s handful of cruisers, by well-directed shots, put the enemy out of action by setting fire to their wooden fittings which had been erected for comfort and decoration. The arrangements for putting out fire are now very complete in all navies, and the drills for that purpose are being constantly carried out. Smartness at “fire quarters” is the object aimed at, and although this evolution is the least interesting of any to the men, to those unacquainted with the various duties of the man-o’-war’s man the evolution would be very entertaining. I will therefore attempt to describe it as carried out—on an average, bi-weekly—in all our ships. The ship’s bell—sometimes a looted one from a Chinese pagoda, sometimes a relic of a famous “wooden wall,” sometimes only a dockyard fitting—in

measured tones rings eight bells in the afternoon; at the same time the bugler calls the men to “quarters,” an institution which at sea is apparently useless, being the descendant of the old “evening battle and sail-stowing quarters” of the sailing-ship days. The men are mustered, and it is usually ascertained that “none have been drowned,” “no sleepy stoker is asleep over the boilers”; all but those on watch stand on the upper-deck, whether the ship is “rolling her inside out,” or whether she lays against the dockyard wall. An evening evolution is expected to follow the muster; all eyes watch the Commander as he quickly walks forward to report to the Captain on the fore-bridge. He is followed by bugler and messenger, and now the bugler puts bugle to his lips and the familiar “fire quarters” sounds. A man rushes to the bell, and it breaks into a quick tolling. All hands move to the hatchways when the “Still!” sounds, and all but the bell are silent until the Commander shouts “Fire in the gunners’ store!” The bugles sound the “Carry on,” and bos’uns’ mates take up the cry, “Fire in the gunners’ store!” But there is no mad rush for the fire; no matter what heroes stand undiscovered ready to fight the flames, they and all others move to their pre-appointed stations, there to burst into activity in the unrolling of leather and canvas hoses. But brute force is not the only means to be employed in subduing the fire. Men have now flocked about the Commander at the scene of the fire with a wonderful



variety of instruments—bundles of keys, spanners of all shapes, strange little cans of water, and other things which to the ignorant would seem useless, but to the initiated signify the flooding of magazines, the stoppage of ventilation, &c., by the opening and closing of many valves hidden below. And now the hoses arrive from all parts, the brass nozzles project into the hapless store-room where, groping amidst the fuses, &c., wanders the diver in his smoke cap—a strange being. And now all is ready; in the engine room two little pumps stand ready with full steam on to supply hundreds of tons of water per hour; on the steel deck hundreds of men stand, hands on the pump handles, ready to supply another hundred tons in the same time. Along the fire system stand leading stokers, ready directly the bugle sounds to open the valves to deluge the store-room. But to-day it is spared; the Commander shouts, "No. 1 Main!" "Sir," is the answer, as a brass nozzle is lifted; "No. 2," and so on; "A pump," "B pump," &c. All hoses are trained on the supposed fire and ready to speedily extinguish it. And now the order comes: "Fire spreading starboard side upper-deck for'ard!" Away go the Commander, hoses, keys, spanners, and men to the upper deck. The hoses are pointed over the side of the ship, the Commander shouts "Heave round," bugles sound, and hand-pumps, steam-pumps, and valves start together; the limp hoses swell, spurts of water issue from the nozzles, and in a moment develop into solid jets

shooting from the ship and breaking into spray thirty yards from her. The exercise is completed; the bugles sound the "Cease fire," and soon the hoses are hoisted into the air to drain and dry, and Jack "pipes down" to a five o'clock "tea."

God takes care of the world; take thou care of thy country.—BACON.



## PUMPS

APPARENTLY a subject of extreme "dryness"—not that pumps themselves are dry (for when they are it is a "sad case"), but because talk of such mechanical things usually indicates mathematical problems, and such worries as this little publication should deal with in moderation.

But a perfect knowledge of these creatures is always reminiscent of occurrences strangely sad, of many anxious moments, of lives risked, of lives saved, of desperation, of delight, and the many other mingled feelings consequent with those who have to control the concentrations of nature's power in engines and boilers.

Everyone has heard of the fast-sinking sailing ship, of the expiring energy of the weary crew as they strain at the pumps while the long looked-for help speeds towards them; but few know of the pumps of the armour-bound warship, and it is of these I would chiefly tell. Imagine the armoured cruiser of the power of 30,000 horses "panicing" along at twenty-four knots (over twenty-seven miles an hour), a dead weight of 13,000 tons, propelled by two little propellers. Now let us trace this marvellous energy from these propellers to the pumps, and note their all-important functions. Up the hollow twirling shaft we move into the engine



ONE OF THE LATEST BRITISH SUBMARINES





THE FLAG OF A FRENCH FLAGSHIP WITH H.M.S. "IRON DUKE" IN THE BACKGROUND.

room. The place is fearful to us. The heat and the complexity of things bewilders us. We are told that there the 30,000 horses are working. We can almost believe this statement literally.

Now we are moved to the stokeholds: men are shovelling and raking, and fierce lights burst upon us as fire after fire has its insatiable appetite satisfied for a few minutes. But the evidence of 30,000 horses is no longer with us, only that of forty men. But deep and portentous groans are uttered from various corners; what do they tell of? and we watch a grave, anxious man go into a corner and, in the flash of an opened furnace, turn a little wheel, then move away to watch a foot of glass tube in which water bobs up and down while those awful groans increase. We inquire, and are told that the groans are from the feed pump; we inspect it and see two large cylinders, one large slowly moving rod, and a few smaller ones which seem to control it. The large rod moves up and down, and we can easily imagine the biting grip of the groaning metals as the plunger in one cylinder, driven by the steam piston in the other, forces the reluctant water into the boilers before us. And those boilers are trembling with bottled energy, and we think of explosions caused by lack of water in such, of rending seams, of burst tubes, and of flesh-flaying steam. But soon our minds are at rest. "Oh, Weir's is alright; bit of a job to know the valves, o' course, but fine things to work." And we move on soon to a snug curtained



little "mess" on the lower deck to hear more of these "Weir's" and their brother and sister pumps, and as it happens of their inefficient ancestors.

"Well, I don't know as there's very much to tell you about pumps; 'course they're most important things. Many's the poor devil flattened on the plates with his fire over him because of feed pumps stopping or losing suction. I remember when I was just caught, and in the old trooper K——. Our feed pump used to work off the main engines, and sometimes hove and sometimes didn't. In them pumps, if water was too hot, pumps stopped heavin'; if water was too cold, steam went back and ship stopped; so 'twas always touch an' go. But we had a little auxiliary pump, Admiralty pattern Keyham donkey, what used to give us a lift. He was called "George." Now one day, down the Red Sea, main feed give out, and we put George on the big tank outside: the ruddy Red Sea, but of course at that moment a big jelly-fish was passing. George objected to jelly-fish; pumped him into the suction, and finished pumping water. The chief stoker watched for water in the glass; there was none; the engineer came, a plucky young devil, who thought George would work for him as a pal, but George wouldn't. We hung on—never do to draw fires or ship would slow, and we'd all get court-martials and that, but we hung on too long, the water never came back. First a tearing crackling, then a flood of fire, then scalding steam, and I for one

was soon in the next stokehold, and not long after on deck. But not so a good many others, and if it hadn't been for the engineer shutting off the boiler there would have been more, though he dropped from the valve to die with the men on the plates."

And so we listened while we drank (perhaps a little begrudged) tots of rum, while this scarred and coal-worn veteran told of pumps that pumped into leaky boilers, pumps that wouldn't pump, pumps which he had necessarily "kicked around," pumps which liked oil, pumps which didn't, "new-fangled" pumps which never worked, trusty auxiliary pumps and hundreds of others, identifying them to us as creatures of sense and will, until he spoke again of the new pumps, when he said: "As different as chalk an' cheese, these new pumps. These new pumps is more scientific, of course, but they're built to go, an' you might just as well try to stop them with jelly-fish as to make me teetotal when there's rum about." And since forty years' experience was laid bare, we agreed on both points, and felt more satisfied with Britain's Navy than ever.



## ENGINES

“WELL, there’s engines and engines, but some’s better’n others,” I once heard a man say. That man had seen and closely dealt with many engines, so that what he said about them meant a good deal. The idea prompting his speech was: “I know some engines because I have lived with them and cared for them, but ask me to tell you of one I have not so lived with, no matter how you explain to me the details of its design and construction, I can tell you little about it.” And the man was right; engines are like animals—you may breed two horses from the same stock, they may be exactly similar in appearance, but it is certain they will differ in their running. So it is with engines; you may build two from the same design, sharing their metal from the same furnaces, yet the engines will differ.

And it is the difference between engines which introduces a touch of romance into the sordid task of “driving” them, which “driving” is often coaxing, humouring, and bullying them into doing the work you require them to do. Were they always to act “according to the book” men would not be required to look after them—other machines could do it as well.

Especially are engines “wonderful in their ways” at sea. Like the ships they drive, they

are then full of vagaries. At one time they will jog sweetly round, revolution after revolution, quietly, easily, and constantly taking their steam supply from the boilers, whilst at others, like stubborn, obstinate brutes, they will drive firemen to despair in furious toil, and their direct caretakers to desperation in their efforts to find the causes of trouble. This is why we hear the greasy men who attend engines muttering such expressions as “That’s the way, my sweet one,” “Steady now, steady,” “Come on, old girl,” “Shake up, now,” “Pull yourself together,” “Easy over the rubly parts,” etc., as they slip from lever to lever with practised touch, getting the most out of their charges.

When it is considered that some of the charges are executing the work which as many as thirty thousand horses are capable of the control seems wonderful, but though to all appearances it is the iron hands on the lever and the valve, there must be much behind those hands. Such creatures must be thoroughly known, or their own mis-directed power turns against themselves for their own destruction. But engines are not things to fear, but to love, to look after like thorough-breds, and nowhere is this more so than in the Royal Navy. There, if England is to be ready for the inevitable attack, must be people who, though greasy, pale-faced, and perspiring, know their engines, the big main engines, whether the spinning turbine or the intricate reciprocating, the rattling dynamos, the grunting hydraulic pumps, the lively torpedo, and the dozens of



other engines which go to make the fighting ship the most energetic thing in the world when her steam is up. Then, counties of England, look to your representative cruisers, cheer the fastest, and the others will become faster ; at any rate, you will do no harm ; for when captains act as stokers and discipline accordingly improves, your cheer of approbation will help England to maintain what she must never lose—“ the heritage of the sea.”

The Royal Navy is the salt of the sea, and the salt of the earth also.—G. W. STEEVENS.

## PRIZE-FIRING

**T**HANKS to the general enthusiasm of the people, the kindly encouragement of the King, the deserved, though perhaps undesired, lionising of individual gunners, here a mediocre ship finds herself more or less incited. For weeks past loading parties in working time and spare time have loaded and fired dummy projectiles and cartridges in practice for to-day.

We have just commenced our trial runs ; our gunlayers are already revolving their gun mountings as the ship steams towards the target, some by hand, some by hydraulic.

Now the gong for the prize run fires. “ Bang ” goes a gun, and bang and bang, then a momentary delay (hang it, the Woolwich mechanic works too neatly). Alright, ready, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, and the gong rings again, the run is over.

Eleven shots good, how many hits ? ten hits, very good, but not record breaking ; and so on from the big turret to the smaller 6-inch gun, they all have at least one trial shot.

Now the day has arrived, the expert judges are on board, everything will be exact to-day. One casemate will commence, our crack man is there, what will he do ? There are rumours of £5 laid by himself, a fabulous £20 by his officer, a presentation “ fiver ” by the commander, and



there is the positive fact of the "skipper's shield," but there are other things, there are jests about "Togo on the bridge," "German Bill in the offing," &c., &c., flying freely, and there is the grim face of the man himself, and he may be chiefly thinking of his girl's praise. And now we are just commencing the run. Sharp, stern orders issue from the casemate. We hear, "right," "left," "right fast," "left slow," as the ship steadies up for the run and the little steering engine puts her on her course; and then, just as it will in action, the "commence" sounds, and at the same moment "bang" goes the gun. We who are privileged in time of peace to see it strike, note it—a hit—but before this two more bangs have occurred, and we see more hits; we hear the bangs of the succeeding shots, we count the shots until the "cease fire" sounds, and the run is over. Thirteen rounds, eleven hits, "not bad," "a pity it wasn't twelve." Then one considers the rolling ship, the anxious man, the too quickly pressed trigger, and the shot that shaves the target but, alas, does not pass through it.

The ship turns and retraces her course, and Y1 prepares. Y1 is not so enterprising, only ten shots but gets nine hits.

Again the ship turns, the foremost barbette is now rocking on its rollers as its tremendous weight is quietly pushed this way and that by the 1,000 pounds per square inch of water continuously supplied by the engine below. And so the man power—the physical power to

load and train, and the mental to judge—does its work, and the machines do theirs, and both must be correct. It is not only the business of the man and his officers to see all correct, it is the business of every Englishman, many of whom, though they will hardly believe it, may have to take the places of these "cracks" when that inevitable Armageddon takes place (for without doubt when England fights at sea every great nation must range itself on one side or the other).\*

It may be that soon we shall rely on one man and many machines in each ship, for directly fighting the enemy, when we shall be talking of the ship's gunlayer and firer; but still the encouragement of the nation will be required.

Let us now raise such a spirit of national defence that records will be made and almost immediately broken, that machines will be invented and almost immediately improved, that science and skill will work hand in hand in our Navy to such an extent that it will be invincible in its spirit, enthusiasm, perfection and bravery.

\* It is interesting to note that this was written over ten years ago.



## BOILERS

ROBERT BURNS said, "A man's a man for a' that." I would that Kipling's MacAndrew had said, "But after a', a biler's a biler"; for of all the machines of man's invention the boiler is most like himself in the fact that no amount of scientific knowledge and the completest mathematical calculation can "get to the bottom of him." Boilers have their moods, their fancies, their whims, their likings, their vices, and, verily, I believe, their loves; for, like woman, the mate of man, it is hard to solve the intricacies of our mate the boiler.

The first boiler with which I made acquaintance was that of a Cornish fishing lugger. Whether it was under the observation of a careful Board of Trade I know not. I think not, for it was a fearsome article. Covered by a conglomeration of salt, it looked "an old man of the sea." When it raised steam to hoist the big foresail and warp the boat from the dock, my book-learned engineering knowledge caused me to shudder. I thought of steaming strains, of stresses, of over-heating, of the dangers of scaled fire-boxes, of corrosion, of red decomposing rust, &c. As it showered a finely divided stream from every seam, as it groaned, screamed and crackled with weakness, it seemed to say

"I'm old, but I can do it." I (perhaps fortunately for me) never knew that boiler well.

But No. 6 of the old battleship "Horrible"—what a scoundrel! He was responsible for the building of a new wing to an asylum, for the conversion of religious youths into blasphemous blackguards, of small kids into big men, and for the hastened departure of many to places warmer than his own furnaces. That boiler was in league with the devil. He nearly escaped doing any duty because of his idiosyncracies. It was useless to order, "Light up No. 6 at 4": at 3.30 No. 6 would collapse entirely from boiler heart-disease, or some kindred malady known only to a few ancient boilermakers with whom the "Horrible" was not supplied. Or perhaps No. 6 allowed itself to be lit up alright, when trouble came otherwise—No. 6 would not raise steam, or the door on which most care had been expended would develop an impossible leak. On the few occasions it performed tractably and started well—it was certain to be the boiler which had to be "closed up" to stop its priming just when it was most required, or to lift its safety valves when the pressure was lowest, so that they would for the rest of the trip throw precious water to the winds. Now No. 6 is a quiet old gentleman, having retired from active service into civil business, driving coffee-roasters, and his once bulging fire-boxes have now, after undergoing repairs, decided to atone for their previously wicked lives.

A contrast to No. 6 were the members of the



little group which drove, and still drive, the gunboat "Flyer." They arrived in the face of great opposition—a foreign invasion, the first of the maligned Belleville. Strange, lanky, weird creatures, at first acquaintance I wondered how they could possibly conform to the ancient and honourable laws of boilers—how their water could ever circulate, where their water-level was, whether they primed, how they were to be treated when raising steam, how, when fires died, could they be "scummed," could they be blown down, did they corrode, where were their leaks to be expected, and how could they be stopped. But "I didn't have to wonder very long." Their points, and they were many, soon became evident. We found and stopped their leakage, and after rectifying other minor faults, these apparently delicate and fragile creatures became what they now are—hardy, thoroughbred steam-makers.

But even the reformed Belleilles were beaten in good behaviour by the small docile tube set of the destroyer "Assassin." Little creatures of beautiful shapely form, they squatted in perfect contentment alike at slow speed as when "wolfing" precious fuel under forced draught.

And so I could mention hundreds of cases of good boilers and of bad, of dozens of types, of various nationalities, but of all the thousands of individual boilers, no two ever agreed perfectly in their behaviour. But the boiler is doomed unless he can be made a less greedy animal. Man is himself very inefficient: he eats and drinks

enough to drive five. And the boiler is nearly as bad: a lump of coal of enormous potential energy is to him a thing to be consumed, not to turn to lively motion, but simply to please his insatiable appetite, for which he grudgingly gives a little of its energy to the engines. He takes twice as much coal as he requires.

Still, a man can be friendly with boilers, can treat them well, can feed them well, can almost analyse their feelings, can like them better than his fellows, and can make them his only concern: and boilers require such attention, for without it they are a terrible menace. A boiler explosion, whether in the speedy locomotive or in the confined stokeholds of the battleship, is a fearful thing. Worse than the cutting knife is the howling, shrieking steam as it scatters flaming fire before it and scalds the flesh from the bones, when the furnaces yield to the pressure or the red-hot tube bursts.

So committees may sit, scientists calculate and argue, but experience can only prove the value of particular boilers.



## STEAM TRIALS

**I**N the swirl of the flowing tide a gaunt dilapidated figure floats, nearly motionless, moored to a buoy. The thing is ugly : it is painted grey, disfigured by long irregular scars of red. No streaming flags relieve the picture of its abject desolation. Yet shortly, if only one condition is properly fulfilled, this " it " will be talked of with pride by the majority of a great nation as " she." Her capabilities will then be the subject of great concern amongst people who at present are ignorant of " its " existence. A little paint, a few flags, gold-laced officers and smart men in blue, will soon make our ship (for such she is) that potential item—a battleship. At present, however, there is one condition to be fulfilled before she becomes the first-class battleship " Briton," it is—" she must perform properly under trial." There is no room in the lines of our fleet for a " waster." Will the " Briton " be a " waster " ? It is thought not. Designed and built under expert supervision, she represents the ideal ship of the present-day admiral.

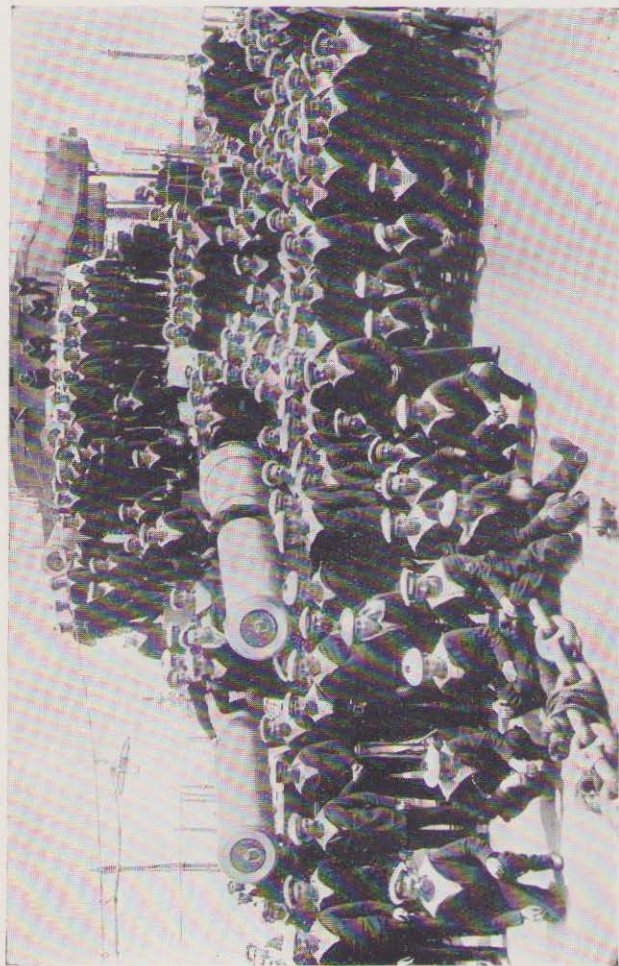
To-day the trials are to commence. We on board wait to be put in position for the basin trial. The big paddle-wheel tugs from the dockyard sweep round the corner of the harbour, and the labourers on our foc'sle and quarter-deck

busy themselves with the big hawsers. And now the tugs are alongside, churning the water into seething foam as they turn, practically in their own length, as few other vessels can. They are soon made fast. The big shackle of our mooring chain is cast off, and we are turned slowly but surely towards the dockyard. As we approach, the inside tug slips, and the other manœuvres us until we are alongside and made fast. Now we are secured by many hawsers, and are ready for our basin trial. For the last three hours the navigating party of stokers from the barracks have been raising steam, and the contractor's men, the makers of the engines, have been preparing them. The Babcock boilers have, since four o'clock this morning, been gradually " warming up " ; the water in them has commenced its round of circulation, which it is destined to repeat many times to-day ; the fires, which started from a few pieces of oily waste, are now an acre of flaming coal ; the ship contains living kinetic energy of steam, generated by a small part of the enormous potential energy of her coal. This is the birthday of her engines, creatures of steel, brass, and various other metals. Until to-day they have been inanimate ; but even now the foreman contractor opens the steam valve, the little starting-engine runs merrily round, the great pistons seem to sigh, down comes two great connecting-rods, up go the other two—one engine is started. The other engine, on the start of the first, seems also anxious to be away. It seems to jump and start like a



restive horse, until the foreman opens the valve and starts it. Outside in the water the great propellers "heave round" slowly, but since they are baffled in their true purpose of driving the ship ahead by the great hawsers, now as taut as bars, they devote their attention entirely to the water. Churned waves rush up the river behind us. The craft moored astern of us swing and surge on their hawsers. Now engines go astern, now ahead, now stop, and the steel creatures are obeying properly. Nothing is wrong; one or two bearings must be readjusted: they show a tendency to overheating—so often the cause of serious breakdowns—otherwise all is well. Now for the sea trials.

The second day has arrived. We are to do a low power run in the Channel. Escorted by the tugs, slowly and majestically we steer through the narrow harbour mouth and into the open sea, manned by captain, officers, and men from the barracks, who only came on board this morning. Only a few of our forty boilers are lit up, for this test is to show them capable of their share, and the main engines capable of taking their share and converting it to a certain speed properly. Already we are working up to the power, the swallow-tailed trial flag flies from our fore. The courtesy of the sea will be followed by the other ships upon it: they will steer clear of the babe, leaving her unhampered in her first attempts to master the sea. Now we are on the measured mile. Mysterious instruments are being brought to bear from the bridge on known



FRENCH BLUEJACKETS ON BOARD THE "COURBET."



marks on shore, the telegraph clangs "full speed," and the trial has commenced. An officer stands by the indicator of the patent log on the quarter-deck, which informs him, by its little gong, the knots the "Briton" has run through the water. Down below a large staff of dockyard mechanics are taking many records of the performances of the engines. Curious little figures traced by pencils on paper reveal to them the horse-power of the steam. In the stokehold the stokers feed, rake, and otherwise tend their fires to produce the steam. They must produce the steam in such quantities and at such pressure that its horse-power, as indicated in the engine room, will be as required. Until now, clean fires have burnt so fiercely that they even have to be checked; the boilers are not required to do as much as they now seem willing to do. And so for hours we steam along the measured path, turn about, and retrace our steps, and still we are getting our horse-power. But the difficulty of the task is increasing. The impurities of the coal are becoming unpleasantly evident. Instead of brittle, fiercely burning coal on the fire bars, we now have fires largely made up of great masses of red-hot slag, blocking the ingress of air to the new coal as we put it on. The steam gauges, which have been showing full pressure, show a tendency to "walk back" in these the last few hours of the trial, and the fires are responsible: they require cleaning. But the work of cleaning must not be undertaken lightly, for while cleaning a fire we shall deprive



THE FRENCH FLEET AT SEA.



ourselves of its impaired but important aid. Remembering this, the energetic engineer gives certain orders concerning the "devil," which we are surprised to see is but a formidable looking pronged rake, which, as we remove ourselves as far as possible from, a burly stoker plunges into the flaming furnace. Propelled by the sweating man, it dashes through the fire this way and that, until the order comes, "that'll do." All the fires are now being similarly treated in order, while all concerned look anxiously to the gauges. Do they mark improvement? Our unpractised eyes note nothing; but when a chief stoker mutters with pleasure, "walking up," we accept his decision. And now, with pressure to "fall back on," the cleaning commences. A great iron tool is brought by two stokers to a furnace door, the door is opened, and immediately the two seem to dive into the furnace with the "slice," for so we hear it called. But they only reach the mouth. Withdrawing the tool they make more plunges, they lever it up and down, their faces streaming with perspiration, the rags in their hands burning on the nearly glowing bar, finally they break the slag, or "clinker" as they call it, and withdraw the "slice." Now another stoker dashes forward with a rake, and in a moment we see glowing masses of clinker on the floor plates before us. The heat they shed about them seems overpowering; but the stoker is not deterred from continuing his job. The pile of blazing clinker increases until now we see another stoker waiting with coal in

his shovel. The rake is withdrawn, the shovel flies to the furnace, the coal is "sprinkled" over the thin, cleaned fire, and we have a new fire. The steam has not materially suffered. The operation is repeated on the worst fires, and we "keep steam" until now we hear the telegraphs clang—the trial is over. The "Briton" has "got through" her preliminary trial.

Three days have passed; then the great run commences. It is the "thirty hours' coal consumption trial." This will be one, the conditions of which most nearly approach those which may be expected in warfare. It is the full speed of the Admiral short of coal, of a weary fleet broken down by overmuch steaming, the speed at which some limitation, such as coal supply, makes care of every detail of the engines and their working essential. The trial has commenced. We are moving at a speed of 20 knots against a head sea under 29,000, and more, horse-power per minute; we must keep up for the next thirty hours. The ship at last is really moving. Her irresistible rush into the quickly succeeding waves is magnificent, but is apt to fill the landsman with dismay, for the ship herself is vibrating as though the plates and frames of her whole body are already strained to the utmost by the tremendous driving force below; her masts seem to sway in rhythm with the engines' throb, her boats jump up and down as their steel davits move with elasticity to the general throb of ceaseless energy. So on we rush. On deck all is grand; the fast receding shore fills us with a



sense of exultation, for to-night we shall be 200 miles away in the Atlantic before we retrace our steps. Down below all is monotony and hard work. Shovelful after shovelful of coal goes on from the measured heaps, the watchful engineer carefully seeing none is wasted; can after can of oil is placed in the lubricating boxes; 'tis hard to raise enthusiasm in such a place. But strange to say, a wonderful spirit begins to show itself as the difficulties increase. The more work there is required, the more the stoker seems capable of, and anxious to do. The work is not merely of shovelling coal, though from the dim recesses of the bunkers to the fires there seems too much of that. The stokers' task is to make every pound do its best; no rushing forced draught, making the fire "wolf" the coal it is fed with; we are under natural draught, and to do our best we can only assist the natural means, by regulating the fires according to our knowledge of them. We keep the steam at its proper pressure; but again and again the dreaded fall seems imminent, and as often fresh bursts of stokers' energy, or some subtle trick in management, saves the situation. And so we complete the trial, returning to harbour in need of rest for the engines and the men. The "Briton" is doing well. Next week will see her far advanced towards the time of her commissioning, if her progress so continues.

The day has arrived for her "eight hours' full power." This is the supreme test. Limits are to be reached beyond which 'twould be unsafe

and at the same time impossible, to exceed. Already we hear, as we stand near the air supply cowls to the stokehold, the "jogging" of the forced draught fans. Once this morning the bottled steam escaped for a minute through the safety valve, until its excess pressure was relieved. All is ready, and we slip our buoy and steam to the measured mile. We reach it, the telegraphs clang, the trial has commenced. We rush along, but beyond the smoking funnels there is little evidence of the cause of our movement. We must go below; soon we are in the engine-room. "No place for a Christian," says one, and truly 'tis a fearsome place; everything seems to be moving, a rain of oil and water seems to be falling, and the temperature makes one gasp. But what is that knot of men gathered about that particular place engaged in?

"A hot bearing" and as we look we see the smoking of the oil. One man works a mighty spanner amongst the rods, and we fear for his life in this moving maze. But he seems only concerned with the bearing. Cranks rushing round at 120 revolutions per minute do not seem to trouble him. He is "easing the bearing," so we are told, and we all trust his action will be of use in cooling the bearing, for should it get hotter the shaft may snap, and the "Briton" will be long delayed in joining Britain's fleet. It has "turned out" as we wished, the bearing is cooling, and is now so cool that further cooling by cold water is safe. This is done, and a mishap averted; the engines are running well, let us go



to the stokeholds. We reach the door, but question the advisability of entrance. Through the glass in the iron door we see the glare of the fires, the frantic movements of the stokers. But we dare, and opening the securely fastened door are met by a terrific blast laden with coal dust. The door is rapidly closed behind us, and we stare into the blackness. We find it hard to breathe; the extra atmospheric pressure, poured in by the fans above us, seems to frighten our lungs from their proper purpose. But we get used to it—the sublime indifference of the stokers to the unusual conditions makes us grin and bear them as well. There is little room for idlers in this place; a warship is always allowed the largest possible number of boilers. As we stand we are in unpleasant proximity to a groaning pump as it steadily feeds the boilers with water. In front of us 2-cwt. skids of coal are being slid, at what appears a dangerous speed, across the plates, until they are tipped before the boilers. The furnace doors open with astonishing regularity, and the stokehold is lit each time by the leaping flames. "Devils" and "slices" are being used in a furious manner; the pressure is kept up until the eight hours are up. A "solid 22.5 knots" has been kept up, and the "Briton" has further qualified herself for promotion to the Fleet.

But still there are other trials, "gun," and "circle turning." We will attend them.

The day has arrived for gun trials. We are steaming at ordinary speed to sea, a select staff

of gunnery experts occupy the turrets, and the latter are already revolving under the influence of the hydraulic pressure the big pumps are supplying. We are now able to fire—nothing is in range of fire. The ammunition hoists shoot up from the magazines and shell-rooms. The turret swings—a mighty roar startles us. The ship trembles and seems to momentarily stop. A full charge has been fired on the beam. And now the guns are all being fired together. We are deafened, but everything stands the strain and the "Briton" has scored another success.

Now for the "turning trials." These are made the subject of accurate timing and mathematical calculations. First the great ship is suddenly ordered to run "full astern" from "full ahead." Her engines are reversed. She trembles and quivers as if she objected to the treatment. Her momentum is checked, she slowly moves astern. Now she turns circles of various diameters at various speeds, and goes through many other movements, the practical use of which are only known to the naval tactician. She obeys her great rudder perfectly, as its tiller is pulled from side to side by the sturdy little steering engine, and all that is required of the "Briton" has been got out of her. In a few months she will leave the harbour, perhaps with an Admiral's flag at her fore, to grace some station and "to show the world that England still is mistress of the seas."



## COALING SHIP

IT is 5.30 A.M. "Clear lower deck! Hands fall in for coaling ship," is the pipe, and up we tumble, a motley crew, some in aged but correct uniform, others in such dresses that one wonders at their existence away from Petticoat Lane. We have been waiting for the collier, and she has just been sighted crawling towards us. We are quite ready, and No. 1 (First Lieutenant) has quite completed his defences against his worst enemy—the approaching dirt. He has pasted ward-room newspapers over every crevice which makes his holy place assailable. The stokers have, like the wise virgins, trimmed their lamps, and will be more or less able to distinguish themselves from the coal they must soon commence to trim away into the corners and pockets of the wings, lowers, triangular spaces, and the other wonderful "innards" of our great battleship.

We wait on the quarterdeck, a place now of desolation. The shining barbette guns, like ragged tramps, are swathed in rubbing mats, mast cover, and such clothing. The usually resplendent hatches of the ward-room and skipper's cabin are down, and those look as grey prisons.

And now the "Abernethy" is within reach of the heaving line; the hawsers are being made fast by the foretop men, the Commander

—as usual, immaculate under cap-cover and sea boots—gives the word, the "commence" is sounded, and away we go. Nothing matters now, we are free—free to get as much coal in in as short a time as possible; cramping ideas of order are thrown to the winds, for we all know how to coal. Soon after we have swarmed over the net shelves, away goes the first hoist—ten bags on the "forrard" whip. In rush the marines with their trolleys, they pull on a bag and away they go to the forward shoots. They are being directed by the Engineer Sub-Lieutenant, who will see that each shoot has its fair share, and the deck is kept clear, as any jamming will cause delay.

The flags at the yardarm denote that we have 1,200 tons to take in, and we must fly 160 from the other yardarm this hour if we are to work up to record breaking in the next. The collier's winches are groaning and shrieking, and already the E.R.A.\* working the 'midship one is craning himself in and out amongst the wheels like a serpent, looking for a way of lubrication. He has found a hot bearing and is afraid of smashing up the show, when up comes the young Engineer who has been sent by the Commander to have the winch driven faster.

"Evans," he roars from the boat deck. "Sir," is the answer. "What is the matter with that winch? Don't be afraid of it, it's not yours; drive it." "Bearing red hot, sir." "Red hot be d—d; drive it and let me know when it's

\* Engine Room Artificer.



green!" And so we go on, everything at full pitch excepting the collier's crew, and the Maltese cook engaged in conversation as he stands surveying the collier from the 'midship gangway—the gunroom breakfast fast cooling on his shoulder.

At 7.0 A.M. we record 160 for the hour, so record-breaking looks possible. At 7.55 "cooks" is sounded, and the dirty cooks leave to prepare breakfast. At 8.0 "stand easy," and we race on board again, quite a dozen of us dropping back into the collier in a sitting position during the operation, the result of attempting to climb up a loose rope-end, or of being used as a ladder by some of our more pushing shipmates. The mess deck is now like the main tunnel of a mine. In their separate furious attempts to have "first look in" at "scran," the members of 43 mess have capsized their breakfast, and are engaged in picking up the least dirty of the scraps and in writing out canteen chits for cold provisions to take the place of the impossible remainder. The canteen is surrounded by a fighting crowd, determined to lay in a good stock of succulent oranges before the supply is exhausted. Aft in the gun-room, angry roars are heard demanding "hot coffee," "toast that wasn't burnt yesterday," "a hot plate, you blighters!" also various remarks from the second breakfast detachment, for which there is no room, and who are seated on the ice-chest, such as "Blowed if I shan't have to have a glass of beer; this is the dustiest lot I remember," and "Oh, my young friend,

do be careful," from the junior "snotty" (midshipman) seated on a pump handle, attired in sombrero and cricketing gear now as black as a nigger.

Then, just as pipes are filled, the "commence" again sounds, and we are soon installed at our respective stations, in the collier's holds, at the whips, winches, &c. The next hour is one of fury. Oaths are launched at everybody by the "bucker-up." He's our man, nipping from hold to hold, whip to whip, coal-shoot to coal-shoot, kicking here, caressing there, working like a demon here, talking like a parson there—a dignified officer converted into a forced-draught machine; and at the end of every hour up goes the record, and down goes Billy, senior watch-keeper, for his well-earned glass of beer. "That's the way, me bhoys," shouts the Irish officer of the marines, as he appears for once not in uniform or shore-going clothes, at the same time being completely bowled over by his own servant with a trolley from the f'oc'sle. "Bedad, let's up and at 'em. Give me a trolley, bhoys: 'tis tit-for-tat for that," is his Irish answer to the shouted plea for pardon, and away his loaded trolley goes at a terrific pace, his beaming face fairly lighting up the whole show.

And so on every hand, officers and men, we're simply "diggin' out." We've made a record, now we're going to break it, and if one man slacks—which isn't likely—all that happens is that others share his work. In the bunkers the stokers are sweating and blowing, for they must



keep the shoots with a free run or they'll choke, and that will delay us, for the decks will "litter up" with coal, and perhaps the bag supply will run short in the collier.

There's one jammed! The Engineer Sub-Lieutenant who's a regular perpetual-motion machine on coaling days, again arrives, confers with his *confrère*, and they decide to "blow the expense" of the Commander's paint down below, and the former descends, opens the escape in the hitherto clean ammunition passage, and, amidst a cloud of dust, shuts himself in with his trimmers. What occurs in there on such occasions is a mystery nobody knows except the Engineer Sub-Lieutenant and his men, and "mum's the word" with them. But soon the shoot is clear, and the sub. arrives by a rope's-end on the upper deck. He is followed by a stoker, who appears to have just come out of an ink-bath—his flannel has been torn off, he is bare to the waist, and has, we hear, temporarily decided to "chuck 'is 'and in." But this is only his idea of a moment. A few words respective of his physical and moral state, indulged in by a perpetually-grinning chief stoker, appears to reduce him to a condition of, at least, relief, and he goes below to snatch a late breakfast, from which he and his more sporting fellow-trimmer have been for some time imprisoned.

The excitement, which has been intense, appears to be approaching its maximum. The parson, who instead of writing sermons has been "logging" the coal taken in, has declared in

solemn tones that we are about to break our own record; and the doctor, in a slack moment—the supply of smashed feet having run out—is about to write the figures in large letters on the blackboard, usually used for middies' instruction, now erected on the quarter-deck. Yes, the record is broken, and our signal's run up in inter-signal code—a wily one—denoting "What O."

And now rum is served out, and we have three quarters' of an hour "stand easy." We now discuss our feat of the morning—a select committee, consisting of a chief stoker, chief armourer, the bandmaster, ship's steward, and several other of our chiefs are discussing ways and means of improving matters. The general opinion, and one that appears common to all of us is that "splicing the main brace" (serving extra rum) would be a politic step. But the chief stoker goes further: he declares that to improve coaling records, the Admiralty should send all ship designers once or twice during their term of office into the bunkers, while coaling, so that when building, they would study their own convenience. He declares that the "bloomin' alleys" of his bunkers are really a maze of passages and doors, arranged for his especial mortification of spirit.

These things may be, but the fact remains that we have broken the record; and if the Commander is kind enough to give us general leave to-night, the liberty men of the fleet ashore shall know it.



Now the Quartermaster pipes, as before, "Hands fall in," and soon we are at it again; in she comes, and we keep the pace up so through the afternoon that it seems, at the pipe "stand easy," at 5.30, to have been but an hour. Twenty minutes after we are at it again, now under the light of the arc lamps, which have been rigged and are running from an extra dynamo.

The scene improves—there is something of the village fair about it. We replace the weight-lifter of the show by the strong marine (our champion heavy-weight) throwing huge bundles of empty bags from ship to collier. The band is playing the tunes of the fair, the strains of "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay" and such like melodies fighting bravely for supremacy in the general din. Things go on as merrily as by the light of day; and the hoists are shorter, for as the collier floats lighter, so our decks sink, and at 8 P.M. the for'ard hold is finished.

The Engineer Lieutenant makes certain of the collier's emptiness, and the shovels are hoisted aboard. The other holds quickly follow suit. Then "general leave" is piped, and the steam-boat tows the sailing pinnace alongside, while two hundred of us, by dint of much scrubbing and yellow soap, convert our complexions into a likeness to salt beef. As red as beets, we are inspected, bundled over the side, and reach our pints after well earning them by "coaling ship."

## "MAN AND ARM BOATS"

"MAN and arm boats!" is the signal from the flagship; bugles sound the call, and everyone rushes to his pre-appointed duty. The boats are hurriedly manned by their crews, who swarm over torpedo net shelves and booms, down ropes, and in all cases by the shortest route, with no consideration for bodily risk. The Commander stands on the quarter-deck gangway, megaphone at his mouth, directing the different boats in their attempts to excel in smartness in getting alongside to receive their armament, provisions, &c. On board, the marines, a spare watch of stokers, the sick bay and ship's stewards' assistants are busy getting up requisites to the different gangways. Down below, in the man and arm boat store, and in the various magazines and stores, parties of men are emptying lockers, whilst others run swiftly to the deck with shot, shell, &c., then back for more. The surgeon awaits on the quarter-deck, instruments in hand. He will accompany the little expedition of boats, for in one of our "little wars" this evolution would mean the probable extermination of some unruly state on shore, attended by nasty wounds to those in the boats. The surgeon's boat is conspicuous, though but a five-oared whaler. At her bow flies the flag which has attended the administration of comfort



to the wounded warrior for years—the Red Cross.

And now the boats are being hastily filled with supplies of ammunition, food, water, etc., from the gangways, while the handy little 3 and 12-pounders are being lowered from the boat deck where the armourers have been busy unshipping them. Their object in the big ship has been to drive off or sink the slinking destroyer; in the small boat their use is chiefly against mud huts and savage hordes. In the space of—as an average—say, fifteen minutes, all boats are fully equipped and are "shoving off." The gaudy picket boat, resplendent in brass from funnels to rudder, proudly steams to the head of the line. The more homely, slower steam pinnace, smart in her more buxom beauty, passes her smarter consort a tow-rope, and in turn takes a hawser from the waiting sailing launch—the largest boat of all; then follows the sailing pinnace, the three cutters, and whatever small boats have been despatched for duties other than fighting; and all the painters having been made fast, the procession starts for the flagship. The picket boat engines are working as for eighteen knots, the pinnace's as for fourteen, and the pulling boats are developing man power enough for their best speed, apart from engines. The speed of the tow may be taken at nine or ten knots. They soon reach the flagship. "Is our's first ship?" is the question most used in all ships in the fleet; and, fortunately for Britain, as much joy is felt and exhibited in the ship



THE SICK BAY OF H.M.S. "QUEEN MARY"; BELOW THE WATER LINE.





H.M. SHIPS "AJAX," "CENTURION," AND "AUDACIOUS" IN A HEAVY SEA.  
(TAKEN FROM THE "AUDACIOUS.")

receiving the affirmative "Yes," as when a football cup is won. Smartness in the Navy is dear to all but the "scallywags," who are never smart; and evolutions, such as "Man and arm boats," calls for the best everyone in the crew can do—from the stoker driving the winch to the Captain directing the whole of the operations—if it is to be performed smartly. Everything for use in the boats plays a double part: it is for use on board when required. Duplicate guns cannot be carried to enable an evolution being performed quickly, for every gun means weight, and in the modern ship weight chiefly signifies coal, and coal means speed, without which, in the modern battle, guns are of no avail.



## THE FLITTING OF THE FLEET

**I**N a little office a two-striped officer writes in a dirty book—"Second watch to light up at 12 P.M." "Steam for unmooring by 6 A.M.," and many other such orders. The book is the Engine Room Night Order Book, the officer the Senior Engineer of a battleship. At 11.30 P.M. a sentry dodges over sleeping forms and under hammocks, until finding No. 263, he unceremoniously turns out its occupant, abruptly apologising by saying "7 bells." The ejected sleeper, a chief stoker, is fully dressed, and immediately starts on a similar errand to that which the sentry has just completed. One by one, according to the list he carries with him, the 2nd watch of stokers tumble out with his assistance. Little noise is made, for the stokers have great regard for one another's sleep. No piping bos'un's mate disturbs the fetid atmosphere of the stokers mess deck at these times; if such occurred it would be bad for the bos'un's mate. The watch proceeds on deck for a look round before going below. At 11.50 P.M. its members commence dressing in their stokehold gear in the casing over the boilers, and before 12 are mustered and found correct in the stokehold. The Chief Stoker receives and transmits the order, "Light up," and in a minute gleaming shovelfuls of fire from the auxiliary

boiler (working dynamo engines, etc.) are carried to the furnace fronts, and thrown into the topping (heap of picked coal laid on a bed of coal in the furnace). At the same time the artificers are crawling over the tops of the boilers, and so they proceed, opening the valves, which later will allow the steam to reach the engines in the engine-room, which are also being prepared for their scalding "driver." In an hour all arrangements are completed, and the watch devotes its attention to general "squaring up," after spreading the blazing fire-fronts over the whole of the furnaces. At the third hour from lighting up, little spurts of steam occur at the open gauge cocks, which are then shut, and the water is finally bottled up for its work. A pressure then shows itself, and gradually increases according to the pressure gauges, the pointers of which creep slowly round on the dials, so that when the morning watch comes down at four, they are at 30 lbs. In the engine-room they are "warming up" the engines, and the massive rods and cranks give spasmodic jumps backwards and forwards as they are allowed to feel the influence of the steam.

And now the upper world begins to rouse itself. Electric bells are tingling to prove their correctness, the steering engine rattles round and pulls the great tiller to and fro; and notice having been given below, the clanging engine-room telegraphs, on which so much will depend later, do a preliminary canter, the deafening siren is allowed a single blast, and the controlling



gear is reported correct. The main engines are now allowed to move a few revolutions ahead and then astern, under critical observation, and all is ready and reported to the Captain.

Steam is now on the capstan engine, for unmooring will soon begin.

The hands fall in at the pipe, "Out pipes—both watches fall in." Men drop their basins of cocoa and run on deck. The Commander awaits them on the quarter-deck, a smart figure standing on a bollard, immaculate from white cap cover to shining rubber sea-boots; "1st part foretopmen unship port after gangway," and such like, are his orders for the different subdivisions of men, the 2nd part of starboard watch falling out to "stand by to unmoor." On the foc'sle, until the men arrive, stand three persons—the First Lieutenant, with his pretty little green, red and yellow order flags; the bosun, a tremendous man, who appears to be fretting to commence work; and a leading stoker, dirty in his once white canvas, as he holds the lever which will work the capstan engine down below, while his mouth is at the voice-pipe, ready to transmit orders. Down below in the capstan flat—where the temperature is rarely less than 110°—is an interesting group. An E.R.A. stands, his ear to the voice-pipe, intently listening, his hand on the steam valve, ready for the first order. Stokers lean over the most important bearings, one with a syringe full of oil, another an oil can, another a bucket of soapy water. They are to prevent hot bearings; for of all engines in the ship, the

capstan engine is the one which most often reaches its limit of speed and strain, for anchor competition is strong in the fleet. Now the Captain is on the bridge, the foc'sle men on the foc'sle, the engineers at the engines; the day has broken, the flagship is easily distinguishable; the signal men keep their eyes on her, two little flags flutter to her yardarm. They commence to flutter again. The Captain cries, "Unmoor," the stoker moves his lever, the cables rattle, one comes in, the other runs out, the Captain directs the engines to work so that the capstan can "heave in" in as short time as possible. One after another the shackles of the incoming cable appear at the hawse pipe, crawl along the deck, and descend to the cable locker. Now the cable is seen to be dirty—it has been buried in the muddy bottom. The hose, already rigged, is directed on it, the little fire engine down below shoots the sea through it on to the grinding links, the men broom them, and they descend to the locker, clean. The first anchor, is weighed, and shortly afterwards appears above the water. Its capstan is uncoupled, and the other cable is hove in short to two shackles—or more if the water is deeper than thirty fathoms. At the same time, a man slips over the bows, and on to the first anchor. He makes fast the catting pennant from the cat-davit; and swarms aboard again. The pennant worked from another capstan, pulls the anchor from the water and high up to the cat-davit, the latter swings round. "Let go," is the order; the anchor drops on its bed, and the



first part of the operation of unmooring is completed—"Break," cries the Captain, and this the first ship, breaks the tricolour pennant of victory, which has until now been a little ball of bunting hoisted half-way to the yardarm. Other tricolours break about us and flutter in the breeze, all as yet half-way to the yard. Soon all pennants are at yardarm, and the flagship signals, "Weigh"; up flies the church pennant to send one of its varied messages. The cable grunts and starts again, the hoses splash, and soon the second anchor leaves the ground. We are "under weigh." The second anchor then follows the example of the first, to a similar bed on the other side of the deck, the pennant being broken and hoisted as for the other. All the ships are steaming ahead, the revolution indicators are tingling, the engine revolutions are increasing or decreasing as required to keep station, and soon the fleet has "flitted," quietly and in order.

## "OUT NETS"

THE restful peace of Sunday and its night is over. Throughout the world a press of business seems to present itself—it is Monday morning. Bustle is occurring everywhere, but nowhere is more work going on than in the ships of Britain's fleets. No matter whether they lie in foreign ports or in Portsmouth Harbour, whether they are gathered in scores or in pairs, "General Exercise," entailing the extraordinary work, is taking place on board them. A landsman in one such ship would see, on this early morning, immense blocks and tackles, coils of rope, and other, to him, apparently unnecessary gear, dragged about the decks and left in what would seem a mere litter; he would also, if he stepped out into the overhanging gangway, see knots of men, as if glued to the ship's sides, performing in an inexplicable manner; using marlinspikes, hammers, scrapers, lumps of tallow, and other of the sailor's varied accoutrements. All is being done in special preparation, for the ships are about to "evolute." The Commander-in-Chief will order competitive exercise at 9.30 by the hoisting of a few flags. The crews at 8.30 are at "stand easy," for preparations have been completed for the most likely evolutions, and, as far as possible, without chance of interference for any others. At 9.10



divisions are mustered as in daily routine, except that the stokers, for once in the week, have been excused their grimy work below in consideration of the assistance they will give on deck. The divisions having been reported by division officers to the Commander, and by the latter to the Captain, Roman Catholics fall out, and the " sky pilot " entertains the Protestants for ten minutes. Now the fateful moment is near. What will it be, " Out nets," " Man and arm boats," " Away all boats," " Lay out sheet anchor," or what else? The crews are in the batteries, protected from the fire of the land forts, which can be easily imagined. The signalmen, Captain, Commander, and attendant messengers and others on the bridge stand with eyes and telescopes fixed on the flagship. Silence reigns, until a ship with fast time strikes three bells. No one moves, the flagship strikes the bell, and simultaneously two flags leave the hands of a signalman of the flagship. " Out nets, sir," is the cry of the dapper bos'un; a dozen people repeat it, for perfect discipline at such times is rarely considered essential. The bugle sounds the order. Men rush to the net shelves on the ship's sides, throw the nets over the side, then run in all directions, with but few collisions, seize loose falls of powerful tackles, which seem scattered everywhere, give a few good hauls, timed by an encouraging officer; and the heavy steel booms, on which the nets are fastened, move slowly from the ship on their hinges, and now, prompted by the marines with " bearing

out " spars, take charge and rush to their proper position, just over the water, the nets suspended at their ends. The batteries are immediately again populated, and the Captain, sprinting from side to side of the bridge, observing the completion of the net defence, shouts " Break," and a signalman's sharp tug on a rope breaks a little ball at the yard arm into a streaming tri-colour pennant. " First ship," shouts someone, the stopwatch midshipman reports forty-six seconds, and in this ship all is peace. Not so in her less smart consorts. Astern is seen the newly commissioned X——, some of her booms are out, others are not. The Y—— has finished one side smartly, but is " hung up " on the other; strange noises float over the water, stentorian voices even use unparliamentary language, whistles are setting time to the " hauls " in one ship, a band is playing in another to " buck up " a nearly beaten crew, and on all sides enormous energy is, or has been, exerted, respectively according to the breaking of those little yard-arm balls of bunting. At last the fleet evolution is completed. There is a short interval, during which time the boom topping purchases are being led to the little steam coal crabs, and the hands man the ropes the entire length of the battery, for " in nets " will probably be the next task. Yes, now a few more flags in the flagship, and bugles, bands, coal crabs and men start working together. The creaking purchase blocks move along the decks, the booms slowly rise, " top," and fall in against the ship's sides.



" On the shelves " is the order. The ship's sides are lined, men grasp the brails and haul the foot of the net to the edge of the narrow shelf. They grasp it, and pull it up, hand over hand, all pulling together at the " haul," shouted, at short intervals, by the officer on the boat deck. But, alas, things do not always " go " perfectly even in the best of ships—the net has caught something on the ship's side. Without hesitation, and against orders, without the life-saving bowline about him, the nearest man to the disaster slips down the net like a monkey ; with his knife, teeth and hands he clears the hitch, and as the haul recommences he climbs and is pulled up by the rising net. His hands are torn, his toes are skinned, but as he comes over the net shelf with the last of the net, the pennant again breaks, and he has satisfaction, for he thinks his risk and trouble amply repaid, when he learns that his is first ship.

The time is 1 min. 30 secs. The ship's best record has nearly been broken. Again the cries of the incapable and unfortunate are heard. There in the A—the nets are in but for a few feet forward, which have caught in some ship's side projection. Her Captain is playing a fair game. He will not " break," though practically, yet imperfectly, finished, and the flagship cannot easily see his ship. There a new crew in the B—, incompletely trained, are hauling one after another, so that the net comes up a little, " walks back " a little, and little progress is made, until, in desperation, her Commander

orders the band to strike up " Auld Lang Syne," which is acknowledged to be the best tune for inducing men to haul the net together in the proper time required by heavy nets. One after another the ships finish, the pennants " break," the tricolours wave in the breeze, and the fleet exercises, " Out net defence " and " In net defence " are completed.



“ MAN OVERBOARD ”

**T**HE cry “ Man overboard ! ” is never to be lightly regarded. Even the landsman can recognise the terrible position of a man overboard, his ship fast sailing or steaming away from him. In the Royal Navy, and to a great extent in the merchant navy of England, measures have always been taken to relieve such an accident of its easily disastrous consequences. Easily detachable lifebuoys are placed in the most accessible positions on the ship's side, and the lifeboat is frequently exercised, both in rough and in fine weather. The frequent exercises have not developed the cry into one similar to the over-used cry of “ Wolf,” for it is a competitive exercise, and competition is the sailors' delight.

The evolution calls for a great display of skill and courage, both on the part of those in the boats and the captains managing the ships, for many are the boats' crews whose boats have been smashed under them, even before they have left the ship's side. It is often a fearsome sight to see the boat descending from its davits, the dashing waves sometimes licking its keel, then dropping back into a horrid hollow, then rushing on again until they receive the boat as she is slipped, the crew all the time sitting, their oars on the gunwale, ready to dash the boat away on

its errand of mercy. The young midshipmen on such occasions have no light task. They must possess judgment to keep their boats off the ship's sides, and to deal with the fleeting billows.



## NIGHT QUARTERS

“EIGHT Bells” (midnight) are striking on all sides in the different ships of the fleet, when the signal flashes forth from our leader, “Exercise Night Quarters.” The familiar, but annoying, call blares out from the bugle of the bugler shivering on the forward shelter deck, and all are roused. The tired stoker emerging from the dusty stokehold, after his four hours’ first watch, realises that he cannot yet roll into his hammock, and proceeds to his appointed station—a water-tight door—and, in his anger, tightly closes it. The officers tumble up from aft blinking, but manning their stations, and giving orders in a way which clearly shows their familiarity with them. On the mess deck the rattle of chains is incessant, as the black snouts of the 6-inch guns emerge from what before was the flush side of the ship. Messengers bring night-sights, the guns making their presence felt. In the turret shell chambers, huge projectiles are being shot one by one into their little cages, “slap” from the deep shell chamber into the ready maw of the big gun, as it crashes back from firing to loading position under the placid control of its glycerine and spring-loaded recoil arrangements.

In the submerged torpedo flats compressed air is being used. Torpedoes are all but fired.

They are ready for awful errands, but they will not be released to-night. About the decks, stokers stand fire-nozzles in hand ; shrill whistles blow ; a voice calls, “ Fire in the marines’ mess deck, starboard side,” and hoses and men dash towards it. The guns are drilling. Imaginary enemy are aimed at on all sides. Charge after charge has been placed in the guns, and imagined fired, but are ready. The turrets are already swinging on their pivots, while the great hydraulic pump below jumps and starts to uphold the necessary pressure. In the fighting tops and on the boat deck, the searchlights are ready. The vicious-looking little 3-pounders are swinging from forward to aft, and the only disappointment of the whole proceeding is the absence of the enemy. Still the fun is fast and furious. Records in shot and shell supply are being made and broken. Perspiring men in the shell-rooms are throwing projectiles to others in the shell-room passages as though they were toys. Others are hooking on the different coloured bags to the hoists of the casemates, and as the record shooting is made, so is the more humble inconspicuous supply kept up. All are inside armour, for we know, by what our guns might be doing now, what a formidable enemy might be doing to us if this were war.

Steam and electricity are everywhere. This time the shot and shell has only come for a trip to the upper deck, its aerial flight will come later, when it may slip, little interrupted, through the canvas target ; or perhaps, penetrate and



struggling through an enemy's armour, to burst between, and devastate, his decks. Let us hope, though in truth the sailor does not, that the latter possibility is far off. Many mysterious operations—the purposes of which are not so obvious as of the above operations—are also being performed, in some cases of paramount importance. Curiously shaped spanners are opening valves far below them, which may later have the float-ability of the ship dependent upon them.

The steering of the ship is no longer done from the fore bridge; the conning tower now contains the “heart” of the ship—the Captain and the gear with which he controls the ship.

If the engine-room telegraphs are to clang their momentous messages of “Full Ahead” and “Full Astern,” &c., the handle in the conning tower will be their director. And so no contingency of warfare is left unconsidered.

Each of the 700 men in the ship is at his station, and in the words of our most famous Admiral, if all other points of our Navy are as perfect as its discipline and organisation, it is “Ready, Aye Ready.”



RUSSIAN BLUEJACKETS ON BOARD THE “TSAREVITCH.”





COALING H.M.S. "AUDACIOUS" FROM SIRORE.

## THE ASSASSINS OF THE SEA

SILENTLY and steadily, on a dark night in January, a great battle fleet surges through a northerly swell in the German Ocean. It consists of six fine battleships and two scouting torpedo gunboats. Assisting it are ten cruisers on its line of communication from the enemy, and a flotilla of ten destroyers, the particular ships of which may be almost anywhere. The fleet is in darkness; no lights are exposed, for though the battle fleet of the enemy is known to be slinking northward 'midst the treacherous shoals of the German coast, there may be other fierce foes ready to stab in the dark. In all the ships a good look-out is being kept; men lay at their guns, look-outs "skin their eyes" aloft. The little gunboats, unseen by their larger sisters, are rushing up and down the outskirts of the fleet, ready to dart in to the flagship with the dread alarms which are quite expected. At the same time, a little further north—under the lee of a sandy island, floating in the discoloured water brought down by the turbid Elbe—four long gaunt objects slowly twist and turn. They are destroyers. On their decks busy knots of men are putting shining torpedoes in the tubes from which they will be fired. They are being prepared for deadly work. Now, at this pre-arranged time, they slink one



after another through the shallow channel between the sands to the north. Directed by daring navigators, they are about to attempt a night attack from this spot where it will be least expected, and the object of their attack is the battlefleet steering its cautious way towards the fleet it would engage in battle on the morrow. Yes, those four puny little vessels, of a total tonnage of 800, are about to attack the fleet of 80,000 tons. And their crews have hopes of success, for they hope to strike a stealthy blow. They are not going forth to fight, but to assassinate. The craft now huddle together, for news flashed along the coast has given them the probable whereabouts of the enemy. They stop; the enemy must pass them if it continues its course. Their crews gaze to the southward, but the night is dark—nature is assisting the fell enterprise.

In the battlefleet all is readiness. They expect an attack, but it will come out of the darkness. They do not know when it will occur; but they do know that the torpedo is the only foe they need fear as yet. They are provided with a part protection against this terrible missile in the shape of the great nets now so ready to be placed in position, but they cannot be kept in constant use, since they check the speed of the ships, which, if they are to come to battle, must be maintained as fully as possible. And so, like a warrior provided with a shield, the fleet is prepared to ward off the blow if it is not too sudden. The fleet relies on its own destroyers to shadow

and deal with those of the enemy, but its wise admirals and captains are fully alive to the possibility of a sudden attack by the enemy's torpedo craft which may have eluded their own. They fear, but they do not know of the four skulking brutes ahead, until suddenly a gunshot breaks out above the washing of the sea, and without noise the crews of the guns spring to their arms.

In one of the destroyers someone hears the beating of propellers, and as the boats dart forward at the whispered orders, a gunboat looms before them, a rattle of quick-firing guns takes place; one destroyer stops, her boilers exploding, and with gaps in her frail sides, sinks. Unheeding, the others dash on, the gunboat flashing her searchlight and taking up the chase. The beams of the searchlight fall on one of the flying boats: a deadly hail pours into her, and she too sinks beneath the waves. As yet the battlefleet is practically undisclosed, and but for the flashes of flame out of the darkness, they do not yet make their presence known to the enemy. The two remaining destroyers dash on. For a moment in the searchlight the shells scream round them, but their work lies ahead. Large black objects appear before them.

At the dread alarm, in the battle fleet the men on the net shelves have thrown the nets over the side, others are hauling on powerful tackles, the great torpedo booms swing out from the sides of the ships, and they are encased in their crinolines of net armour. But, alas! for the



"A——," the finest ship of the fleet, leader of the line, and flagship—she is too late. Even as the nets strike the water, a glittering torpedo has rushed at her at 30-knot speed. She is struck amidships, and immediately a tremendous roar is heard; volumes of water shoot into the air above her heaving side; she trembles under the blow; she is doomed to sink. But her quick-firing guns, which at the first alarm fired at that vague something, have at least done their work. Another of the four assassins has had her frail plates and frame riddled, blasted and torn, and she sinks after her "useful suicide," with her brave crew jubilant at their fatal success.

And now in the "A——," though she is disembowled, the survivors are at their stations. Water-tight doors are closed—she must be of use before she finally sinks. Her searchlights light up the scene, and reveal a grim tragedy: five battleships rolling in the sea, a sinking destroyer, and a chase. A gunboat is running a losing race after an escaping destroyer, but they are within range of one another, and soon the destroyer, with what seems an angry toss of her bow into the air, sinks to be seen no more. And as the "A——" settles in the sea her crew, yet at their posts, are ordered to "abandon ship." Steadily and in order the men commence to lower the boats, but it is too late. With a drunken lurch, whilst the bulkheads burst, the 12,000 tons of steel rushes to the bottom. And now the lights of the remaining ships flash out; the attack is over. Four destroyers and a great

battleship lay on the fishing banks below. A few minutes are being allowed for the picking up of survivors, the torpedo nets and booms are hauled in and re-stowed, and the depleted fleet steams on its errand, now of revenge, into the breaking dawn. The furious rush of the assassins has been a success, but at the cost of their own existence.



## " CLEAR FOR ACTION."

**I**F my demands are not then complied with, I shall open fire." The British lion was growling. Off a little island lay four ships of war. One flew the sacred flag of England, the combined banners of her patron saints; the other three, flags less renowned as emblems of justice and right. An international dispute was in progress between these ships. On the little island, on one side of the bay, a red flag fluttered from a native chieftain's house: on the other a European flag flew over a tent. Both these flags were in danger; these ships in the bay had declared that the red flag must be lowered, and a small but ancient coloured nation lose its independence; one ship insisted on the lowering of that other flag and the maintenance of native power, and she was the English ship. At noon, by the English demand, the red flag was to be still the ensign of a free race, and the intruding flag must by then be lowered.

The ultimatum was declared; all preparation must now be made for possible results. The British lion must bare its teeth and talons; their use may be necessary in crushing these daring aggravators. A bugle call rang out, movement commenced everywhere, natives moved in the swamps, sailors of all the ships leapt to their feet, and as the call died away other bugle calls

rang out—the four ships were "Clearing for Action." This frequent exercise of British ships was being done in deadly earnest. The work was a big one. As the calls died away the thumping tread of many bare feet sounded from all parts of the ships. In the Englishman, stentorian voices gave brief orders, and on all sides boats were hoisted into the air, some by man power, some by hydraulic, as derrick after derrick topped itself over the ship, swung outward, and deposited its load into the water. Then, as the steamboats towed their consorts to a safe berth in another bay, the lofty boat davits themselves were dropped over the side, while top hamper of every description disappeared as if by magic, and the click of hammers resounded on all sides. The smart ship fast developed into a bare armoured box, while the massive cut davits finished their task of lifting the five-ton anchors to their beds, and then themselves sullenly subsided to the deck; tall awning stanchions lowered themselves, and the awnings, like great centipedes, crawled on men's shoulders to the canvas lockers. Resplendent ensign staffs with their glittering crowns disappeared, rails and stanchions were laid on the deck, hatchways were closed, the ship was as invulnerable as she could be made. She had taken off her garb of peace, she no longer looked a dainty thing; she bore a terrible appearance; she looked what she was—an infernal machine, a box of armour with projecting guns. The stripping was complete; all fittings



which were dangerously combustible were removed and sent away in the boats; no detail which may have affected the true purpose of the ship was left unarranged. And the work was smartly performed. As coolly as though at exercise, the signalman ran up the little pennant to mark the completion of the "clearing for action." As the Captain expressed himself satisfied, the order "Break" was given, and as though signalling to the Admiral of the fleet, the tricolour fluttered out. The effect of it on the other ships was to increase the discordant cries as men, unfamiliar with their work, struggled to loose rusty bolts and stiffened hinges. But in the British ship, as the pennant flew out, another bugle call sounded, "General Quarters," and those who had been on deck engaging in the general demolition then dashed below to magazine and shell room, to electric hoist, to steam hoist, to casemate, and to barbette, and soon the great guns reared their oily snouts from point to point as they scented the enemy, while their shot and shell supply, from hand to hand, cage to cage, rammer to breach, rushes at record speed from the rest of the magazine to the ready maw of the gun. In the conning tower, with a few assistants, the Captain is directing the movement of his ship. The steering engine, earlier controlled from the bridge, was then controlled from this box of eighteen-inch steel, the clanging engine room telegraphs were being rung from there, the guns asked the conning tower the range, speaking tubes and bell circuits

ran from it everywhere; it was, in fact, the heart of the ship. And the clock ticked on, the sun neared its utmost altitude, and still an impudent usurper's flag fluttered in the breeze, while the military power it represented—the ancient warships in the bay—struggled in the throes of unpreparedness, while a silent enemy circled about it, waiting for the time when it should care to attempt its destruction. England was ready; eight bells rang out. The casemate fired one shell, which was arranged, to frighten the denizens of the foreigners' tent. Its lyddite flung a ton of earth before it; the flagstaff tottered and fell. It was never raised again. The next foreign signal was a white one: the disorganised battleships did not fire their shotted guns. England had "Cleared for Action." The British lion had roared—then all was peace. England was ready!



“ LAND EVERY AVAILABLE MAN ”

THE great ships lay at anchor ; they are concentrations of power—of guns, of engines, of men. On this morning of “ General exercise ” the man-power will be brought into play in the performance of one of the many evolutions which are apt to occur in war. The flagship will signal the particular exercise to be carried out, the ships will compete with one another in the quickness of the “ carrying out.” And now the signal flies out, and the bugles call, “ Land every available man.” The hands, hitherto fallen in in the battery, immediately run to their rifles, blankets, cutlasses, leather gear, water bottles, &c. Ammunition supplies are rushed along the decks by the stokers’ ammunition party, already encased in their leather gear, which has been thrown on to them by their assiduous chief stoker, who has chosen a particular corner of the deck for doling out his men’s accoutrements. Amidst the excitement the great steel main derrick rises from its bed, propelled by the noisy boat hoist engines on deck, and lifts one by one the great boom boats into the water. At the gangways now the men are pouring into the boats, and there a cutter is away, loaded to the water’s edge, oars projecting outwards, and rifles upwards ; from amongst a mass of men, she steers for the shore

with her warlike load. The big launch and pinnace are not yet away, for they must wait for the slowly descending field guns and carriages, as they are lowered by the derrick. On all sides on the upper deck men wrestle and struggle with accoutrements. There a kindly officer is strapping up a clumsy man, as though the latter were a babe. The great idea is a quick landing, and this is no time for dissertations or drill books.

The midshipmen, big and small, are busy getting their companies together, seeing that every man and gear is complete. Even the Engineer-Lieut. is busy in assisting the ship to do her best in this, his unfamiliar line. Though theoretically a trained officer in the use of small arms, his practice in the same is small ; yet even he may be seen directing the stokers’ stretcher and ammunition parties in the particular “ setting up ” of each man and their general duties. And now the guns are lowered ; over the side scramble the armed men, the oars are tossed, the boat shoves off, and the procession is complete. But there are still some men left, and our pennant must not break till all are gone. Now here comes the first cutter, and her small crew of three are showing enterprise worthy of their ship. Unable to gain the full advantage of the breeze by hoisting all sail, owing to short-handedness, they rush along under foresail, keeping the boat to the wind by manning the lee oars. They have already earned the approbation shown by that rare but much-sought



treasure—the Commander's smile. And now they are alongside. "Bundle in all"; the men jump in, the doctor follows, the Gunnery Lieutenant completing the landing party. "Shove off!" is the next order. "Break!" immediately follows, and the tricolour of victory at our yard-arm flutters a taunting signal to our competitors—we are first ship. But all is not yet over. From the ship we see the landing of the men and the mustering of the companies on shore. They must pass inspection. Even now we see the Gunnery Lieutenant of the flagship prying into ammunition boxes, looking for water in water bottles, seeing that the men are properly dressed and accoutred. The inspection is over; now they will drill—yes, there the field guns unlimber, limber up, and dash about in a manner which would shame the smartest horse artillery.

The companies are now in skirmishing order, and are attacking the imaginary enemy. Now the second part of the evolution (timed competitive exercise) is to commence. "Return to your ships"—the processions of over-laden boats immediately recommences; the ship is soon again a scene of turmoil. Dusty men are stripping themselves of gear and rushing to man the boats to bring off their mates, waiting on the beach, in the quickest possible time. Others man the guys of the great derrick, for the boats must come in again, the field guns as well. Now the boats arrive, and are soon unloaded of their freights; hooking on, they are soon swinging

in mid air and then settled in their crutches on the boat deck. All are on board, all the boats are hoisted, and again we break the pennant. We are first ship at both landing and embarking.



## MOORING SHIP

**G**RADUALLY, and with majesty untroubled by the heaving sea, the great fleet rushes, yet with no unseemly haste, towards its haven. The two centre lines are made up of huge battleships, the flank lines of varied cruisers, some longer than the battleships, with three and four funnels, others so small that they seem to be but the boats of the former.

The flagships head the lines and display much bunting. The flags are flying, not for show, but to transmit important messages regarding the disposition of the fleet at anchor. Two little flags in the first flagship of the fleet are prominent before all others. They signify "Prepare to moor," and when they flutter down, the first anchors must drop simultaneously in all ships. All eyes are turned on those flags. Signal boy vies with Captain to be the first to see the flags hauled down, for the ship which drops anchor late will be out of position, and may be sent to sea to come in later and moor properly. At last when the flagships are as close to the shore as they dare, the flags run down with their halliards in a festoon to leeward. Captains shout "Let go," and the starboard cable rushes out at a terrific pace, for though the engines have been stopped, 15,000 tons possess great momentum at twelve knots. The ship vibrates to the

rattling cable as it jumps from its bed in the chain-locker below, leaps into the stokers' mess deck, jumps through the seamen's mess deck—causing devastation amongst unlashd crockery—careers along the foc'sle, throws off sparks in the hawse pipe, and finally descends into the sea, where nature allows but little noise. In a few minutes twelve shackles have run out, but still the ship moves on. Only two more shackles must run out if we are to moor quickly. The Captain judges the way of the ship, and now cries, "Full speed astern, both." They are prepared for this below: it is the usual final burst, the last lap of stokers, boilers and engines before the spell of the morrow in port. The ship sensibly lifts her stern and trembles, but still moves ahead till, at the twelfth shackle, she stands as if undecided as to her proper course. "Let go port anchor" is the Captain's order, and the cable flies after the descending anchor. At the same time, the First Lieutenant lifts a little flag, the starboard cable tautens—the capstan has commenced a struggle. The ship is not yet actually moving astern, though her powerful engines are beating up great billows at her stern. In the capstan flat, a little engine groans and struggles to do what it is directed to, but as yet steam is not strong enough. On deck, the poor little engine is, in strong language, being consigned to hotter places than the capstan flat, though the temperature there is 140°. But the steam soon prevails, the ship commences a sternward course, the engine



rattles round at a terrific speed, the starboard cable rattles in as the port rattles out. The sixth shackle of the starboard cable appears, the sixth of the port goes over the side, and the ship is "middled." Now for the swivel which will allow the great ship to swing, as the tides and winds please to swing her, without "tangling," or as the sailor puts it "fouling," her cables. Eager eyes closely watch the blacksmith as he disconnects and connects the various shackles. At last all is completed. "Let slip" is the cry, immediately succeeded by another "Break!" The ship lays fastened by her starboard cable to a swivel connecting both anchors and cables, and a tricolour pennant has been broken and is flying from the yardarm. That is "first ship," for as yet hers is the only pennant flying. All concerned in mooring breathe a sigh of relief, and lazily turn to survey the rest of the fleet, noting—and from their lofty standpoint judging—the smartness of individual ships by the order in which they break their pennants. But amidships and aft much work is proceeding. Steamboat hoists rattle down, the derricks sway from side to side, steamboats lift from their beds, smoking and ready for immediate use, gangways are being shipped, and all the conveniences for use in harbour appear from below and are smartly rigged. The big ship spreads her boat booms so that her little parasites, the now floating boats, may make fast and be safe. Soon all is snug, the decks are swept down, the importance and sacredness of the bridge has



MR WINSTON CHURCHILL, ENGLAND'S FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY,  
LANDING FROM SEAPLANE 95 AFTER A FLIGHT TO SETTHEAD.





THE RUSSIAN FLEET AT SEA.

been transferred to the quarter-deck, the mail is on board, Jack has piped down, and is enjoying his letters after " Mooring Ship " — six on each.\*

A

\* A shackle of cable is  $12\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms, so that there are seventy-five fathoms of cable on each leg, the mooring swivel being in the centre, just outside the hawse-pipe.



## THE SAILING RACE

**A**SAYING famous in the Navy is: "A ship is known by her boats." To a great extent experience shows this to be correct—smart ships usually have smart boats, and so nearly all such qualifications of ships are shown in their respective boats. But in these days there is one exception to the rule of "Like boats like ship," and that is, fast ships need not have fast boats: there is no common relation in speed between the ship and her boats—one is by artificial coal power driven, the other driven by no "bottled up forces," but directly by nature as it happens to be exerting itself at the time.

So on this day of the sailing race, we, in the boats, meet on common ground. The breeze is strong, but equally available to us all. We are merging towards the starting line. The preparative guns have fired, and in a few minutes we shall be off. In nearly all the boats someone is intently studying a watch, and calling the number of seconds from gunfire. The boats approach this line, we, in the smallest class, will be first allowed over—separate starts will be made in turn by the different classes, according to their size. Now we are just on the line, the two flags in the flagship are nearly in line, when "bang" goes the gun. We all give little kicks of excitement and relief—we are across the line.

No "recall" flags are hoisted, no one has overstepped the mark, and the race has commenced. In this boat we are pleased—we have crossed the line to windward, and as yet are first; but not for long, our most dreaded antagonist is already cutting out her work. She is the smart little whaler of the S——, steered by little B——, one of the youngest of midshipmen, but one of the few who looks on the departing masts and yards of the Navy with regret—he is one of our few remaining sailors. Our antagonist has slipped through, by smart sailing, the batch of boats he injudiciously started amongst, and is standing up with well-trimmed sails to contest supremacy with us. In the meantime the larger boats are starting at intervals, but as yet they are no concern of ours. Our fight is with this "snottie's" boat. She is now so close under our lee that one might easily jump from one to the other. Her helmsman is "mighty careful." He sails his boat for her very best, and tries no manœuvring of questionable result. She is moving no faster than we are, so his decision is correct; it is, for we of the crack boat can tell, "I will not try more than I can do." Such gauging of possibilities is only in the power of men of judgment, and the "snotty" being a true sailor, is one. And so the two good boats hang together. She can only pass us if we make an error and sail carelessly, or if she gets a fluke of wind, for we are both in our best sailing trim. We can only outstrip her by sailing better. Now is the test, boat to boat, helmsman to



helmsman, the respective couple are at their best, some power is being exerted—the power of concentration on the matter in hand. The power is being equally exerted by helmsmen on the objective boats, and they slip gracefully through the water. But now we approach the first mark. 'Tis but a moored boat, yet it affords food for thought. We decide on our plan, we lure our enemy into a false move. "Poor kid," we mutter, he is disposed of. We made him, by virtue of sailing rules common to all seas, transgress—he is disqualified. We are first at the first mark. Shall we be so at the second? 'Tis doubtful, for here are the cutters not far behind us. They rush towards us, we crawl further into the wind's eye. They cannot follow, they are not so trim, but they are moving fast, the wind is increasing, and now, as we move free to our mark, we feel it. Our lee gunwale seems charmed, though above the water-level 'tis allowing none over it. We must be "moving" for such to be the case. We are doing so "with a vengeance." Why, here we are at the second mark. And now the order comes, "Lower dip foresail, rip spinnaker," immediately succeeded by, "Lower and dip mainsail," and we faintly hear the clapping of the man in the mark-boat as we rush by "ramping free." We feel fairly safe, but by now we begin to fear the big boats, the tremendous launches are not far behind us. They, in the general ruck of cutters, whalers, pinnaces, and launches, are just turning the mark, and all as close as they dare. Such crushing brings about

the usual mishaps. We hear the snapping of spars and see the lowering of sails, which tells of mismanagement, brought about by competition, unguided by sailing rules.

We are now rapidly approaching the last mark from home, but the leading launch is gaining fast. We strain every nerve, but here she is close behind us, but we are just rounding the mark. We haul smartly to the wind, and bound away from the buoy and stand in towards the land—for an hour with the sailing directions of the port has taught us that the wind will veer from that quarter. The launch follows an opposite course in tacking for the line. She stands to sea. We have our chance and take it. Pursuing what probably appears to others a wrong course, we stand on, but the welcome breeze arrives, first in little puffs, then steadily down the cliffs. Our nearest opponent is now to leeward. We stand in for the line. The gun fires—we have won.



## PAY DAY

**I**T is two-bells in the afternoon watch in the battleship when the carpenters struggle aft with pay-tables—one is seen to be the gun room card-table, another is a jerry-built affair of planks. The carpenters are followed by a more curious procession of seamen carrying large wooden boxes, closely followed by the Paymaster.

The boxes are deposited one over another on one of the tables which has been placed far aft on the quarter-deck. The officer of the watch then gives the order, "Pipe payment." The Quartermaster runs along the decks, alternately piping on his whistle, and hoarsely shouting, "First hundred fall in for payment." The pipe is smartly obeyed by a crowd of seamen, and they are soon, under the direction of their officer, falling in, each man in his proper place. The officer gives the order, "Each man will hold his cap top uppermost to receive his money, and will see it is correct before he leaves the quarter-deck." Then "Right about, quick march," and they march to within a few feet of the pay table. Immediately a Writer calls out a name and the amount due to it. It is the name of the first man in the front rank, who answers by giving his number, at the same time taking his cap off and smartly stepping forward. The Paymaster

takes out of a partition in one of the boxes an amount of money and adroitly throws it into the centre of the cap before him; the man turns smartly to the right and marches away. And so on at the pay-table till each man has received his pay, the only interruption occurring when the sick berth steward, standing at the side, steps forward to answer for a man who is sick in the sick bay, and when the leading seaman answers, "Duty, sir," for a man who is on duty and unable to attend.

The men, as they receive payment, proceed to the postal order table, and those who require orders are quickly disposed of by the Assistant Paymaster. The next table is that of the savings bank, where a marine lieutenant presides. The next may be one where collections are taken for missionaries or for the relatives of some lately deceased shipmate. So the men are paid, hundred by hundred. After payment, the men proceed to the steward serving out tobacco, cigarettes and soap—essentials to the English sailor. The tobacco is served out as a bundle of leaves, which will later be compressed into a round perique of strong tobacco by the rope contrivances of Jack, and, when circumstances permit, a judicious sprinkling of rum. This tobacco is in great demand amongst Jack's friends ashore, but it is rarely that he manages to supply them with any large quantity, for he is only allowed to take a fair-sized pouchful ashore with him, and his own consumption is large. Still, there are some funny tales told of the devices used for smuggling



tobacco out of dockyard gates. The following is a fair example.

The liberty men at P—— had landed at the dockyard and were filing out as usual between the police on either side of the gate—about one in eight of them being stopped to be searched—when one of them, unencumbered by any suspicious bundle of "togs," pressed forward and said to a policeman: "I say, old chap, I'm going to bring a bit of baccy out to-morrow; let me pass then." The policeman immediately thought he saw an opportunity for being smart, so, saying "All right," he passed the sailor out, but determined he should be stopped on the morrow. The next evening arrived, and our sailor came towards the policeman winking furiously. To his pretended surprise he was sent to be searched, but shortly returned smiling on his way through the gates. The policeman looked surprised, and, as the Tar came towards him, said: "You didn't bring the baccy, then?" "You —— fool, I took that out last night," was the sailor's answer.

Another is of a sailor engaged in working at officers' buildings adjacent to the dockyard. He often had to carry buckets of wooden blocks, sawdust, &c., from the yard to the house. They were at first examined by the police, but, after some days, were rarely searched. The sailor determined that this relaxation of duty should assist him in a grand coup. Filling his basket with tobacco bought from his messmates, and covering it with sawdust, he strolled up to

the gates. Noticing a policeman strolling towards him, he made no attempt to avoid him, but, jerking his thumb over his shoulder towards the basket, shouted affably, "Baccy," and passed on. His ready wit saved him. The policeman lost all suspicion, and allowed him to take his tobacco out.



## ROLLING HOME

**T**HE impressive strains of "Auld Lang Syne," played by the bands of the "A" and "C" behind us, have faded away astern. The great Rock of Gibraltar no longer o'ershadows us; we are truly homeward bound.

All are exultant, as the good old "Briton," which has been the pleasant habitation of us exiles for the last few years, leaps and plunges in the swell, and there are few regrets on board her. The band on the quarter-deck is in strident tones reminding us that we are

"Rolling home to Merry England,  
Rolling home across the sea," &c.

Everyone is humming the tune, and as we work, securing boats, &c., for the heavy "blow" which is expected, everyone looks happy.

And now Gibraltar is out of sight—we are practically beyond recall. All give a sigh of satisfaction and think for a few minutes of the times when the "Briton" was in the finest fleet of the world—Did she do her duty? Our modesty will not allow us to answer this question ourselves, but we ask outsiders who question to look at the evolution records, look at the list of steam trials, look for the inspection records (bar one—not a word), look for sports records, look for firing records; in fact, for all particulars

of what a battleship and her crew should be. And we know and feel no hesitation in declaring that what we have done in this good old ship has raised but few unkind feelings in our competitors. We remember when the young officers of the fleet would bid good-night to ours, their hosts, how the harbours would echo such evidences of good feeling as the following: "What's the matter with the 'Briton'?" "She's all right." "Who's all right?" "Why, the 'B-r-i-t-o-n,'" with such emphasis on the separate letters as would make us men, smoking in the battery, as pleased as possible. And now we are taking our ship home to deliver her to the hands of others. A little feeling of jealousy comes over us, for we fear what they will do with her. Will they allow her to develop into an amusing "bug-trap"? Will she crawl about in disgrace, manned by a crew and in a fleet both unworthy of her? We think not, for even now as she bounds along she seems to answer us, "I'll sink first," and we are fairly satisfied. It may be that she will instil wherever she goes a spirit of emulation in her consorts, and demonstrate that there is still something in that oft-used word "efficiency." We hope that she will do so.

We shall regret leaving her, but these things must be, and we shall have a little satisfaction. Paddy will go away to Cork, Jacker (Cornishman) will go down to Mulligizzey, Cockney will go to "town," Mac will awa' to Edinbro' and Glaskie, Torpointers will go to "Rangoon"



(Torpoint, near Plymouth), Tam, the Devonshire man, will "be goin' up along Widdecombe way," and for a time divisions may sound, "night quarters" will try to awake the dead, "evolutions" will be carried out, but the "Briton" will sleep in dock, and old "Britons" will almost forget who they are.

And now the night is on us; the sun set in a bank of blackness, the sky is overcast, the heaving swell looks oily; we are about to get a farewell drubbing from the sea without doubt. Well, we can't complain; it has treated us pretty well this commission. The wind is easterly and light, but backing slowly to the northward. We'll turn in on deck in "togs"; there will be a call later on. "Both watches for exercise, fall in," piped by the bosun's mate, awakes us: it is just on eight bells in the first (12 P.M.). "It is blowing like the devil, and we are pitching and rolling about like a 'boozy Tommy,'" is what everyone thinks, but does not think worth expressing, as we double aft to the quarter-deck. There, standing on a ventilator trunk, is the Commander. And now he rattles out his orders, "First part foc'sle men secure port anchor," and so on, as we double off to our jobs.

The wind is now N.W. strong, and the big swell, herald of the wind, has broken into a heavy sea. The barometer is very low, so that everything is being secured with extra chains, lashings, &c.

Our work completed, we fall out and sleep

again. The ship, her fittings now snugly secured, steams on; the Captain will not ease, and we are glad of it. The gale increases and so does the sea; the decks are now uncomfortable, and the quarter-deck is dangerous. Water is getting in through various places, which shows we require a refit, and the mess decks are developing into snipe marshes. Down below the closing of scuttles, hatches, &c., has stopped a good deal of ventilation, so that the "fugginess" is about the same density as one would expect in the foc'sle of a Dutchman. And, alas! weak-kneed, wild-eyed people, with white faces, are laying about everywhere, "mal-de-mer" is making itself known in the Navy. Is the explanation jam? There are many of us revelling in the conditions. It reminds us of older times, and who, whether on shore or on land, does not regard the old times as better than the new? As the prosperous merchant in his town house, in the rush of society, looks back often with regret on the little shop in his native village where his modest income made him happy, so we old sailors look back on the old ships which had no steam. There are few of us left who have reefed topsails in a "pampero," who have "hove to" in a typhoon, or who have even sailed a ship "on the wind" unaided by engines. Anyway, here we are, rolling and diving home; and perhaps, after all, it is as nice to be romping north in the teeth of this "nor' western," on soft tack and fresh meat, at 220 miles a day, as it used to be when we came



up here at a mile a day under closed reefed topsails on salt tack and "bread," in the old wooden walls in similar weather.

There are with some of us nearly equal objections to each case. Sentiment, or, as we like it better, "hardly earned love of the sea," wishes us back to the old times; "sad indulgence in creature comforts" contents us where we are. But there is an element of sentiment amongst us still, which is growing stronger. It is "the fascination of steam." The old stokers from below tell us with pride of the steaming powers of this ship and that, at the same time impressing the importance of the personal element. We hear them say: "Blimey, if we only had the stokers of the old 'Q——' this ship would fly." Man must be deteriorating!

And now that we are fairly in the Bay things are pretty lively, but nothing matters—we are "rolling home." Not so the poor old tramps we are passing; here is one close on the star-board bow. My word, she's yawing, now clean across the sea to port, taking it green all the way along, now flinging her stern to heaven, propeller racing like a windmill, now with her forefoot dry, and under water aft, she comes rolling down to Bilbao with her cargo of tram-rails. I can imagine the lovely time they are having in her. Perhaps last night a hatch got loose and her ten hands tried to secure it; perhaps one was washed overboard and another was killed. Who cares if it was so? But I will tell you one thing: that craft and her sort are the best

sailor manufactories—barring certain sailing ships—that there are. If they were manned by Englishmen instead of Dagos, England would have no need to fear for her naval supremacy. She could then build ships and man them with men who would fight their guns as well as the best drilled of us; men who would not faint when they saw blood—each of them used to do the work of four, and proud of it.

We steam along with no alteration in the weather, until now we are in sight of Ushant Lighthouse. The rocky coast brings thoughts of the "Serpent" and the other good ships which have been dashed to pieces near there, and of the sadness such accidents have caused.

The weather has commenced to get finer, the wind and sea are going down, a more peaceful night is before us, so that to-day we are able to get a good polish on our guns and bright-work, and "shape things up a bit" in readiness for harbour. Now, at four bells in the morning watch, we sight the Eddystone light. Everybody turns out to see it, the wildest capers are performed in our delight, and no one troubles about sleeping any more to-night. The morning breaks and shows us Rame Head, then Plymouth Hoe, and now, at 7 o'clock, we moor in Plymouth Sound. We are home!

Note.—The Mediterranean Fleet, when this was written, contained all our finest ships. There was no *entente* then and no rival in the North Sea.



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