PUSHING WATER

ERIC P. DAWSON

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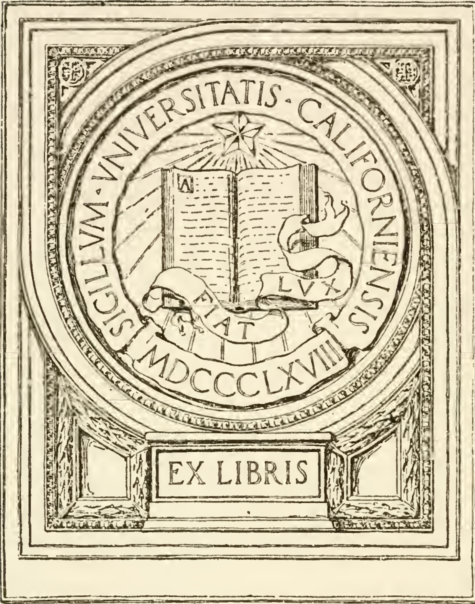
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ERIC P. DAWSON
LIEUTENANT, R. N. V. R.

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BY

ERIC P. DAWSON

LIEUTENANT, R.N.V.R.

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LETTERS FROM HOME

Night like a sable pall
And the clouds hang low,
And out of the gloom a star
Shoots by with a pale white glow.

Feet that stumble—and eyes
That have lost their sight—
A voice whispers "Courage!"
A hand stretched out in the night.

Dawn—and the day breaks drear—
And how will it end?
Hope murmurs once again
In the voice of a friend.

So are your letters to me
From across the sea—
Winged Courage, winged Cheer
And Hope for what is to be.

PUSHING WATER

PUSHING WATER

I

The other day one of the officers of our M. L. fleet returned from a long absence on patrol duty.

"What have you been doing since we saw you last?" he was asked.

"PUSHING WATER," was his brief reply.

This succinct phrase sums up pretty thoroughly the life of those of us who serve in that department of the British Navy which the civilian knows as the Mosquito Fleet. Day and night we push water.

We are known by all kinds of names, from Harry Tate's Navy (a comedian whose chief wit lies in the contortions performed by his whiskers) to our official name, the Auxiliary Motor Boat Patrol. When you come to describe the ship itself you have a varied choice of names;

sometimes it's the "Stink Pot," at others the "Special," or ironically—the Semi-Submersible, but perhaps the name we like best ourselves is the "Movies." There's something about this name "Movy" which seems to fit, for the M. L. is nothing if not movement. To speed, and for the sake of speed, everything else has been given the go-by. Some one has said that her movement is more like a drunken streak of lightning than anything else. If you happen to be aboard when she is running you feel more like an exalted "Strap Hanger" on an inebriated motor bus than anything else. "Sea-legs" in the ordinary sense of the word are about as useful as two legs would be to a centipede; every part of your anatomy is required to perform hitherto unexpected gyrations in order to maintain the equilibrium denoted by the term sea-legs. You require sea-legs, sea-arms, sea-head and a kind of armour-plated stomach well described as the dreadnought type.

Eighty foot of match boarding shaped like a razor, with an engine room taking up one-third of the space, and four huge tanks to contain fuel

for a long patrol, does not leave very much space for anything else. If you remember the old wooden skates we used to have as kiddies, coming down to a sharp steel blade and very long and narrow; or perhaps better still those long pointed ladies' shoes that used to be sold in England many years ago as American shoes, you can get some idea of our appearance.

To paraphrase an old problem of mental arithmetic, think of a destroyer: divide her into 80 feet lengths and multiply by fragility to the *n*th. power, add 500 horse power and you have a "Movy."

"Built for speed, not comfort," should be the motto of the enterprising New Jersey firm that built movies at the rate of one per day. After all they are typical of the very spirit and enterprise of America. They are lean and sharpcut as the American himself, and like the American type of manhood just a shell to contain an almost inexhaustible supply of energy. Everything is dwarfed except the horse power,—just room to move around and nothing more. I've tried often to work out how many times round the deck I

should have to walk to get a mile's exercise, but long before I have covered that distance have grown dizzy with scraping corners.

So this is where we live and have our being. For'ard are the crew's quarters where, with a marvellous economy of space, seven men live and sleep in twenty feet of space. The officers' quarters are about as grandly miniature, and are ambitiously divided into a "Ward Room" where two can turn round and three becomes a crush, while the after cabin is spacious enough for two, provided one makes room for the other by remaining pressed tight against the side in his bunk.

Crushed in somewhere amidships between the engine room and the gloriously named ward room is the galley, taking a space of about four feet athwartship.

> "Sing me a song of the M. L. Cook—
> May the Lord have mercy upon us—
> With a petrol stove in a greasy nook—
> May the Lord have mercy upon us!
> Our meals a lukewarm lingering death;
> We'll praise the Hun with our final breath
> If he'll strafe our galley and slay our chef—
> May the Lord have mercy upon us!"

So wrote the poet of the Movies of the galley, our sink-hole of strange and weird stenches that carry their message of strange forms of nutrition fore and aft, and permeate the nostrils of all hands, and especially of the cook. I am afraid I cannot tell in restrained tones of that sink-hole of iniquity in the galley, with its tintinnabulation of shifting pots and pans, and burning concoctions flung in a heavy sea over the paraffin burners. Even the cook grows speechless at these times, and his vocabulary is not even a distant relation by marriage to a Sunday school; when even he is speechless I must perforce be dumb. There are many things about a Movy that can only be whispered; that is why we were once among the "Hush-hush" class of his Britannic Majesty's Navy. Suffice it to say that beside being a mass of speed energy, we are quite as much a mass of explosive energy. We have of course a gun that is built for business, but this is not least of the ingenious devices with which we are ready to welcome Fritz. Like Agag we must go tenderly all our days, and not bump too hard, lest not only M. L. oo disappear like the conjuror's

cat in a loud explosion and a puff of smoke,—but, forsooth, not only M. L. 00 but also most things within a quarter of a mile's radius.

I remember one chill winter morning I awoke with a thud to find an old Scotch drifter nosing her way at our stern. Only the most vociferous and ungodly language could convince the skipper of the risk he was taking in affectionately nosing so harmless a looking craft as an M. L. Finally he deprived us of his attentions, but not too soon or one of the harbours of the West Coast of Scotland and many fishing drifters would have been napoo.

II

One glorious summer week I tripped across the continent from the quiet peaceful beauty of the Rockies with every good intention of joining the Canadian Artillery. A chance meeting with a man from Vancouver who had been accepted for R. N. V. R. and the path of Fate swerved off. I think it was the prospect of a vast exciting game that seemed to call. "Hunting submarines" in a speedy motor launch, to any one with imagination, has the smack and tang of the old Armada days and seemed to promise a sport, in comparison with which, big game hunting was child's play.

So I think this branch of service made its appeal to the sporting sense of many of the R. N. V. R. officers, and gathered in a particular kind of man, whose joy was bucking up against things that required his own initiative to win through. Especially is this true of the Colonials—we have many Canadians and New Zealanders.

Truly enough the man who has been yearning for excitement gets all he wants on occasions. Even at the most ordinary times, when Fritz is not paying anybody particular attention, the sea itself will give you as an exciting a time in a Movie as ever could be obtained by stalking grizzly in the wild spaces of the Rocky Mountains. Moreover, it needs just about as much "nerve" to nurse and coddle a Movy in the teeth of a gale with a sea rolling in, that has been rolling waves along, which never seem to have stopped once since they left New York on their slow and solemn progress across the Atlantic. They say a Movie can't capsize and that statement I would almost endorse from a multitude of experiences, when she has rolled gunwales under and we have all hung on to something or other, soaked to the knees, but with a grip more tenacious than that with which a mountaineer ever scaled the Alps. The excitement of tumbling like a cork in a hillocky sea, of the stinging, biting sputter of driven spray, and the exhilaration of fighting a big sea in a tumbling, tossing eggshell of a ship, would give a bronco buster a thrill

that he never had before. Hun or no Hun this kind of fighting is always with us.

Men who found their fun sailing little yachts out of Auckland, New Zealand, in Puget Sound, or in the Great Lakes of Canada and around the British Isles, felt they had found their appointed niche in the war when the Movy was evolved. The rovers, wanderers, and rolling stones of the earth, gathered around and besought the Admiralty for commissions. We are as variegated a collection of manhood as could well have been gathered together under any service. You'll find amongst our numbers men who landed in "windswept Skagway at the clarion call of Gold," and others also you'll find who built from the virgin forest the stern-wheelers that first made the Fraser River navigable. Amongst our number also are the milder and less adventurous types who spent eleven months of the year in offices musty with parchment and deed boxes, or counting our change behind bank grilles, but lived their lives for one month in the year skippering a cutter with a miniature puff-puff engine.

For each and every one of us, whether the year

of our Lord 1914 saw us moving freely in the green spaces of the earth, or wearing the elbows out of broadcloth jackets in stuffy offices, the fabric of our lives will be re-woven. I think the rolling stone and adventure-seeker will have had his appetite sated and will go back with a calmer spirit to gather up the threads of his scattered life; but the man who strolled into his place of business, immaculate every morning for three hundred odd days of the year at the same tick of the clock, will have found that the iron of unrest has entered his being, and the longing for the open spaces, the horizon and the elemental things, will always be with him.

There will be few of us, when this war is over, who will not have lost the fear of the little things of life; the daily fear of the things that may be, that sometimes happen but most usually don't, will no longer burden us. Do you remember how Swinburne puts it:

> "From too much of living,
> From hope and fear set free,
> We thank with brief thanksgiving
> Whatever Gods may be."

III

The men I have already tried to tell you about are the officers of the Movies, for each Movy has two officers to take watch and watch about. The C. O. is usually a "two-ringer" who has served at least one year with the Auxiliary Patrol, the other is a Sub-Lieutenant, a one-ringer, newer at the game, usually full of enthusiasm as to how he will run his ship when he is lucky enough to get a command of his own.

But there is quite as much and even more character in the for'ard quarters. Besides deck hands for'ard are the engineers and almost without exception these men are experts on internal combustion engines and can converse as glibly in terms of horse-power and kilo-watts as the ordinary man can in pounds, shillings and pence, or dollars and cents. These chaps too, are the biggest heroes afloat on the Movies: mostly

Bred in a garage and sent to sea,
Sick and sorry and sore dismayed.

A Movie bucking into a nasty short sea is an unpleasant nightmare at the best of times. Even on deck and in the air a squeamish stomach will find no repose at the hands of Mothersills. But when you have to stick it, standing by a rattling, roaring engine, coaxing it, feeding its ravenous appetite with lubricating oil, and above all in the stench of burning oil and paraffin that pours out of the hatch in a blue haze as thick as a London fog, you are undoubtedly doing your bit. This is an engineer's daily job, and it's marvellous how well he sticks to it. Most engineers have been "gassed" with the fumes at one time or another. I know whereof I speak, for I have stood by for an engineer on more than one occasion when fumes and sea sickness have absolutely knocked him out. I have kept my balance by hanging on to the engine stanchion with one hand and the lever which executes the orders with the other, and I have breathed as vile a form of poisonous gas as can well be imagined, so

I can appreciate the hardships of a job which I am glad to say is not mine.

The engineer aboard these ships is not merely a taxicab driver, he is distinctly an expert at his profession. He has usually left a good business which required a clever hand and a good head. He is not a commissioned officer, but with few exceptions he is every inch of him a gentleman. So when I try to give you some idea of a Movy I must say "Hats off to the engineers." Theirs is the worst job aboard, and when there is any chance for fun they get none of the exhilaration of it, but are shut away in a noisome engine-room where they must remain till the last order is given and the engines rung off.

It's a difficult thing to picture the crew; nearly everyone who pictures a sailor to himself, imagines a bluff old sea-dog, with a vile-smelling cutty in his mouth, and an assortment of mendacious yarns which are introduced by a hitch of his trousers. This may or may not be an accurate sketch of a pukka A. B., but certainly is not of the Movy sailor—a member of the R. N. R. Trawler section. There is a scattering amongst

them of fishermen's sons, boys who sailed out of Brixham, Lowestoft, Yarmouth or the Scotch fishing villages, but the great majority have probably seen about as much of the sea as the average tripper at Margate has seen. I suppose they probably liked the look of the sea from Margate Pier, for I have never been able to fathom the reason why they decided upon sailoring as their vocation.

We have got to think normally of a civilian army, but I don't think many people have realised how much of the Navy to-day is a civilian Navy. At least a great portion of the "Fringes of the Fleet" is manned by civilians; I think, too, that just as many people before the war thought a soldier could only be made after years of practice, drill and soldiering, so there are many still who think that a sailor can only be made after many years from boyhood up. But this war has made sailors as well as soldiers out of the office boy and the clerk, and though perhaps the inbred idea of discipline cannot be instilled with the same pukka effect, yet the keenness to do his best is there just the same.

The Movy to which I am appointed is a good example of the prevalency of the war-sailor to-day. One man, our Cox, is a fisherman by birth, tradition and training. He could never be anything but a sailor however much he tried all his days. Since his earliest days of childhood he has sailed in his father's smack with the Brixham fishing fleet. But he is our only born sailor.

The rest are sailors war-made. Let me give you a list of them and their pre-war occupations. Bird was a porter on Darlington station; his love of the sea may have been initiated by the over-seas labels on the luggage he carried. Smith in private life was a plumber in London, and had probably heard of "swinging the lead," so naturally took to the sea. Jones was an artist for calendars chiefly, holds diplomas from art schools and has exhibited in the West Kensington Art Exhibition, but confessed to never having done a seascape until he became a sailor. This I can vouch for. He made me a present of a water colour of a Movy at evening. The sky was vivid yellow ochre, the kind of sky you may sometimes see at a brilliant sunset. The Movy's steaming

lights threw brilliant beams of red and green (unfortunately his starboard light is red and vice versa). Amidst this display of coloured fireworks the white ray of a distant lighthouse shot a trail of light across a sea, about as realistic as the toymaker's sea in which a child's Noah's Ark floats. To be just, this sketch was made during the first days of Jones' joining the ship. Since then he has done really excellent sketches, as should be the case with a man whose profession and livelihood is that of an artist. I simply mention this that you may realise that our sailors are distinctly civilian sailors. The last member of our crew (I will give the name he has most justly earned from his shipmates) is Grimey. The name itself needs no explanation. Grimey is a sore worry to his C. O. who believes that cleanliness is next to Godliness. He is frequently ducked by the crew, but whether he ever voluntarily forms any intimate acquaintanceship with water I would not swear. It may be his sympathetic soul that causes him to sing around the deck:

"I want to be a Sailor, a Sailor I do,
I want to wear a whistle
And a suit of navy blue;
But if I were torpedoed
Why then what would I do?
A compulsory bath is a thing I strafe,—
So they won't have me."

Nevertheless, Grimey is a sailor and prefers to do his bit on the sea, despite his ingrained contempt for water.

Taken all in all they are good chaps, smart at their work, and if not sailors in looks, have taken to sailoring with a will, can steer a course and take an order as smartly as many men who have sailed in square riggers round the world.

They are different in every way from the land lubbers who reported aboard when we commissioned a little over twelve months ago. Even then they had had some short training but everything about a ship was unfamiliar to them. Perhaps once in six times would the ship's head swing to starboard when you gave the order to port helm, and then only after momentary hesitation. These essential things came instinctively in time. I well remember in those days a new deck-hand at the

wheel of another Movy getting a compass course given him, and chasing that point round the compass—boxing the compass in fact with his eyes glued to the card and making two complete circles before the officer who was attending to something aft got dizzy and looked up to find himself playing kiss in the ring. Great was his wrath, too, when he hailed him good naturedly and asked him whether he was swinging ship for compass deviation.

There were many funny incidents in those days with our "green crew." When we came alongside anything, they used to look at a warp in a puzzled manner as though a sea serpent had come aboard and they were meditating on the best treatment to accord to him. Once an old petty officer on the quay absolutely flummaxed Grimey, who held helplessly on to the end of the after warp. "Make fast, can't you? Don't stand with the thing in your arms, as though you was nursing a baby. Tie it round yer leg if yer carn't find any other place and then stay there till yer want to cast off again!"

Can you imagine the dampened spirits of the

young C. O. in the full joy of his first command, starting off to some North Sea base with such a crew? Our first trip out to sea was more rife with pathos than comedy. I am well assured that as land faded away in the mist every man jack of the crew, except the coxswain, was convinced that he would never see again the "clover sod that takes the sunshine and the rains." Darlington station must have seemed like Paradise to Bird at that hour, and broken pipes a melody to Smith, our plumber-sailor. I am quite convinced that they doubted the possibility of the miracle of a ship with nothing in sight ever arriving at her port of destination. That was all magic to them, an incomprehensible conjuring trick. But if that was a sad hour, when land took her misty departure, the hours that followed were an agony of tragedy. The seas became confused and choppy, and the Movy, like a polo pony who has not yet been broken to her step, jibbed, sheered and cavourted. The motion of a Movy is something utterly strange and different even to the best sailorman. There is no languid roll or pitch, it is a series of unexpected leaps or bounds. She

buries her nose one second, recovers shakily to flop over on her side, then does a tobogganing stunt. Life is a varied vibro-massage of motions on a Movy. One by one our green crew took on their vernal clothing, became very sorry for themselves and reached that suicidal stage of sea sickness when they wished they might die; they became incapable, and in fact collapsed, all except our Brixham fisherman, and he was far from happy. In the engine room things were not much better and conditions much worse. Livid engineers made frantic ascents up the engine room ladder and dived for the rail and returned staggeringly but grimly to their work. Sea sickness may seem funny to some, it always used to to me, simply because I have never been seasick. Since that day it has lost its humour. Eventually one of our engineers was "all in," fighting to do his job to the last. Throughout the whole day we were a hospital ship. Fritz would have committed another atrocity to attack us; even our Brixham fisherman had to knuckle under. We arrived in port that night with two hands to work the ship, the C. O. at the wheel and telegraphs, and

myself in the engine room, somehow keeping the engines plugging along. Such was our first day at sea in a Movy. Gradually came health and happiness and the 'Dreadnought stomach' was achieved.

IV

For very many good reasons it is not possible to relate in anything but the most camouflaged details what these little ships with civilian sailors do. It is no secret that first and last and all the time they are looking for Fritz, and that when Fritz has been found they have given a good account of themselves. In fact, at their speed, the protection that their very miniature proportions afford as a target, and their waspish nature as regards guns and explosive inventions, they have proved so inimical to the constitution of the U-boat, that the Hun always plays his High Sea Fleet tactics of avoidance. We are not loved by the Hun, and he therefore prefers to make himself very scarce in our vicinity. You would naturally run from a swarm of wasps rather than stand and fight them. Killing wasps is small satisfaction and there is a very good chance of getting stung yourself. So it is much more profit-

able for the U-boat to conserve her energies for a transport than to take the risks entailed in attacking Movies, with the very good chance, as she herself has learned, of finding it a very expensive sport.

That is the reason why hunting the Hun is like hunting a needle in a haystack.

While this is our steady job, we have many auxiliary stunts to perform, which afford a little variation to the monotony of Hun-hunting. If we don't see so much of submarines as we would desire, we are constantly reminded of their slimy trail. We are there to sweep mines, familiarly called "eggs." Minesweeping is a satisfactorily tangible job. You at least have the satisfaction of coming at distant grips with the enemy, and when you've destroyed a mine and realised its explosive frightfulness, you can really feel that you've done a "little bit" in the war and possibly saved some fine ship and many fine lives from destruction.

Besides these occupations we police the seas as special constables. Every passing ship must be challenged, stopped and examined. She may

prove to be another *Moewe* or more frequently—and, as is often the case,—some Hunnish neutral, who is willing to run any amount of risks either for love of the Hun, or else for love of Hun gold.

On a dark night there is sometimes quite an exciting chase. The big steamer is thinking more about submarines than Movies, so when Miss Movy shoots out of the darkness, Morsing him to stop, the skipper of the big ship usually gets a bad attack of the nerves, concludes we are a submarine (which, by the way, is not a difficult thing to do unless you are thoroughly acquainted with our species) and rings full speed ahead. Then comes as glorious a race as ever was witnessed at a regatta—the big ship forging away at top speed and possibly zigzagging, while the insignificant speck of a Movy whoops along astern, one mass of spray, but always gaining. Of course there is always an excellent chance that the big fellow may exercise his gun if he has one, and I have seen him do it; it is up to you to convince him of your friendly attentions before that happens. Finally and fully convinced, the Big Ship

stops, and then you go alongside, step aboard, express your sorrowful apologies for having accelerated the skipper's heartbeats and then get to the technical business of examination. If everything is O. K. you wish him a *bon voyage,* give him his instruction or "sailing orders," and leisurely return to your "beat." If not, you must rattle your revolver, make him realise the whole British Navy stands behind you, and send him into the nearest port for further examination.

If you have ever seen a small terrier at the heels of a dray horse, you'll have some idea of the ludicrous side of a Movy chivying a 6000 tonner into an examination port. It is only the white ensign flying on the diminutive jackstaff aft that maintains the dignity of the situation.

Of all our "stunts" perhaps the most pathetic is when we assume the roll of stretcher-bearer to the Navy and go in search of the sailors in "open boats." "Steamer torpedoed 20 miles W. S. W. of X head" comes the order. Then the Movy's engines hum as never before, and her exhausts wreath her in a fleece-cloud of vapour. It's a question of life and death, and nothing matters

but speed. I think sometimes that many of our good natured civilians who still refuse to believe all the stories that are told about the Hun, and who still preserve a soft place in their hearts for the easy going German they knew before the war, would get a little bitter hatred in their hearts if they could see some of the men from the "open boats." I have seen them, after eight and nine days at sea, crying for water and exhausted with fatigue and hunger. I have seen them, too, bleached with the salt water, and their hands eaten into and cracked as a leper's with the salt. Some of these things are indescribable; the privations and nauseating intimacy of conditions in an open boat after days of helpless drifting are a slow death which is unimaginably horrible. We have grown almost hardened to suffering—our sympathy in this war has been appalled and staggered until we have become numbed to the recorded agonies of our daily papers. The wreck of the *Titanic* seemed a catastrophe that must overshadow the happiness of the world, and yet almost each day, the history of the "open boats" provides a tragedy as great. Can you realise the

brutality, or could you tolerate the people who cry for peace with a nation who do these things—who sink without warning, fire on open boats and even find huge amusement in snapshotting their victims as they drown within reach of their aid? I sometimes wish we could only learn to hate with our whole souls and beings. It takes a strong man to write these stark, staring facts so that they will sear their way into the soul of a nation. If this could be done and the people made to realise the Blonde Brute as he is, there would be no need to pander to pacifists.

But many of our dashes are indescribably ludicrous in their termination. One night late, we were on stand-off in harbour for a few hours after our patrol, and expecting a quiet evening. The telephone rang at the base-officer's house. An excited priest was at the other end. His story was frantically urgent; a German mine had got adrift and was floating up on the rocks at the base of a cliff upon which a Catholic convent was built. The inference was obvious, the mine was momentarily expected to explode, bring down the cliff, blow up the convent and apparently give the

novitiates and nuns a rapid non-return trip to the Pearly Gates! Of course we went to see what could be done to tow the German mine out to sea and sink it. All the way out we imagined an explosion with mingled remnants of cliff, convent and nuns soaring heavenward. Once more, as usual, it was with us a race against time—to get there before the fatal bump occurred. We did get there before that bump, our searchlight discovered the "Mine" bumping away as merrily as possible, as well it might, being a harmless fisherman's pellet-buoy, cut off from some nets in the vicinity. We solemnly returned, reported and disgustedly turned in early in the morning. We had at least given the nuns a comfortable night's rest, so our errand was not as purposeless as some we had taken. That is always the way with the Navy, every report must be investigated; it is better to follow ninety-nine false trails than miss the hundredth which may be the right one.

V

If, from what I have told you, you have obtained the impression that life on a Movy is most exciting I have altogether failed to give you any true picture of our daily life.

It is hard to get people to realise the utter barrenness of an existence on patrol,—the dreary melancholy of grey tumbling seas with the bitter coldness of grey skies and wind and a barren coast. After you have been months on one patrol every day doing the continuous and unchanging beat, always on the alert and always prepared for action, the weariness of the life becomes appalling.

Perhaps what I speak of may not be as true in the big ships, where there is more life and at least room for a fair constitutional on deck, and possibly a ward room mess with sufficient to pass a few hours at a hand of bridge.

Aboard a Movy, as I have said, there is just

room to turn around, and hardly deck space to take a turn without getting dizzy. There are only two officers aboard, thrown together without choice or taste, whose life is necessarily most intimate. No husband and wife are more continuously in one another's presence than the officers of a Movy. Can you imagine the amount of forbearance that must go to make up a quiet life under these circumstances?

But I don't want to draw a picture of discomfort. I only want you to get a true picture of the normal run of things.

We know too well all that the soldiers have to endure and we are ready to admit that the call for courage must necessarily be greater on their side. They endure and do not complain, and it's the very last thing in the world that the sailor wants to do.

Courage is of many different qualities. A soldier told me that if the war was simply a matter of sitting in the trenches it would be unendurable —it is the great moments of excitement that make it endurable. Perhaps this throws a little light on what I am trying to express. The courage

that we are called upon to give is the courage to keep cheerful and endure. It is very easy to let yourself go and to get fed up, to lose the ideal and big vision of your part in the war—the enthusiasm which you had when you "joined up." The monotony of the daily routine, unless you fight against it, will sap into your reserve of courage:

> "Just bustle up and grit your teeth
> And keep on keepin' on."

On a lonesome patrol sometimes it's very hard to keep before you the vision that you are just one cog in the greatest piece of organised and perfect machinery ever made—the British Navy. The daily routine and beating back and forth over the set patrol area, and the monotonous inactivity of it all are apt to dull the sense of the great endeavour. Patrick Vaux, the author of "Gadgets," has put it well—"Gadgets? What are gadgets? Anything, everything—parts of a mechanism—and so on. Anything whatever, we call gadgets. We're gadgets, too. Parts of the Naval Machine. That's what we all are. Just gadgets!"

To the civilian imagination the mere fact that

you belong to the British Navy produces a most wonderful picture of dreadful splendour. He immediately conjures up visions of a mighty fleet sailing out into the horizon in all the pomp and majesty of power. All this is so, but the Navy to-day means more than this. Before the Fleet can sail, the "Brooms" of the Fleet must do their work. We are the Brooms, the scene shifters behind the stage, the insignificant and unsplendid workers who do the daily set task without any thrill of glory in the doing. This is the job of the Auxiliary Patrols and all those numerous branches of the new Navy—of which we are but an infinitesimal part.

The old Navy, that was built to go out and attack and defeat the enemy, is a thing of thrills but a thing of the past. The new Navy is a bigger conception altogether, and besides the Great Fleet it includes thousands of humbler and more heterogeneous craft, whose job it is to clean the seas of the lurking death of German mines, to harry the ubiquitous U-boat and to nose into desolate islands and lochs where the submarine hopes to find peace and quiet to recharge her batteries or

come by stores. We are the "eyes of the Navy" everywhere, patrolling, watching and vigilant, so that no spot around the British Isles may pass unsearched,—a harbour of refuge to the hiding U-boat,—and so that no patch of seaboard may be a death trap to the merchantman that places food upon the civilian's breakfast table.

Of necessity the likeliest places for the Hun to try are the most desolate, and for that reason we are chiefly to be found "based" in places far away from the touch of civilisation,—"a dirty, forgotten one-horse place." I do not think that I have been much more unlucky than most, but my lot has been cast first in the far away western islands of Scotland, where barren rock and snow with an occasional mud thatched house is the landscape, and in the woolly-west of Ireland, which is considerably further away from the kindly touch of civilisation than the furthest West in Canada or America.

I arrived at my Scottish base in winter. First a long, cold journey from Inverness through bleak moorlands, where the deer huddled together in droves to keep warm. Then a six

hours' journey by sea in a drifter (this is a type of fishing vessel which war time has commandeered for the Navy). Finally we arrived at the base in the early hours of the morning. I shall always remember that base by the smell of salted herring that permeated everything. In the "wee sma' hours" I reported to a sleepy officer in charge and then went to seek a bed. Finding a bed took time; two out of three hotels had muffled their bells, and the welcome from the third hotel was to say the least lacking in geniality. I had been full of excitement to get to work at last after the long training. I think I too had imagined that being part of the Navy was something rather splendid. Very soon I realised that there was little splendour for us in this war. The essence of it all is not splendour, but just to do your duty cheerfully however mean or dreary it may be, not to grouse too much at the powers that be because you're not doing anything that appeals to you as spectacular, but just to remember that you're one minute cog in a great machine that depends for its efficiency upon the perfect working of the whole. If you really get fed up,

just look at the White Ensign flying aft, there's the trade mark that means "Part of the Naval Machine." That thought is big enough to give a little zest to the business of "Carrying-on."

VI

After your days of patrol comes "stand-off." The amount of "stand-off" varies in each particular place where you happen to be based. However long or short it may be, it is always eagerly looked for by all the little ship's company. Each day's patrol is ticked off on the calendar until "stand-o" comes around. Hours of stand-off are methodically divided into one watch ashore and one to "stand-by." For if there is any activity, half the ship's company at least must be ready at a moment's notice to put to sea. Stand-off is not all rest and relief either. There are petrol to get into the tanks, oil to be taken aboard, and stores to be purchased. Then there are always reports to be made, numerous forms according to K. R. and A. O. (King's Regulations and Admiralty Orders) to be filled in and despatched, possibly a lengthy explanation to the A. P. (Assistant Paymaster) at the base to be submitted as

to how "Grimey," officially known as Deckhand ....No. 18923, fell overboard and lost his sea-boots, or how the cook dropped the "Fannie (i. e., "Dixie" or boiler) over the side while carrying the crew's dinner for'ard in a heavy sea. Perhaps the most solemn duty to be performed in "stand-off" time is to find a bath. At least, that has always been mine, and although my pleadings with some villagers have met with good humoured contempt, I have always managed to negotiate a precious tub, although I would not like to swear always to its privacy from prying eyes.

There are many people I would like to publicly thank if I could remember all their names. These are the people who have allowed me to spend a few quiet hours of these "stand-offs" just sitting before their fire-sides. There are a number of things which I have learnt to appreciate as more valuable than great riches—yea, even than gold, since I joined the Navy, and perhaps most of all is just a quiet corner to sit down by a fire-side.

It's hard to make any one realise, who has not been upon some job like ours, the joy of getting

out of our little prison house for a while into a really homey room, and to see a real fire merrily burning. Next to that is a good meal, it does not matter how simple, where every dish is not perfumed with paraffin, and you don't have to eat it "catch as catch can" as upon a Movy:

"Meals a lingering, lukewarm death."

When you have managed to get a bath, a good meal, and a "sit by fire" into your stand-off you are ready to go back to your Movy and put in your next patrol as chirrupy as a cricket.

It does not take sailors long to make friends in any port they go to; and plumber, porter or artist, whatever our sailors were in civilian life, they have quickly acquired that habit. The fine clean life and the neat blue uniform and collar of their "number ones" in which they go ashore make our sailors popular heroes in the eyes of every village girl. They have a great time ashore. When the shrill whistle of the Movy pierces the silence of some quiet little village it is the sign for the girls to tumble out and get down to the pier. The "watch ashore" is quickly an-

nexed by them. Even Grimey takes a cat's lick, furbishes up, and becomes a good looking boy in his "number ones," when it's his watch ashore and we are making for port. There's a subtle change, a brisking up, and a feeling of joy in the air when the Coxswain gets the order steer "N. N. E." and the telegraph rings full speed ahead and the Movy turns her nose about, smelling home, as she is laid on her course to port.

Then all the crew who have been silent begin to grow vivacious, and gather together on deck laughing, talking, more often than not starting some invented song of their own, singing in close harmony, our friend the porter from Darlington station booming out "seconds." Here's one of their favourite coming home compositions:—

"When our last patrol is over
And no more I go to sea,
Then no more I'll be a rover,
No more a sailor will I be;
Just a farm set in a valley
Where no U-boats lurk and dwell,
No more hammocks, no more galley
When I leave this damned M. L."

VII

There is a justice about the Admiralty that is not to be found in the War Office—and added to this extraordinary piece of humanity on the part of the Navy there's a touch of humour that has always rather appealed to me. Every officer and rating aboard a Movy is allowed the vast sum of a few additional pence per day extra to his other pay. This is officially called "hard-lying money!" It is no slur upon the veracity of the average sailor upon a small ship, but is given in recognition of the discomforts endured.

I heard one cynic say, "Well, you know, I think we earn our hard-lying money, but as to the rest, I think the Admiralty is very generous!" Whatever else we earn—our hard-lying money is most assuredly well earned.

I have already tried to give you some idea of the quarters of an M. L. and its habits.

The routine of the ship is divided into two

watches. One officer and the Port or Starboard watch take watch and watch about. When it's not your turn on duty you are below amusing yourself as best you may.

Neither are we running all the time. Petrol, forsooth, is a valuable commodity and a Movy consumes petrol with the same avidity as a flapper consumes a box of chocolates. "Save petrol" is a strict injunction given to Movy officers. If you want to make yourself unpopular with your base officer just return a "chit" for your petrol consumption after a few days' continuous running.

Hence, we must do a drifting patrol as much as possible. A drifting patrol means running to a certain position, then shutting off your engines, setting a watch and drifting with current, tide and wind for hours together.

There is no means of keeping a Movy head on to the sea, hence unless you have a dead flat calm (unfortunately in my experience about as non-existent as the Dodo bird) the Movy takes the seas broadside and you spend your time rolling for the whole of your drifting patrol. I timed

our rolling once; the best we did was 35 rolls a minute. This is no gentle, sleep inducing roll, either. Every utensil in the galley dances the "two-step;" rolls and sets up a monotonous orchestration of smashing, crashing and tapping. Our cups and saucers are enamel or they would be no more. If you are in your bunk you must wedge yourself securely there, or you will roll out. "Any roll worth rolling is worth rolling well," is the motto of our drifting patrol.

When you have had a few hours of a drifting patrol, you have quite exhausted the most expressive adjectives in the vocabulary and settle into a sullen silence. I know of no better way to test the temper of humanity than to let them roll for a few hours in a Movy. No, I have no qualms of conscience in taking my hard-lying money—if I earn everything as thoroughly for the rest of my life I shall die with an easy conscience.

As for being off or on duty in a Movy, I think we would prefer to be on duty except when we are sleeping. The greatest difficulty is to find something to do when you are off watch to occupy the time. It's usually almost impossible to

write either when you are drifting or under way. It's hard to find a hobby that will keep you happy and at the same time harmonise with the habits of a Movy.

One man I was with spent months trying to invent a ladies' revolving fan. Of course it was absolutely useless. The said lady had to carry round a set of dry cells somewhere concealed upon her person. Once in action the fan revolved like a windmill. But I had a sincere sense of envy for this brother officer. His idiotic fan kept him happy for months.

Another officer used to make clocks out of china plates. It took him three months to make a clock and he hoped to make one for each of his six several aunts before the termination of war. He will!

But the most terrible of all hobbies I have met amongst R. N. V. R. officers was the fanatic desire of one man to learn the piccolo before the war ended. He certainly could not have told you whether you were humming *Yankee Doodle* or *Abide With Me,* but he confessed to me one day that he "had a feeling for music and he hoped

that he would be able to discover the hidden talent he felt sure he had."

Whenever we came alongside we heard terrible sounds issuing from the after cabin—the death agonies of an expiring pig. On deck his Sub paced the deck and tore his hair like a man demented and hailed me "For Gawd's sake go down and talk to him so that he cannot play that infernal reed!" I did. He met me with a pathetically joyous smile. "I was playing *Way Down in Tennessee* he said; "I think I've got it now." He played it again. I left hurriedly committing him to warmer climates than Tennessee!

I think I have read most of the "Sevenpennies" in the language and for people who want to send something to sailors there's nothing more welcome than novels. It's hard to make a catalogue of the books that we most appreciate, but please remember that what is called "Highbrow" in America does not suit the monotony of patrol. If you have only the choice between Henry James and Dick Dead-eye, send Dick Dead-eye. At random I should think Jack London's books head the list; then O. Henry or perhaps Rex

Beach. As a book, Robert Service's "Trail of 98" has, I think, been as much read as any book by the patrols.

The authors I have chosen will give you some idea of the kind of book that is needed to take a man on this job out of himself. It must be a book with a strong call to the virile things of life and not the artificial. Whatever we were in peace time, leading colourless lives day by day, the books that describe Society and the manners and shadow emotions of well bred city folk don't appeal to us. These hothouse productions have lost their perfume in the vigorous atmosphere of our wartime occupations.

But of all the ways and means of amusement provided for us aboard a Movy nothing can touch our gramaphone. We cannot thank enough The Ladies' Emergency Committee of the Navy League who distribute these welcome little harbingers of joy, and every day our gratitude goes out to the Canadian lady who provided us with our "Music Box." One gets most horribly "fed up" with reading but never tired of a gramaphone. There's nothing to compare with it for

taking you miles and miles away from war, sea and patrol, and putting you right back amongst the things you loved before the war. The memory of the happy days streams back as the old grammie plays—especially when you put on the old emotional sentimental ballad songs. Songs like these carry with them all the tremulously sad emotions of the old days, and recreate as nothing else can the home pictures of the past. But you must not think we indulge too much in these songs. We dare not. The longing for the old life would be too poignant. There is a touch of sweetness in these emotions that is indefinable. But a touch is all we dare. So we put on some antidote from musical comedy.

Did you ever think what a large part the gramaphone has played in this war in keeping sailors and soldiers happy? Kipling deified the banjo and Robert Service "with apologies" the mouth organ, but amongst the household gods of to-day the gramaphone still remains unsung.

There are few Movies that have not a music box. One particular Movy had a huge one which

was kept in the chart house. Its owner equipped it with a large sound box and a huge horn which passed through the port hole on the for'ard deck. He celebrated his return to port by steaming in with the Coldstream Guards playing *Land of Hope and Glory*—incidentally he was severely strafed by the S. N. O. (Senior Naval Officer).

When our crew get hold of the gramaphone there is a great party. They clog and shuffle to it, till you wonder just how strongly a Movy is built. I have been, too, in places where the gramaphone has been an unknown instrument, and the villagers for miles round have assembled on the quay to listen.

Some Movies make a hobby of livestock and sign on a ship's cat. We had one once and the matter should be taken up by the S. P. C. A. A Movy is no place for pets. Our kitten had fits every few days. I think she got dizzy with the motion. She used to make a wild dash up the ladder to the deck, career and cavourt wildly, eluding her saviours. After the seventh time of rescuing her from the briny in a bucket—she

broke ship. I suppose with a cat's peculiar sense of the fitness of things she realised that only two lives of her nine remained and she did not wish to use them up on a Movy.

VIII

It is one of the most difficult jobs in the world to give anyone a true picture of our life. It's so easy in writing about things to be flippant, so that you might come to the conclusion that there was no effort or anything remotely approaching sacrifice; on the other hand the besetting peril in writing or telling our friends, however sketchily, the routine of our existence is to draw a lugubrious countenance and emphasise the monotony of things. There's a good deal of truth about each. Certainly it would be impossible to go about always with the sober and serious realisation of things; besides, there is usually some glint of sunshine somewhere to be found if you have a sense of humour.

I wonder how many people realise where the real fund of cheerfulness that seems so endless comes from to the soldier and the sailor. I know where it comes from—it comes from the people

at home. Logically it's a vicious circle, but in fact it's an absolute truth that the soldier and sailor draw their reserves of cheerfulness from home letters, and it's as much a fact that the tarriers at home draw theirs from their dearest ones in the services.

This is the romance of the penny stamp, and the miracle of the scribbled letter. It's my job amongst others to censor the crew's letters. It used to amuse me to find that every man jack of them commenced, "I am in the pink! how are you?" I have come to see now that there is something rather fine in the spirit of a man who can write that way however miserable he is feeling. I guarantee that eighty per cent of the letters written from this Movy commence that way, and I have come to look upon that phrase, "I am in the pink!" as a kind of sign manual of cheerfulness. There is a romance too about the strange journeyings of letters to those at sea in wartime. It's usually the job of a duty drifter to deliver mails. She's an old fishing boat skippered by an old fisherman, with two or three of his family or relations members of his crew. He does his bit

by bringing courage in envelopes to the fleet and the fringes of the fleet.

Spirits rise when the duty drifter is spotted on the horizon, sedately pushing her way to the various patrols like an aged and unhurried postman. She is observed through the glasses eagerly, until at last your particular flag is flown and underneath flags in code, "J. P.," meaning, " I have mails for you." I think if our casual friends who postpone their letter writing with the airiness that belongs to leisured comfort, could see the scramble for letters they might realise that as water is to a thirsty man, so is good news from a far country.

We are all apt to get into that groove where we lose the big horizon where the daily task becomes dull routine and where the individual effort seems infinitesimal in the struggle of nations. We forget often the big ideals for which we came to do our bit. The petty discomforts and drab dreariness of the daily round drug the fine sensibilities of individual sacrifice. There is only one antitoxin for this, that is the letters from home.

All the beautiful reminders of the inexhaustible

faith that those dearest to us have centred in us, all the poignant pride in us, are things so sacred that we dare not, if we would, prove ourselves quitters in their eyes. These letters bring to us an ideal reflection of ourselves which is so vivid that if anything, we are just a little ashamed because we know it is beyond our attainment. Just as the unconscious sincerity and beauty of character of a boy's mother breeds chivalry into his nature, so it is these home letters that bring the courage of the ideal to the sailor and the soldier.

And that is where the strange thing happens, the boy who is serving his country is brave because of the people at home and the people at home are brave for his sake. When people are brave for your sake you can't be anything else for theirs.

We are too apt to forget that unpictorial bravery of those at home. The virile and dramatic bravery of the khaki and blue seizes the imagination. The bravery of the empty hearth and the vacant chair are unpublished. We can picture the son on the field of battle but we do not often remember the mother who tiptoes into his vacant

room, and smooths the pillow upon which his head has so often rested, or the father who goes about his daily duties dry-eyed and cheerful, as he tries to bury the anxiety of every hour and every minute. These are the bravest of the brave, for it is their letters that give of their bravery to the men at the Front. Because we can't always answer all the letters we receive and because we are not allowed to write anything that is very interesting, don't think that the letters we get are not properly appreciated. Where in civilian life I read a letter and then had finished with it, in these days letters are read many times. They are our magic carpet to the far away country that we once belonged to. There is so much time to think and our thoughts are always about things before the war and after the war. All we are doing now is such strange adventure. We have become other and different selves, and the old self detaches itself easily and looks on as an interested spectator at the doings of this strange new self. We realise, too, that when the War is over we shall be just that old self again—and we cling to

it tenaciously as a sweet memory that will some time live again.

That's just why letters coming from the old home associations mean so much to us. They are all keeping alive the old self,—all the minute little touches and memories of affection and habits of the peaceful days are made vivid and kept green by these letters. I always think that the greatest gift good times bring, is the sweetness of memory that they leave. So it is that we cling so much to the old sweet things of life—the home, the fireside and the voices, the features and accustomed familiar touches of those we have left behind. Without letters these things might fade and die, as a beautiful flower without water. Letters are the water that causes them to live and bloom with a more poignant beauty than they ever had.

There are some people, too, who think the little daily doings of their quiet lives will seem little and unimportant if they put them on paper, and write them to a soldier or sailor who is doing the most important work that any man born could well do. But these people are mistaken, these are

the very things we want to hear about, and that we revel in. We are not eager for talk about the war—that unfortunately is too much shop, and we are more interested in the latest little scrap of news, however infinitesimally important, that has the tang of the home life, than any opinion however weighty on the duration of the war. To that extent at least we are all a little touched with nostalgia, and the craving for invisible links that bind us to old ways of life can only be satisfied by letters.

IX

My present address is C/o G. P. O. London and that is all I am allowed to let you know officially. Did you ever think of the multitude of nooks, crannies, bays and inlets all over the British Isles and Europe too, that G.P.O. stands for? We of the Movies are ubiquitous; there are not many miles of coastline around Great Britain and Ireland from which a Movy cannot be seen according to the Irish "throwing a besom of shmoke to the elements." France knows them well, the Mediterranean has grown accustomed to the asthmatic rhythm of their exhausts, and even the Slav has learned something from first hand observation of the Movy.

So where you get to is all luck, and in the hands of that great Naval Deity, Jos. To the Admiralty you are a cipher and no matter how urgent your desire to take up residence in a certain locality may be, keep it very dark. Certain

shrewd gentlemen at the Admiralty have formed conclusions, that should you ardently set your heart upon patrolling a particular area, you probably have likewise set your heart upon going ashore as frequently as possible to some friend's house in that area. These said gentlemen will therefore be delighted to learn of your desires and then forthwith—if not sooner—will scan the map for some nice little base as many hundred miles as possible from your desired vicinity. Neither are these gentlemen fools, for wives, sweethearts and good pals ashore are a brake to an efficient patrol. Being in port is too pleasant and being at sea too much a contrast.

The great God Jos was yawning inattentively on the occasions of both my appointments. My first lay on a course to the North Pole—somewhere between where Scotland leaves off and Greenland begins. These islands are a part of Scotland, but the people who live there are less Scotch than Norse in their extraction. I don't think they have changed very much since Dr. Johnson and Boswell went to explore them. Certainly they are as desolate now as they were then,

a little touch of green amid the greyness of their piled rocks becomes a beauty that almost hurts the eye. They are such hungry gaunt-looking islands, that they always reminded me of a starving giant with swollen joints and bones thrust through his parchment grey skin, outstretched upon the Atlantic.

The village peoples of these islands cannot for the most part understand English; the world so close to them across water is veiled in mystery. A solemn, sober, rugged people and inured to hardship, war has meant much to them in their far off homes. These islands have supplied the very best of the sailors in the auxiliary patrols; fishing is their chief means of livelihood; also they have given to the Army to the last drop. They hold the record for men joined up of all places in the British Isles. Their trades are fishing and making tweeds, and both have suffered so heavily that relief trawlers have had to be sent out to them. Beneath the silentness and dourness of these people there is a wonderful warmth and kindness of nature that it takes some time for the average Anglo-Saxon to appreciate.

I wonder whether you can imagine what life would mean to you if all the bright and smiling things in it were replaced by the sombre? Can you imagine a country where skies are always grey, where there is never the gentle sweetness of a green branch, or a green blade of grass, and where you long for the marvellous colouring and fine texture of the commonest flower of the field? Where the people go about their daily duties silently and sombrely, eking out a hard subsistence and where laughter has no place. Where you rarely see the glint of the sun upon the ripple of a blue sea. Our chief companions there were the gulls, sad lugubrious birds that followed us in droves, unafraid and mournfully squalling all the time, like imprisoned souls seeking the companionship of live beings.

I never knew just how sweet were the beautiful common things of life, until I had spent months at this Northern Base, neither did I realise the horrible poignancy of the inrush of these pleasant visions until the orders came to proceed South. Our orders were to sail to Ireland and they came in May. For us it had been Winter for

so many months that we had quite forgotten that a few hundred miles south Spring had been creeping on apace.

I wish I could give to you a picture of the emotions of that passage south out of the land of dreariness, sombre shadows and Winter, into the land where

> Earth, unto her leaflet tips
> Tingles with the Spring.

In the early morning at about four o'clock we cast off, bound South. The hand of Winter was still upon us there and gave us her final blessing of a snow-storm. At half-speed three Movies, line ahead formation, hoisted their distinguishing signals to the Battery Signal Station, cleared the harbour entrance and ported helm for a southerly course. Then the telegraphs on the bridge rung more speed, and knot upon knot the flying line left Winter and its chill barrenness astern.

For nearly two hundred miles the engines purred away without cessation. That passage always seems to me as symbolic of the passage of the seasons from Winter to Spring. Gradually the snow fell away from the mountain tops and

the damp chill atmosphere took on freshness and softness. Here and there a patch of vivid green sprung up, dazzling on the hillside, till the mountains became soft and lost their sombre gauntness. The sun sank in the west and threw a splash of gold and crimson over sea and sky and a great red moon leisurely passed up into the starry heavens. Then came the most wonderful thing of all,—an off-shore breeze sprung up and bore upon it the intoxicating perfume of green grass and sweetly scented flowers. I cannot describe the emotions that the perfume of that breeze awoke; it was more like the emotions that music will awake than anything I know; it seemed a sacred thing and poignantly beautiful. At last the engines slowed, Winter with its long monotony and grey hardship was behind us. We turned into a little village in the Isle of Islay and made fast alongside the pier. It had been a day of adventure and emotions for us and had created a keen realisation of the beauty of life.

The next day I went ashore, and walked through hedges heavy with the scent of blackthorn. I saw daffodils growing wild and even

heard the cuckoo call. It may seem childish for one who calls himself a man to give way to feelings of this kind, but I begged from a cottage a bunch of those daffodils and took them aboard. My brother officer and I sat round them, stared at them, smelt them, and fingered them gently as though they were some trophy of marvellous creation. So they were to us, they were the first flowers we had seen for many months, and the tokens of the miracle of Spring.

That day we cast off, still proceeding south. We were in the land of Spring and everything was touched with the fine beauty of it. Day and night we ran until at last we sighted "the fair hills of Holy Ireland."

Unfortunately that great God Jos, to whom I have already alluded as the deity, whose special duties are things naval, once more yawned, nodded, and my luck took me back once more to the North Country and a Northern Base; not for long this time, however, for when the great god awoke again he evidently remembered me, and my next appointment brought me to the Wild West of Ireland,—the home of Sinn Fein.

The softness and mysterious beauty of the southwest of Ireland is marvellously restful after the barren bleak headlands of the North. The soft low-lying clouds, and the vivid carpet of greenery that covers the mountainsides, even the stone walls mortised with moss give a kindly touch to the country that I have never seen anywhere else.

But the Ireland I came to was for a long time only a country to be seen distantly from sea. Our base was established close to where Casement had made his fatal landing. Sinn Fein was at boiling point and the extent of our travels ashore were limited to the length of the Pier. The yellow, white and green flag of Sinn Fein, with the I. R. of the Irish Republic, floated everywhere, and what the Hun had tried to do once in landing arms and abetting rebellion he was not likely to give up without another attempt.

Until I learnt something about the Irish it seemed almost like coming to an enemy country under occupation. Since then I have lived near Irishmen and learned a good deal about them.

Ireland is a dreamer's country—the very coun-

try itself impresses that upon you—romance and fairy lore seems to dwell in these green cloudy valleys. The Irishman has taken on a good deal of the characteristics of his country and has a good deal of the visionary and fanatic about him.

I hold no brief for the rebel who waits with an assassin's knife to stab England in the back, but I do say the Irishman is misjudged and the wise nabobs of Westminster have never understood him. If you had a pup, and kicked him around from birth upwards you would hardly expect him when he grew to be a dog to answer your whistle very eagerly. So Ireland long mismanaged did not rush at England's whistle for men to step into the firing-line.

I can only speak of what I have seen, and I want to say that in no country in the world can a stranger find more kindliness, warm-hearted welcome, and hospitality. Proverbially an Irishman will fight for the love of a fight, and if you make a point of "treading on the tail of his coat" the consequences are your own, and don't complain because you find the Irishman unkind to you.

I have heard stories of Irishmen who waylaid strangers on the highroad, and by main force compelled them to come in and share their hospitality, and this is the kind of forcible free-heartedness typical of the Irishman. I was once persuaded by a smooth tongued jaunting car Jarvie to get aboard his car. He drove me two miles; then argued till he extracted five shillings from me—an exorbitant price—but having got it he insisted on me having a drink with him, then two drinks and so forth till he had quite expended my five shillings on entertaining me.

The Irishman is an irresponsible creature and very emotional. That I think is the secret of Sinn Fein. He is ready to be led by the emotions and to act upon the emotions. Did you ever notice that the Sinn Fein leaders—the headmen—have very unIrish names—DeValera, for instance! These leaders have captured the emotions of the Irish people and they follow blindly. The rebellion was a rebellion of poets and visionaries—an impractical and irresponsible affair. I do not believe there is anything like the malice about

the average Sinn Feiner that people who do not know him credit him with.

Like children, most of them are playing at a game—they don't realise how dangerous it is. One police sergeant of the Irish Constabulary told me that every Sunday they used to parade in front of his police barracks in the village where he was stationed. At first arrests were made, then he found the Sinn Feiners used to come around and ask in a friendly way when he was going to arrest them. The old sergeant was an Irishman himself and he realised that to be arrested was just part of the game, and a means to high dignity in Sinn Feinism, and therefore a much desired blessing. Next time they paraded in front of the barracks instead of arresting them he walked leisurely out and watched them form fours critically. "Bhoys," he said, "I am an old soldier myself, and I could give you a few wrinkles in drill. There's a good field back of the village and if you'll just step up there, I'll drill you and make you as smart as regulars." The Sinn Fein army accepted his offer. For two Sundays he "drilled Hell out of them" (these

were his words); on the third Sunday the Sinn Fein army had vanished never to re-appear again in that village.

Once, on patrol, we coasted into a little bay. Through the glasses we saw a body of Sinn Fein marching, the Green, White and Gold Flag borne by the standard bearer in the vanguard. Quietly we closed the headland till we could hear the tramp of their feet. In the meantime I rigged up a sound rocket that explodes with the sound of a twelve pounder. As the Standard Bearer rounded the headland and came into sight, I pulled the lanyard. The noise was terrific. The Sinn Fein army disappeared in a cloud of dust and took to the "tall timber!"

There is a seriousness and a menace about Sinn Fein Ireland, but I believe the greatest part of it all is sheer irresponsibility. Sinn Fein leaders are rebels who deserve to be treated as such, but the country lads who follow the Green, White and Gold banner are merely playing a game—and cannot understand the disaster to which it may lead.

A strong wise head at Westminster and a hand

with that rare combination of firmness and tact, might yet avoid disaster for Ireland as well as England, and Sinn Fein would melt away as rapidly as the snow that only lies for a few days together on the "fair hills of Holy Ireland."

X

I have been doing my best to try and picture for you the round of events of an ordinary patrol, but I feel it's rather like the diary I began to keep when I first joined my Movy. It used to run something like this: "On patrol—between Blank Head and Dash Bay, going slow on one engine, etc." I found that according to my diary I was still going slow on one engine between Blank Head and Dash Bay two weeks later. Then I found my diary developing an epidemic of blank pages and finally only an occasional event ever got recorded. So I am afraid the same thing is happening here—the events of one day are very much like another, and, when you come to describe it, your recitation is necessarily very short if not sweet.

Of course we are simply typical of the whole Navy. It's a cat and mouse game, and I've developed an immense admiration for the cat—her patience is superb.

The whole cordon of ships surrounding the British Isles and all the trade routes are doing exactly the same as we are doing whether they are big or little. We are all "pushing water". It may seem an aimless proceeding but nevertheless every unit is part of a whole organisation working with the most clockwork precision. I'd like to give all the people who write letters to the papers enquiring "What the Navy is doing," just a week on any kind of patrol ship they preferred. I think they would get first of all a proper appreciation of the size of the sea, and secondly the proper appreciation of their four-walled house, a cosy fire and a nice bed to tumble into every night. The best authority upon the subject of "What the Navy is doing," is the Hun. And the best evidence to the Englishman is his four meals a day.

Trawlers, drifters, Movies, pleasure yachts, and numerous other craft make up the patrols and there is not one little strip of sea around the British Isles that is not daily inspected by these vigilant patrols.

Most of my admiration for the Navy to-day falls to the R.N.R.,—the Merchant Service sailor-

men who expressed their willingness to do their bit and go to sea in "any old thing" the Admiralty like to provide. A great proportion of them are with the trawlers, day in and day out tumbling around right out at sea. They are of all kinds, a fearless hard bitten crowd of sailors, and their knowledge of the sea is from the bitter experience of voyaging the whole world from their earliest days.

You usually think of boys of sixteen or seventeen with the mark of the satchel on their backs, but these R.N.R. midshipmen are men of experience and can assume immense responsibilities if need be.

I met one little R.N.R. midshipman in the North who had just brought a Swedish barque into a northern port from the North Sea. He was the only officer, and—accompanied by an armed guard consisting of two sailors strapped round with knives and revolvers—off the North of Ireland he had met Fritz. This was before the U-boat was sinking every vessel at sight. My midshipman in terse language put the fear of the Lord into the Swedish skipper and told

him he would shoot him and scuttle his ship if he gave information of his presence to the U-boat. He then ordered the skipper to heave to, lower his boat and take his papers over to the submarine. Meantime he and his armed guard crawled on all fours along the deck under the cover of the bulwarks and retired to the chain locker. The trembling Swedish skipper interviewed the U-boat commander, who, as his papers shewed he was bound for a Swedish port (as he was when the British armed guard came aboard), allowed him to carry on, giving him instructions as to how to evade the British Patrols. When the submarine had once more submerged the midshipman and armed guard ascended from the chain locker, and in fulfilment of the U-boat's commands "carried-on," but to a British port.

It's just luck what is going to happen next in the Navy. I think if it was not for the occasional unexpected we should all die of boredom. Fritz is always planning something new and you cannot sleep on your job. At some places too, there "is more doing than others." In one particular spot Movies are tenders on aeroplanes and hydro-

planes. Here their special stunt is picking up pilots in broken down machines off the enemy's coast. This means frequently running over German mine fields and working continuously under German batteries. The Movy is the ideal ship for this; she stands a better chance than most ships of "not clicking" a mine, and she is not an easy target for a German battery. Whether or not you happen to get this work is again a matter of luck. After you have been in the Navy some time you settle down to a quiet philosophy of taking anything much as it comes and just doing your work honestly. All the worrying in the world does not make the slightest difference and you eventually take the dreary with the exciting as a matter of course. There is always the one bright spot on the calendar—even though it is six months ahead. That is the seven days' leave when the ship goes for overhaul and refit.

These days, usually amounting to about five if you are at some far off base, are a brief delirious dream of joy. I've developed an extraordinary capacity for enjoyment since I joined the Navy. After you've been doing six months hard in some

desolate place, the very smell of the smoke of London is a delicious thing and you want to embrace the first girl you see when you step off the train. The last time I had leave was just the week before Christmas. I quite forgot there was a war. All the London shops seemed as gay as ever and the streets were crowded with pretty children busy about filling Christmas stockings. It seems worth putting up with a good deal when you see children still as happy as ever.

The combined joy of a hundred school-boys home from school would not compete with my joyousness in these days of leave. Then comes the sudden and abrupt end, the miserable "good-bye and cheerio" at the railway station, and before you know it's back to sea again with just a pile of golden memories to live on for the next six months till leave comes round once more.

XI

I was asked the other day what I could say about the spirit of that little branch of the Navy that I know, and when I said "Discontent," everybody looked askance. But we are not discontented with the Navy but with Fritz, because he never gives us the chances we are looking for of a good upstanding fight.

Fritz is playing altogether too safe a game for our liking. He wants all the cards in his hand before he will make a bet, and even then he has got to see a good chance of a get-away.

I suppose the ordinary civilian who reads his weekly report of U-boat losses never for a moment conceives the tremendously cunning patience and, yes, luck too, that goes to the destruction of one U-boat. Fritz is pretty crafty in the way he plays his game, but he has by no means a corner in cunning. Catching U-boats is a game of pitted wits, of setting traps, and immense pa-

tience. Then too, a trap once discovered by the Hun cannot be used a second time and must be varied. When the history of naval warfare is written, there will be no more amazing story than the infinitely varied game of U-boat hunting with all its varied devices and amazing trickery, with hundreds of ships each playing a lone hand in the great game of outwitting the Hun.

So when I talk about discontent I mean every man is discontented that he can't do more, that he does not get a chance to make a few more uncomfortable hours for the Hun.

We live always in a spirit of expectation, working out the law of chances that our turn is bound to come. Every man is ready and eager for that, and every instant of the time is fitted towards the one aim, of being ready and efficient when that moment does arrive. We all have a strong feeling that we must each one do Fritz in, before we really justify our existence. Anything else we do, we feel is purely a side-line and we don't want to end up in the war without accomplishing the main issue.

Of course a sailor always "grouses"—that is

his nature; but you'll rarely find a sailor who will ever admit that he has really done anything worth discussing in the great war. Even such a man as I was talking to the other day who has won the V.C. and D.S.O. for gallantry and skill in submarine destroying will admit to no superior qualities of bravery on his part. He admits just one thing—luck. Others would have done the same had they been given the chance. It's a frank and unassuming way of looking at things and has a large measure of truth in it, which does not detract from the bravery of the man who, as he puts it, has had the luck, but speaks volumes for his fellows in the service.

Hand in hand with the average sailor's unconsciousness of bravery is his absolute unconsciousness of danger. We have a job to do, well then, let's do it—that is about the sum and substance of the thought that is expended on it.

For instance, discussing things theoretically, I suppose mine-sweeping is a dangerous game; "Clicking a mine" is an ever-present possibility. If you are so unfortunate, it is sweet comfort to know the end will be so extremely rapid that

you will never know what happened. I have seen one ship click a mine. Her bows suddenly rose out of the water and she went up in a mushroom-shaped cloud of smoke, steam and flying fragments—that was all, except for the notice "H.M.S. ——— struck a mine, all hands were lost, the next-of-kin have all been informed."

And yet no one ever thinks of these things. It's a kind of tradition that seems to get into your system. We carry-on with our job exactly in the same way as the civilian does, doing this or that thing because it has to be done, and doing it in just exactly the cool and unadventurous spirit with which you'd run your business.

Perhaps this is just British stolidity. I remember a commander who had been engaged in the naval operations at Gallipoli describing the way the French Fleet came into battle, flying flags and with the band playing the Marseillaise—recklessly exposing themselves while they played. We cannot understand this emotionalism. And yet is there not something just as fine in the uneven fight of the little Scotch drifters against

the three German destroyers in the Channel? It was purely and simply a question of standing-by until the little drifters, shot to fragments, wearily turned over on their sides and sunk. And yet each man aboard took all as part of the day's work, part of the chances of patrol, nothing very surprising, just something calling for the matter-of-fact remark: "I'm thinking I'll nae go on patrol again."

So although we are rarely conscious of danger or heroism there is at the back of our consciousness always an alertness and readiness for the event we have been waiting vigilantly so many weary months. When the day of the testing is to come, we cannot tell—it may be to-morrow, next year,—but surely some time. All we hope is that it may come speedily; in the meantime we must go about the matter-of-fact lowly duties as the humblest of servants to the Great Fleet. It is that unconscious alertness and eagerness for the test which keeps us ready all the time, so that when it does come we may not be found wanting. It is this, too, that makes all the rest so endurable

—if we can only "do in" one U-boat, we know we have more than justified our existence.

This is what the V.C. and D.S.O. lieutenant meant when he admitted no superior qualities,—except just luck. From the lowliest fisherman lazily pushing over his area in his old wooden drifter to the latest Dreadnought, the spirit is the same. Give either of them luck and there will be nothing but gallantry and sacrifice. From the Jutland battle to the scrap with the drifters in the Channel, the same heroism prevails—the unconscious, unrealised heroism of seeing through whatever job comes, in the most matter-of-fact way, as just one more duty to be performed.

A few weeks ago we had a new sub-lieutenant reported aboard for duty; besides wearing wounded stripes he wore the D.S.O. He was a Manchester lad given his commission and raised from the lower deck for gallantry in action with a submarine on the lower deck. For weeks we could not get him to tell how his decoration was won. All he would say is: "I'm no 'ero!" Finally we got his story.

In the attack the submarine had come up so

close alongside that it was impossible to deflect the yacht's guns sufficiently to fire, without sinking herself by firing through her own decks. This little Manchester lad realised it and grabbed a rifle and coolly picked off the submarine guns' crew before they could level their gun, and while the two ships drifted apart sufficiently for the yacht to get her guns into action. It was just an instance of cool, unexcited efficiency in the face of danger. The submarine was destroyed but the yacht was torpedoed during the engagement. "I did not want to tell you," said the little newly appointed sub-lieutenant, "because I'm no 'ero, and I've been torpedoed twice, and I thought you might think I was a Jonah!"

XII

An officer upon a Movy in time becomes an expert in numerous things. He is usually his own signaller, upon the semaphore, the Morse lamp and the flags, besides being general utility man about the ship.

I always think that the officer aboard a Movy learns there most of the necessary qualifications of a father of a family, for that is just what he is. With the little ship's company who are under him he is responsible not only for the routine and good management of his ship, but also for the happiness and contentment of his crew.

After all, most crews are just like a family of children, they need coaxing and encouraging at one moment and the hard and heavy at the next. Also, it's just as well to remember that every little ship's company is bound to take on exactly the complexion of its officers. If you for one instant slack, you'll find the crew will immediately

disintegrate and no amount of strafing will bring them up to the mark, unless you are yourself ready at all times to do something more than just your own set duties.

Just precisely to come upon the medium which lies between being too easy and too exacting is the problem which each officer must work out for himself.

Each man who has been handed over the responsibility of a Movy aims at one thing—making a happy ship. If you have a happy ship, efficiency is naturally the sequence. Nothing breeds discontent more than laziness, untidiness or slackness.

We fall into rather a strange category as far as service discipline goes. In the Army, continuous drills and the thundering of the sergeant, in time bring to the biggest hooligan a kind of second nature which responds to an order. In the Navy of the big ships the petty officer is the mentor of the deck-hands. In both cases the officer is just there to see that the petty officer fulfils these duties. He is not in the same way the heavy father to his men.

Upon a Movy there is no convenient buffer between the officers and the men. Not only is the officer always on the alert to praise or censure in his keen watching of most meticulous details, but on the other hand his own conduct and weakness are unscreened from the eyes of his crew.

There is nothing that passes the crew's attention—they are eagle-eyed to find a crack in your armour. If you happen to have a sharp pair of ears, you'll realise just how keen is their perception and criticism and the good-natured joy caused by putting one over on an officer. About the most damning fo'castle criticism I have heard was: "Mr Blank, he just likes to be comfortable he does; we have a fine ship here and he don't worry us at all." If you had seen the Movy in question, you would have understood immediately how damning this criticism was. It just explained everything. The crew did exactly what they liked. They seemed to think they were out on a pleasure cruise and that everything was lovely. Their chief comedian did Charlie Chaplin for the edification of the girls ashore, as they came alongside a pier. Every deck-hand went

slopping about his job with a cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth, and the ship herself was the scorn of her division, for her unpainted, dingy appearance, and more too, her crew, the source of most troubles which ever arose on the patrol.

The great thing is to keep everybody aboard keen and interested in their job. If you can do that, there will be no need to do overmuch strafing. It's a hard job at the best not to get "fed-up" with the monotony of things, and it's not hard to realise how very much easier it is for a crew made of men mostly without any great intellectual qualities to keep their minds alive and interested.

The thing of course that interests the crews most is the gun, or rifle, or revolver practice. It makes a break to the weary watching of an infinitely grey sea, which comprises the greatest part of their job. As often as possible, we drop a target and have firing practice, putting up a prize for the best shot. We follow that with rifle practice. Every man is impressed with the idea that the target is a Hun and they are dead keen.

Fritz's welcome would certainly be a very warm one.

This, and getting our chaps keen on spotting objects all helps to make them feel that they are doing their bit; it keeps their enthusiasm alive, and keeps them fit for the Big Job when the time comes.

I suppose to a great many of us, this handling of men is a new experience. It has the great effect of making you very conscious of your own weaknesses and doing your best to overcome them. You learn the secret very quickly. Being an officer means being just a little bit more ready to take chances, just a little bit more ready to sacrifice, and just a little bit more ready to give yourself in excess of your duties. You are always there in the limelight, and there is only one way to get the uttermost out of your crew, and that is by letting no occasion pass to give the uttermost yourself.

That is just the official side of being an officer. On a Movy it means a good deal more in an unofficial way.

We have to become padre, doctor and father confessor amongst our unofficial duties.

The Admiralty provides each ship with medical supplies and they are rarely out of use. On board our Movy we have one great malingerer. Grimey objects to work and one of his games is to play sick. The other day I went down into the Fo'castle. He described his ailments as "indigestion that gave him a pain in his back." Now, I had already spent a fortune riotously on Grimey's ailments and had formed the conclusion that Christian Science and work were the only cure. This time I gave him a large dose of the oil with which we had been provided to clean rifles! Its effect was marvellous. It lubricated Grimey so effectually that he has never been sick for months since.

Then too, I have at times been called upon to give judgment in the various love affairs of the crew. In this respect they are a wonderfully irresponsible lot of children. I have even gone so far as to interview an irate mother of a damsel whose affections had been trifled with by Bird. I knew Bird as an inoffensive Sunday school boy,

and I knew the lady in question as notoriously of quite a different character. I disentangled Bird after a rather tempestuous passage, and then forbade all shore leave to him when in that particular port. On consideration, the latter punishment was somewhat unnecessary. The trembling Bird concealed himself beneath decks during our stay in that port, while the irate lady used to parade the pier waiting for him.

XIII

Before I joined the Movy, I was like most other people, only acquainted with the world as it looks for possibly eighteen hours of the day. The remaining six hours I was quite content to read about it in modern poetry.

An ordinary patrol is a twenty-four hour a day affair, and of the two the night patrol is perhaps more important than the day. Certainly under cover of night the German submarine expects to do her most exposed work and also seeks those hours of respite which are so necessary to her. At night she can lay her "eggs" with less chance of observation. This is by no means as haphazard a job as most people imagine. A mine laying submarine does not simply strew mines anywhere, hit or miss, hoping to luck that some one or other of her infernal machines may reach a target. The laying of mines is infernally clever and methodical. Rise and fall of tide are cal-

culated to a nicety and the mines laid so that at low water the tell-tale horns may not appear above the surface and at high water so that a ship even of shallow draught shall have the least possibility of scraping over them unscathed.

Then, too, the Teutonic mind, well aware of the unceasing vigilance and constant operations of the mine sweepers, leaves special *billets doux* for them. These are smaller mines planted nearer the surface specially designed to destroy the shallower draught vessels, which act as the brooms that sweep the way. Also the amiable Teuton is rather good at planting specially harmless looking but horribly cunning contraptions for hindering these sweeping operations. To methodically complete his well thought-out scheme of operations in mine-laying, Fritz naturally works with considerably more comfort during the dark hours of the night. This is shown by the constant crop of mines that grow up over-night. They are as prolific as mushrooms.

Then, too, Fritz must occasionally come to the surface to recharge his batteries which enable him to remain submerged during the day. His best

chance, of course, is to find a secluded little spot during darkness.

These are just a few of the obvious reasons for a night patrol.

I have always been rather amused at the number of people who have told me that they envy us our glorious open-air life. I own it is a very pretty sight to see a division of Movies steaming in formation on a nice calm sunny sea. Nothing could look more pleasant. But these dear people only carry away that pretty picture in their minds; they forget that when they are just drawing their eiderdown coverlet up over their chins to keep the draught out, that those same pretty little Movies are in all likelihood steaming about in the darkness, snow, drizzle and cold.

In war time it is necessary to take all kinds of chances. Certainly in peace, no yachtsman would think of navigating his ship through shoals and rocks on a pitch-black night with only dead reckoning to guide him and no lights from which to get bearings. Night patrol, however used you may get to it, must always be a little anxious time. One deck-hand is set for'ard as a look-out, peer-

ing out into the darkness of the night for his entire watch. He is usually chosen for his eyesight and alertness in distinguishing a headland or surf breaking on a rocky shoal looming up out of the gloom. Another deckhand is at the wheel, his eyes glued to the compass card through which the binnacle light casts just sufficient glimmer for him to see the degrees marked out there. The officer on watch is responsible. He must work out his courses with minute accuracy, allowing for tide, deviation and numerous little things that all make for just the safety or endangering of the ship. Also he must constantly check the helmsman, and see that he *is* on his course. Keeping a Movy on her course to a degree is an art in itself. She has little or no stability in any kind of weather and swings and sheers in a marvellous way. When all this is done with every precaution, you must always be conscious of the danger of collision. Only your men on the look-out can save you from that catastrophe in war time, when no navigation lights are shown. A destroyer kicking up thirty knots and bearing down upon you does not leave much margin of time to

escape. If you do "click," you'll just crumple up like a pierced balloon, and it's not quite the heroic ending we are looking for in the World War.

These are just a few of the things worth considering when you talk about night patrol. When you add to that the fact that we none of us in the Movies pretend to be expert navigators but purely amateurs, you can realise that having no nerves is rather essential. In peace times there were always a multitude of lighthouses and lighted buoys to work by, also vessels under way carried masthead light, port and starboard lights, and stern lights; we do not have the benefit of any of these luxuries.

To me at least, there is no more pleasant sight in the world than "the Shadow of Dawn";—the first delicate flush in the east, deepening to crimson and gold, till one by one the stars and last shred of moon flickers out and the night patrol is ended.

Night patrol is not without adventures. My first week on a Movy gave me my first. Dawn, misty and foggy, broke as we came in from a Western Island patrol in the North. We were

strangers and new craft in that area. As usual I was feeling quite happy that dawn had broken when just over my head I heard a "Whizz-z" and then a splash. We were being shelled. Through the lifting mist I saw a sedate little drifter, her funnel pouring out volumes of smoke, bearing down upon us. There was no whizz to the next shot—just a splash. It fell short. The gunner was very much in earnest. If he was a good gunlayer the next shot ought to get us. I yelled to the helmsman to keep his course and race off, grabbed the ensign from the jackstaff and ran for'ard, stretching it out in front of me. The third shot fell just ahead of us; then Mr. Drifter recovered from his panic.

We went alongside. I was very voluble, the drifter skipper was apologetic. I pointed out in terse language that I had not come over to join the Navy to be sunk by one of His Majesty's drifters, and that if the Huns did not see their way to do the job, I considered it bad form for a blankety Scotch drifter to understudy the part. However, we settled our differences over a cup

of hot coffee and I went back aboard my ship, the richer by many score of fresh herring.

This is a picture of the mental discomforts of night patrol, and they are far more keen than any physical discomforts. In fact, you are so alert, and your mind is so filled with your various duties, that you forget that you are cold and wet and tired. The mental exhilaration carries you through. It is not until your watch is over and you are relieved that you become conscious of any weariness. Then you go below and discover that your fingers are too frozen to strip off your multitude of woolly garments, and that your feet are numb and about five sizes too big for your sea-boots and the quantities of socks you wear. Finally, divested of your wet garments you turn in, and thank God that your watch is over. The old Movie can cavort all it likes, and fling you from one end of the cabin to the other, for all you care. The propellors can race till they seem to be coming through the bottom of the ship bracket. As one man said, "You don't just go to sleep, *you die,* when you turn in after night patrol."

XIV

After my first six months on a Movy, we began to hear rumours of "refit". This is the bright spot always on our horizon; it means at least a few days in which to get away on leave, to get into a nice clean sheeted bed every night for a week, have a bath every morning, not to mention the minor excitements of having a gloriously good time seeing theatres and generally luxuriating.

Eventually we received the list of refits and the date duly set forth upon which our turn came round. From that time on the total conversation of everybody was what they were going to do when the "drop of leave" came round.

Finally came the orders to proceed to that point where the refit was to take place. Never were naval orders obeyed more promptly. I think a typhoon would hardly have stopped us from accomplishing this particular passage.

Very early one morning we made our depart-

ure. You never saw a more gloriously happy ship's company in your life. Six months previously we had steamed into this terrible barren Northern base and as we passed through the boom defences the examination trawler had cheerily semaphored to us:—

"All ye who enter here, abandon hope!"

As we passed once more through the Boom, the same cheerful trawler was on duty. She celebrated our departure by whistling on her syren and sent the signal hand on to the wheel-house to semaphore: "Good-bye, Old Thing, Cheerio, Chin Chin. Good-bye, Good-by-ee, Good-by-ee-ee!"

It was a glorious send off and the enthusiastic signaller was still frantically waving "E's" by the score for his last "Good-by-ee", when we lost sight of him.

Even the Movy herself seemed rather pleased about things. Every Movy has a personality. On this particular day, our Movy seemed to be beating out joy music from her throbbing engines. She went like a bird all the way without her engines bucking once.

All this may seem fatuous childishness; perhaps we do get childish at such times. All I am trying to do is to give you some idea of our lives, doings and emotions. I think, too, it would take a man bereft of all the enthusiasm of boyhood not to get wildly excited on such an occasion. I've read of the emotions of a man let out of the prison gates, free once more,—with the world before him—his own world and a wonderful and beautifully exciting place. These are just our emotions,—we have seven days absolutely our own! Of course, we are rather like a captive golf ball attached to the end of a string and when the seven days are over we are "yanked" back again with rather a thud. Nevertheless, the seven days are at least ours to do what we like with. After the months of the gray barrenness of gaunt cliffs and the drudgery of grey tumbling seas, seven days absolutely and entirely your own, just made for your enjoyment is a wonderful streak of sunshine.

I think London is the Mecca of nearly every Colonial officer on leave, and however many times you may go on leave, it always seems a more

wonderful place each time. From the very first moment you get out at Euston and taxi through its streets, to the sad moment when you collect once more on the station to return to your solitary confinement for another six months, London seems a wonderful Arabian Night dream. The first morning you wake up with a start in a nice clean-sheeted bed with a weird consciousness that something is wrong, somehow or other your "bunk" is strangely comfortable and still. Then, when you can press a button in a lordly way and order breakfast in bed, you feel exactly like the long lost prince of the fairy tales who has returned once more to his kingdom.

When you are on leave, everything is wonderfully vivid and exciting, all your senses are keyed up to a fever pitch and you are never your normal self. For one thing the greatest necessity on leave is company. There is no place where you can feel so lonely as in London; you feel all the time like a man who has been dumb for years and just recovered his speech. You must have some one to tell "all about it."

This is where the man from overseas some-

times has rather the worst time of it and, incidentally too, why London may be rather a dangerous place for him. The British officer has his family ready to greet him and do everything to give him a good time. The Colonial who has no friends must find some—and the conclusion in many cases is obvious.

What a man wants most who has been spending what seems like endless months of monotony amongst men, is the touch of a woman's companionship. I remember one officer who had been shut away North for months telling me that when he went on leave he knew he'd forget himself and ask the first pretty girl he saw to KISS him!

It simply comes to this, when you are on leave you are like a child at play-time and you must have a playmate.

The days rush by tremendously quickly on leave, bringing you nearer and nearer to the thing you have so joyously left behind. All the time that memory and anticipation of your return hovers like a dark cloud in the background of your mind. Each of those seven days you are

building into memory is to be a wonderful storehouse to dive into during the months that are to come, little tablets of compressed joy to remember and help carry-on the months that are to follow.

Very often I meet people who think every actor should be put into some kind of war work. You never hear a soldier or sailor talk this way. There are very few soldiers and sailors who do not realise that the theatres in London to-day are actually doing wonderful war-work. Without the gaiety, brightness and frivolity of the Music Hall and Revue, London would be the most desolate place on earth; we must have our playtime and our playground, somewhere and sometime, to forget the dreariness of war and to get the natural healthy vision of the world as a good place in which to live.

Then comes the last day—almost with an unexpected suddenness, the miserable ride down to the station, the final conversation just for the sake of conversation, then the train pulls out and once more the curtain is drawn on the bright lights of the theatres, the gay little restaurant

parties and all the glamour of those seven days.

A few hours later you step once more aboard your Movy—a very hateful thing it seems. You open your orders for the day. "Being in all conditions ready for sea you will proceed to X head and patrol between there and 'Y' Bay". It's a sudden awakening after a gorgeous dream. You pinch yourself to find out whether you are awake or asleep. Still through your head runs the lilt of the latest musical comedy song and as you gaze out in the blank horizon of sea and sky, you see a stage crowded with a moving panorama of soft coloured lights and the swaying chorus.

The next jolt you get is your first meal—you had almost forgotten that paraffin was a necessary relish to a Movy meal. If you are a philosopher you relieve yourself in strong language. For us *C'est la guerre!*

Coming back from leave is the worst part about it, but who is there who would refuse it? In a day or two you shake down, and everything once more assumes its monotonous routine.

XVI

A Movy knows no feast or fast days, and despite the numerous Christmas cards I received, a Movy's Christmas could hardly be described as a Merry Christmas. Literally speaking, our Christmas dinner consisted in gnawing a turkey-bone "somewhere at sea."

It is unfortunate—but the Kaiser has no ideas of declaring a separate peace with Movies on Christmas Day. In fact, the Hun is wily enough to seize every advantage possible and if he thought that Christmas was to be observed by the patrols he would take it as a rare occasion to redouble his energies. Our instructions were therefore to be especially strenuous Christmas Day and keep a particularly sharp lookout.

Even the weather was not on our side. A drizzling wet snow and a short uncomfortable sea did not contribute in the least to our Christmas cheer.

Christmas Day is a thing you would like to forget on such occasions but it is too closely interwoven into your life to ever forget. It is the one day in the year that above all makes you long to be home once again.

I might almost have forgotten, but the crew were determined to mark the day somehow on the calendar. Our contribution to their Christmas was providing them with their Christmas fare and cigarettes.

The watch woke me early Christmas morning with a cheery "Good morning, Sir, and Merry Christmas!" I returned his salutations with as much gusto as possible, but my mind went back painfully to the old days. Christmas! It could not be Christmas, unless when you stretched out your toes to the end of the bed you could feel a litter of parcels and hear the crunch of crackly paper. Christmas morning to be Christmas morning ought to be ushered in with the opening of parcels in the half-light and the delving in the toe of a Christmas stocking. But of course a Movy has no chimney so you could hardly expect Father Christmas to pay you a visit.

However, I rolled out and pulled on my clothes and Duffel Jacket and went on deck. A Merry Christmas! After all this was only a very unpleasant twenty-fifth of December. But I felt the occasion should be promptly celebrated, so signalled the nearest Movy in the flotilla by semaphore.

> "M.L. oo presents her compliments to M.L. o5 and wishes her C.O. and ship's company a very merry Christmas."

Evidently the C.O. in question was very nostalgic that morning for his reply to my signal was particularly rude:

> "C.O. of M.L. o5 reports that M.L. oo can go to Hell with her damned silly messages."

I thought the form of greeting a trifle unkind, but bore no malice. It would have required a Tiny Tim as C.O. of M.L. o5 to have semaphored back "God bless every one!"

Grimey, whom I have described as our professional comedian in the crew, alone rose to the occasion on Christmas Day. I found a cluster of

holly and mistletoe had been run up on the halyards to the signalling yardarm. I could not quite see the object of the mistletoe, but perhaps Grimey was a believer in mermaids. Also Grimey had tried to create the Christmas spirit in the fo'castle by starting the gramaphone bright and early with "Come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant", played on the Westminster Chimes.

We had numerous Christmas parcels sent for the ship from donors known and unknown, so I undertook the office of the absent Father Christmas, and mustered the crew outside the charthouse, and set about the distribution of things. The Christmas parcels seemed to contain everything from chewing-gum to crackers, numerous woolly garments, packs of cards, cakes, and even a calendar, with the quotation "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!" A more humorously inappropriate calendar to send a Movy I have never seen.

I think these gifts did more than anything to make us realise that this really was Christmas. We got the sense from them that, after all we were in the minds of many people, and that

Christmas, if not very merry for us, was at least a day of "Goodwill towards men"—Huns excluded.

Our cook rose to this occasion most nobly. Cooking on an M.L. is, as I have told you, a marvellous combination of juggling and dietetics. On Christmas Day the cook had a goose, a turkey, and plum-puddings to prepare in by no means a comfortable sea. He strove valiantly and well with the combined assistance and expert advice of the other members of the crew. Judging by the smell issuing from the galley-hatch, we were to have *the* dinner of our particular Movy's history. Unfortunately, however, a sou'-westerly gale blew up, and I could hear unpardonable language issuing from the galley. At last the Christmas dinner hour came round. One of the deck-hands reported "Dinner ready, and the cook wants to know if you can manage to eat it now!"

One at a time we went below, and seized available portions of our turkey and gnawed them. Then came the Christmas pudding. It had travelled a few thousand miles to reach me, but it

was a question of gobbling it down between rolls and keeping everything else on the table at the same time.

At night when I turned in, I hardly realised that another Christmas had passed by—one more picture of Christmas to hang up side by side with all the old pleasant ones in memory, and very strange and different. Perhaps too, it was the very best Christmas I had ever spent. At least it was the most unselfish.

I remembered all those eager little faces I had seen staring into the London shop-windows during the Christmas week, and I could imagine all the day had meant to them just as it had to us in the years gone by, and as it might some day to our own children.

Christmas Day had just found us doing our bit, not much indeed and not very eventful, but a job that had to be done by some one. I think too, that those at home who noticed our vacant chairs, and whose thoughts we filled, would be glad to know that Christmas had just found us carrying-on. Some Christmas will come round, and perhaps find us once more seated at the

Christmas table at home, whether it is to be next Christmas or still further off. At least we know this, that when that day does come, it will be when "The world is safe for Democracy," and when not only we, but those who are to follow after, will be assured that their Christmases to come will be the token once more for "Peace on earth and good will to men".

As I turned over in my bunk I could hear the crew still carrying on their celebrations with the gramaphone. Harry Lauder was singing. I remembered him as I had seen him singing in London with hands clenched and a sob in his voice, just after he heard of the death of his only son:

"When the fighting is over and the war is won,
And flags are waving free,
When the bells are ringing and the boys are singing
Songs of victory,
When we all gather round the old fireside
And the old mother kisses her son,
All the lasses will be loving all the laddies,
The laddies who've fought and won!"

XVI

Two years ago I crossed the Atlantic on a troopship, having already joined the Auxiliary Patrols in Canada. We were not in uniform, but nevertheless felt a certain glamour and thrill in being a part of the British Navy. When we were within two days of our journey's end, we got very excited because we felt we must soon be getting into touch with the Navy. Although we said little to one another about it, each man was eagerly scanning the horizon for the first sign of smoke. I don't know quite how we expected to get our first introduction to the British Navy; certainly we expected to see some rather magnificent ship suddenly shoot out and overhaul us, and to be duly impressed with the might of the British Navy.

Our first touch, however, was a very different and a very much truer picture. A slow old trawler emerged from the gloom, pitching and

rolling as she came. She was a dirty, disreputable old thing, her funnel caked with spray. Closing in upon us, she started to semaphore—evidently some greeting to our skipper. As we continued our voyage we passed more trawlers, drifters and sweepers, all very busy and intent upon their particular little jobs—but that was all we did see of the British Navy—just the "drudgers" of the fleet.

The Auxiliary Patrols are just made up of any and every form of craft, almost anything that floats can go out on patrol. How much they have done and how they have saved and kept intact the units of our pre-war Navy will never be known.

All our preconceived notions of fleets and naval warfare have had to be changed. Before the war, every nation was straining to have the biggest, speediest, and most powerful ships. If you had stood at some fishing port like Lowestoft, watching the trawlers and drifters returning laden with fish, and said, "In the next war these are the ships which will maintain our naval supremacy", you would have been quite justly called a mad-

man. But this is absolutely and literally true.

It would be sheer madness to send out the Grand Fleet on patrol, to say nothing of the enormous expense. The bigger the ship the easier the mark for a torpedo. When a big ship of the Fleet goes down, the lives of a thousand men are lost, the expense is tremendous. Gradually we should lose our superiority, and when that happened, the Hun, "in accordance with pre-arranged plans", would willingly emerge from the Kiel Canal and give battle.

So the strength of our pre-war Navy had to be maintained, its strength both in ships and men. After the last Britisher had been shot down in the battlefields of France, that bulwark of strength would still remain to uphold our insular immunity. In the meantime a new navy had to be created to harry the U-boat, to clear the seas infested with mines, and for the general work of patrol. This was the Auxiliary Patrol—the navy of small craft, the brooms and eyes of the Fleet.

How quickly, and even how it was possible to bring the Navy of Small Craft into being, is a story in itself. The fisherman, without a mo-

ment's hesitation, left his old easygoing job of fishing for the London market, and offered his services to fish for mines. The "Fleet behind the Fleet", of merchantmen, tramps, and tugs, responded just as quickly, and with equal readiness the amateur yachtsman placed his steam-yacht or motor-boat in the hands of the Government. The Grand Fleet would be kept intact, the sinkings of units of the Grand Fleet ceased, and the new Navy took on all this auxiliary work, leaving to the big ships the single and all-important task of sending to the bottom the German High Seas Fleet as soon as it should venture out of its hiding-place.

Once more the Hun had miscalculated if he expected us to expend the strength of our naval machine upon the submarine. He forgot that we were a nation of sailors, and that a new navy could be so rapidly called into being.

What the Auxiliary Patrols have done, and their losses, are not published. Certainly every day some small ship "cashes in her cheques". But small ships are quickly replaced, the crews they carry are small too, and the losses therefore are

slight. Had it not been for the creation of the small craft the strength of the Grand Fleet would have been rapidly dispersed, and we should have been open to the dangers of invasion.

That then is the part we play in the war; carrying-on at a job which we can do as well as the pukka navy, and that the pukka navy may remain always ready to defeat the Hun. The Movy has replaced the steam-yacht and motor-boat that was hurriedly commissioned early on in the war, but the personnel of the officers remains. The number of these volunteer yachtsmen, who are naval officers now in the R.N.V.R., is over four thousand, and there is a never-ending supply always in training to replace losses, and a very high percentage of wastage through various forms of sickness which are unavoidable in the carrying on of this particular service.

I think I have made it obvious in all that I have said, that ours is just a very unsplendid job of drudgery. We feel that if we are doing our job, it is just the most and the least we can do. It is just one of the ever necessary jobs of the war, rarely calling for any fireworks display of

gallantry or loud applause. When the war is over, and we return once more to our tasks, we expect to have no line of ribbons to wear. These things do not come our way. We know that day after day, until the end comes, our task will vary but very slightly. With luck we may have our moments of excitement to break the monotony of things. In the meantime our job will consist in just doing efficiently whatever duty comes our way, of enduring and carrying-on cheerfully to the end.

Some day perhaps, in the future, when the war is a thing of the past and the soldiers and sailors have returned once more to their old occupations, each man around the table will have some war experience to tell. We shall listen to stories of gallantry at Vimy Ridge, at Ypres, or the Somme and we perforce shall sit dumb. We shall have no stories of breathless excitement to tell, and should we be called upon to tell our experiences in the Great War, all we shall be able to say is "Pushing water".

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