

HUNTING THE HUN

WITH

THE COAST GUARD



A WORD OF EXPLANATION

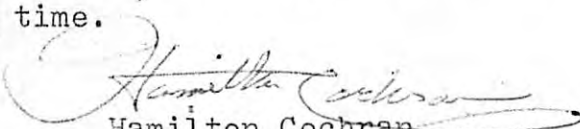
I wrote this manuscript a few months after receiving my Honorable Discharge from the U.S. Coast Guard, as an able seaman. I had enlisted on April 23, 1917 and served until March 23, 1919.

Along with many other young men from the Atlantic Seaboard, I received training at the Coast Guard Academy, at that time located at Fort Trumbull, New London, Conn.

Early in August I was assigned, with others to the U.S.S. Algonquin, C.G. We joined four other cutters at Gibraltar early in October, 1917 and immediately engaged in convoy work in the war zone between Gibraltar and English and Welsh ports.

I was 20 years old when this was written. In September, 1919 I entered the University of Michigan and received my Bachelor of Arts degree three years later, having completed the four year course in three,

I hope that those interested in the distinguished work of the U.S. Coast Guard during World War I will find this interesting, with added sidelights on the history of the service at that time.


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HUNTING THE HUN WITH THE COAST GUARD.

BY

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When the average person picks up the morning paper and reads that a stranded steamship has been rescued from the treacherous shoals off the Atlantic coast, and is being towed safely into port, he does not realize that this act has been the result of tireless effort on the part of the United States Coast Guard. The people living in the inland states never come in contact with this organization and therefore do not know of its work. Operating on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as well as the Great Lakes, the members of the Coast Guard lead strenuous lives. Not only do they handle all lifesaving stations and light houses, but they see to it that all seagoing traffic along the coasts is carried on in accordance with the laws of navigation. Furthermore, the Coast Guard is always prepared to come to the aid of vessels in distress, no matter how severe the weather conditions may be.

Though heavy seas rage, and bitter winds blow, the sturdy little revenue cutters are always on the spot, ready to rescue both ship and crew from the perils of the deep. Each cutter has its home station from which it patrols a certain section of the coast, keeping a watchful eye on smugglers, poachers, and all others who persist in disobeying the laws.

On the Pacific coast, as far north as the Behring sea, the cutter "Bear" cruises among the ice floes, sending out warnings of ice bergs, protecting the sealing industry and rendering medical aid to the inhabitants of isolated villages. Many a steamship company has the Coast Guard to thank for the salvaging of their vessels, but this service is never allowed to receive any compensation for service rendered. Destroying derelicts and other menaces to navigation is another labor of the Coast Guard, and both officers and men must have years of seagoing experience in order to carry out this difficult and dangerous enterprise.

The Coast Guard was established in 1790, and since that time it has made a record for itself which will never be forgotten by the mariners whose lives and property have been saved through this service of aid and mercy.

In war as well as in peace, the Coast Guard has shown itself ready to meet any emergency. Every man in the service has endeavored to live up to the motto: "Semper Paratus" which means "Always Prepared". In time of war the Coast Guard is automatically transferred from the supervision of the Treasury Department to the control of the Navy, and operates as a part of the latter.

When the call came for ships to be dispatched immediately for European waters to combat the submarine peril, the Coast Guard cutters were among the first vessels selected for this duty. The men that manned these little ships were, for the most part, from American colleges and universities who had enlisted in the service shortly after the United States entered the war.

Most of us received our training at the Coast Guard ~~depot~~ ^{Academy} at New London, Conn. By the middle of April, 1917, there were about 200 recruits in training. We were instructed by Coast Guard cadets who were studying to become officers in the service, and they were a fine lot of fellows. The first thing we were taught was the art of semaphore signalling which consists of sending messages by means of flags. A good part of each morning was spent in boat drill on the Thames river. The cadets had charge of the boats, teaching us the proper stroke, how to make a landing, and giving us commands pertaining to a boat under oars. Sometimes we had gun drill with a little three pounder that stood on a hill overlooking the parade grounds. It was great fun to train the gun on some boat on the river, pull the trigger and imagine what would happen if there had been a real shell in the breach instead of a dummy! Great stress was put on infantry drill and the manual of arms. We were kept at it day after day until each company had become ^{like} a machine in executing the commands of the cadets. Finally by July, our training days came to an end, and we were ready to be assigned to the various cutters.

The summer of 1917 saw unusual activity about the Coast Guard stations, and an air of suppressed excitement seemed prevalent. In August, the U.S.S. A *Ligonier* was lying at

Newport News in the shipyards, undergoing extensive repairs prior to her trip across to the war zone.

It was to Newport News that twenty young fellows including myself, were sent after our three months intensive training at New London, Conn. Everything about the shipyards was in a furor of work. The steady rat-a-tat-tat of the riveting machines filled the air from early morning until far into the night, and every week, and sometimes more often, a new ship would slip off the ways to take its place in the ranks of the steadily growing American Merchant Marine. Finally, on the last day of August, after six busy weeks of preparation, our ship, provisioned for a long six months, steamed slowly down the Chesapeake, and around to New York. Here, after the finishing touches had been put on, and our farewells said to friends and relatives, we started out, Sept. 20th, on the Great Adventure.

A great many of us thought that we were bound directly for France, and naturally several wild rumors had started, most of them originating from the galley, as to the port of destination. However, several days later, we arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, towing a mine sweeper, which, we were told, was to go with us all the way across. This miserable craft had formerly been an oyster boat, having been bought from the government for eighty thousand dollars, and was supposed to have been completely overhauled.

She was camouflaged like a barber's pole and soon proved ^{to be} our "hoodoo". Her crew were green men, just out of the Great Lakes Training Station, and had never tasted salt water before.

The 4th of October will always remain in my memory, the day that the shores of North America sank below the hazy horizon line, as we stood on the deck watching. It was a fine clear day when we steamed out of the harbor, and all hands were eager to encounter the excitement of being in the war zone. But the following day, the weather took a decided change, and soon heavy black clouds massed themselves in the horizon. Several hours later, we were in the midst of a terrific hurricane.

Our "hoodoo", the "Edwards", did not have enough coal capacity to carry her all the way across, so it was our task to tow her part way. As night drew on, the storm increased in violence, and it was necessary to put out oil bags, which helped to break the force of the huge waves which were breaking over the poor sweeper. She certainly was having a hard time of it. Meanwhile on our own ship, we had plenty to think about.

Oh! What a lot of seasick, seagoing gobs we were! Lying about the decks, in the scuppers, -anywhere was good enough. "Oh say! If this darned old tub would only quit pitching!" Poor old Dan was feeling the worst, and this is what I heard him mutter between groans: "Ye Gods! Why did I ever become a sailor? Its great to be a sailor, but its hell to go to sea. O-h-h-h-h! There I go again! ---UGH! I feel better now! Say, be, if I ever get off this ship, Ill never, never, go to sea again, or set foot on a deck as long as I live! I guess Ill bring up the moon next, I havent anything else left to cough up!"

However, in spite of our unsettled feelings, there was a great deal of work to be done about decks, even though the ship stood on her ear. Fresh air and good hard work are the best cures for seasickness that I know of. Meanwhile, the "Edwards" was frantically signaling to us by blinker. As the light slowly spelled out the words we read: "We are leaking badly, the boilers have shifted several inches on account of the heavy rolling and pitching. The crew have been all night at the pumps, and are exhausted". It was thought for a while that it would be necessary to launch a life boat and take off the crew of the disabled vessel, but it was impossible for any small boat to live in such a sea. So we hove to, keeping just enough turns on the screw to prevent the ship from drifting to leeward. For about twenty four hours we were hove to, then the sea gradually subsided, and morning dawned clear and bright, with only a moderate wind.

Then we set our course back to Halifax and limped into port in a rather battered condition. The "Edwards" we left there and have never seen her since; probably she is there still. Two days later we set out for the second time, feeling very much relieved that that decrepit trawler was off our hands.

After twelve days steady steaming with almost perfect weather and very moderate seas, considering the time of the year, which was the middle of October, we approached our destination--Gibraltar.

About the middle of the night, we entered the straits, and soon after "General Quarters" was sounded. This means that all hands are called to the guns and their various battle stations, by the ringing of electric bells throughout the ship. Of course there was great excitement, and all were sure that it was a submarine, as we had been in the war-zone for about five days. But after an hour's watchful waiting, and much eye straining in the dark, it was discovered that the suspicious object was nothing more than a poor old tramp steamer, hugging the coast of Morocco, and probably just as scared of us, as we were suspicious of him!

I shall always remember my first sight of Gibraltar, as we proceeded up the Strait in the early morning, with the bright sunshine bathing that huge mass of rock, and making its every detail stand out against the flawless blue of the sky. Gibraltar is nothing more than a huge rock, looking as if it had been carved out of some gigantic mountain range by the wondrous hand of nature. The north and east sides are very steep and precipitous, rising almost straight up from the water. However, on the other two sides of the rock, it rises a great deal more gradually, and on the western slope will be found the harbor and town. The town itself is not much more than a jumble of white and yellow and blue houses, with queer narrow winding streets, while the buildings rise one above the other with fascinating irregularity. They are fashioned after the Spanish style, high and balconied, with interesting courtyards, usually with a flower bed in the center. As one passes up Main street in Gibraltar, he will be sure to see almost every race in the world, for the harbor is a rendezvous for ships going either east or west. Here the convoys were made up, some bound for the Americas, others going to England or France, then again other convoys would set out for Italy, Africa, and all of the many eastern ports that are so important to trade, but of ^{which} whom the average person has never heard.

When one first goes ashore in Gibraltar, he is first struck by the picturesque aspect of the place. Such beautiful gardens, such quaint houses, such different and interesting types of people, such fascinating curio shops! But if he stays there off and on for a year and a half, as so many of us did, he will soon tire of it all. Before the Y.M.C.A. arrived, and that came about four months before the armistice-- too late to do any good--there was absolutely no decent place to go for recreation, except a couple of musty, dusty, so-called homes for British soldiers and sailors. But the most exciting thing to do there was to play checkers, or read a month old English newspaper. The average two fisted American sailor, going ashore after weary days at sea, demands more amusement ^{than} that. Of course there was the Theatre Royal, but unless you understood Spanish, you could not make out what they were jabbering about. Our ship was one of the first American vessels to arrive at Gibraltar, and the U.S. Base, later called Base 9, was just being organized. After about ten days rest, during which time mine chutes were put on the vessel's stern and other repairs ~~soon~~ attended to, we set out on our first convey.

Before telling about that, it would be well to explain in brief the convey system. After about the first year and a half of war, the British Admiralty adopted the convey system for all merchant ships and transports, as the safest way to cope with the submarine peril, which was increasing in effect all the time. A fleet of merchant ships would form up, each in her proper station, and proceed to a certain port. It is easily seen that a large convey, keeping close together, and protected on all sides by destroyers and trawlers, has a much better chance to escape being torpedoed than a lone merchantman. This system proved very successful, and the sinkings of ships by submarine attacks decreased materially.

Our work was to guard the convey from the enemy, going all the way from Gibraltar to England, staying there for perhaps a week and then returning with another convey. An escort of destroyers and P-boats accompanied the ships past the worst danger zone, and our vessel, the ocean escort, took the convey all the way. Each captain had a chart of the positions of the various ships in the fleet, and was thus able to keep in his proper position.

By different code signals, made by flag, wireless, and lights, the ships always were in communication with each other.

During our stay over there in the war zone, which was exactly one year and three months, we alone escorted about five hundred and fifty vessels, whose total cargoes valued almost a billion and a half dollars. There was only one other vessel besides ourselves, which was based at Gibraltar, that never lost a ship out of its convoy. Others were unfortunate during the most serious submarine attacks, to lose two, three, and even four ships out of a single convoy. This then was our task, and many times it got terribly monotonous, for there were sometimes months without a single bit of action.

The second convoy ~~that~~ we escorted from "Gib" to England, was during the first part of December. Only two days more and the shores of the British Isles would be sighted, and that meant a week's rest for us. We were looking for the escort of destroyers and trawlers that day, for we had been in wireless communication with them the night before. Things started moving early, ^{at} to be exact at just one-twenty a.m. My watch had turned in their hammocks for a short four hours rest, when suddenly "Quarters" rang.

It is rather disagreeable to be startled out of a deep sleep by the furious ringing of the alarm bell, ^{and} ~~together with~~ the rush of hurrying feet, ~~running~~ through the dark, ~~for of course~~ ^{No} lights were allowed on any part of the ship. Some of us were only half dressed, ^{so} ~~but~~ we stood at our stations in the biting wind, ~~without a murmur~~. It seemed that a large American troop ship, bound for France, and escorted by a destroyer, had crossed our bows by not more than fifty yards and had given warning of submarines ahead. Soon "pipe down" sounded, which meant dismissal, and my watch returned to their hammocks to snatch a little rest before going on at four o'clock. Shortly after breakfast the escort was sighted by the lookout in the crow's nest, ^{It was just} a blur of smoke on the horizon. I was standing on the fore-castle head, when I happened to look to port. A dark object seemed to be moving through the water, not more than a thousand yards away. Peering closer, I was startled to discover what appeared to be the conning tower of a submarine.

I quickly pointed out the object to the gun watch, who immediately reported to the bridge. Instantly we were summoned to Quarters. Down in the forward magazine we were moving swiftly, hauling out the ammunition boxes which were hoisted on deck as fast as possible. Suddenly our forward battery roared out, almost in unison. The constant concussion of the guns shook the whole ship, ~~and~~ They kept up a steady fire for several minutes. As the last shot was fired, a ~~terrific~~ ^{shattering} explosion took place somewhere off our port bow, ~~which~~ ^{It} made the old ship reel and stagger. ~~Of course~~ ^{It} Those of us down ~~there~~ ^{in the} magazine could only imagine what was going on, ~~but~~ ^{soon} after, we learned what had happened. What appeared to be the conning tower of a submarine was nothing ~~of the kind~~, but a clever decoy, built by the Huns to resemble ~~one~~ ^{a "sub."}. We had ~~been~~ ^{had} headed for the thing, intending to ram it at full speed, but on discovering the ~~mistake~~ ^{use}, our captain ^{had} sheered off and ordered the gun crews to fire on the object.

After several rounds, a direct hit was made, ~~and~~ with a tremendous explosion, a huge column of water shot high in the air. There were two large mines concealed beneath this imitation conning tower! Had we rammed it, there is no doubt but that our ship would have been blown to pieces.

An out-bound convoy leaving Gibraltar, was always an impressive sight. Along about noon the ships would start out of the harbor and steam slowly ^oward the Straits, flying their code flags, which indicated their number and position in the convoy. Small speedy submarine chasers darted about here and there, giving instructions to the large heavy-laden vessels, and keeping a watchful eye on any suspicious streak of foam. As the afternoon waned and the shadows began to creep over the mountains of Morocco, the entire convoy, now in formation, and going at half speed, would proceed westward ~~toward~~ ^{toward} the open sea. Soon a three flag hoist appears at the yard arm of the flag ship leading the middle column. "Full speed ahead" spell the flags and then we know that we are started once more on our dangerous mission. As evening draws on, the ships take a close formation, which is risky business, for there is always is danger of collision. On several occasions vessels in our convoy were forced to put back to Gibraltar in seriously damaged condition due to colliding in the dark.

No lights of any kind were permitted and it was a serious offense for a man to light even a match on deck. Presently through the darkness on our starboard hand, there flashes a bright light. It is Teriffa, the last beacon we pass on the Spanish coast. Soon the lookout reports another flash, which is our old friend Spartel light on the rugged Moorish coast. Now we know that we are practically through the Straits and really at sea.

Even though great precautions ^{were} taken, ^a the submarine had ^{a much} the greater advantage over a steamer, ~~for~~ ^{made} a large merchant vessel ~~was~~ a wonderful target at night, its bulky hull and tall spars showing inky black against the surrounding darkness.

① One night, about ~~the~~ mid-watch, our ship just barely escaped the fate of the many craft that went to the bottom through the ruthlessness of the Hun.

② ² One of the boys who had been on lookout at the time, ^{It was an experience that} ~~told me about it next day.~~
^{I shall never forget.} He said: "It all happened about ten or fifteen minutes after I had come on watch. The sea was rather calm, and it was very easy to detect any disturbance in the water. ~~Of course~~ ^{we} had been zig-zagging continuously through out the night, and ~~it~~ was just as we were turning on the starboard tack, ~~when~~ I saw the thing coming.

③ A wide streak of swiftly moving foam, which looked like a path of fire, because of the phosphorous in the water, was headed directly for the ship. I knew in an instant that it was a torpedo! Well, sir, I was just naturally scared dumb. My tongue ~~seemed to~~ ^{stuck} stick to the roof of my mouth, and I seemed to have lost control of my knees. ~~How-~~
^{But} ever, I managed in a second or two to shout down to the bridge: "Torpedo headed for our starboard bow, sir!" ⁹¹ A few sharp orders from the officer of the watch, and our bow slowly turned away from the fast approaching missile. All this happened in a few seconds, but it seemed hours ~~to me~~ before the ship had turned, just in time to see the torpedo rush past, clearing our ^{stern} ~~bow~~ by not more than a few yards."

④ There was great excitement, both on the bridge and among the crew, and the man whose sharp eyes had detected the torpedo, was ^{highly} commended by the captain.

Going ~~toward~~ ^{toward} Gibraltar with a large convoy one day early in 1918, we had left behind the foggy, soggy weather of the English Channel, and were enjoying the first sunshine, which always greeted us on nearing Gibraltar. An off-shore trade wind was blowing, when the lookout reported a small two-masted schooner several miles off, and dead ahead. ^{II} On nearer approach we noted signals of distress flying from her masthead. Immediately ~~all~~ ^{II} was action aboard our own ship. In response to the boatswain's pipe, the crew of the first surf boat took their stations, and were ~~immediately~~ lowered away. After some time the life boat returned, bringing back the crew of the disabled vessel. ^{II} Six weeks before, this little Danish schooner named the "Urda" and ~~halfing~~ ^{II} from Swen ~~borg~~, had encountered a U-boat. The small sailing vessel, ~~not much larger~~ than our sailing launch, had the Danish flag and her nationality painted on her sides and could be plainly seen at a distance of almost half a mile. Nevertheless, despite the schooner's neutrality, the submarine promptly began to shell her. Luckily escaping with their lives, the crew of four had worked night and day to keep the vessel afloat by dumping their cargo of salt, ~~which had become wet~~, into the sea. She had been bound for the Azores with her cargo of salt, and for over a month, she had been floating ~~about~~ ^{II} the ocean, encountering heavy storms, ~~but~~ ^{she had been} unable to make any progress, ~~as the~~ ^{for her} vessel's mainmast had been shattered by a German shell. After the crew had been taken aboard, the Danish skipper, who could speak a little English, wished his vessels sunk by our guns, ~~as~~ ^{II} she was a menace to navigation. This we did, and she afforded a fine target for the gun crews. ^{II} The last we saw of the little craft, she was settling fast, with her decks awash. Those poor Danes certainly did eat, for when we rescued them they had only a ~~few days~~ ^{II} ~~more~~ provisions left. None of them had had a hair cut for months, or a shave either, ~~and after~~ they had been barbered, and each presented with several packs of cigarettes, they seemed to have a favorable impression of the American Navy.

At day break, one morning in June, there seemed to be unusual excitement about the ship, and preparations for sea were hurriedly being made. As we did not expect to go on another trip so soon, everyone was curious to know what was up.

Shortly after ~~breakfast~~^{mess}, the launch brought a British army officer aboard. Our ship was already under weigh when the launch came alongside, and soon was hoisted and secured for sea. Steaming out into the Straits, we arrived at Tangier, Morocco at noon. I was one of those picked for the crew of the of the surf boat, and thus had a fine opportunity of seeing the quaint town. An old Spanish gun-boat was lying at anchor, as we came in, and the crew seemed very much interested in us. On the right of the town, and curving around the harbor, there stretched a wonderful sandy beach. Camels could be seen moving along, evidently part of a caravan coming in from the desert.

After our boat had gone about half way to the pier, a small boat, manned by two swartzy fez-capped Moors, met us. The French consul's attaché ~~was in the boat~~^{It contained} and he accompanied our officer to the dock. They both went up town together while we roamed about the queer place as we pleased. Returning after a little while, our officer ordered us back to the ship. With him came a French naval lieutenant, and this increased the mystery more than ever.

Soon after, we weighed anchor, and at dawn the next day, sighted the blinking light on Cape St. Vincent, on the Portugese coast. Passing the Cape on our port hand, we steamed past a straggling submarine net, and into a small cove. A little cluster of fisherman's huts sprawled on the side of a rocky hill overlooking the cove, which was called Sagres. The people earned their living by fishing for sardines, which were canned in ~~a small factory near by~~^{canning stood at}. ~~After mess~~^{Instantly}, all was hustle and bustle. Belts and leggings were buckled on, revolvers ~~given out~~^{passed}, and a landing party chosen. Again I was lucky enough to be picked, and ~~getting into~~^{manning} the surf boat, we ~~were~~ pulled ashore.

The country about the place was very rocky, ~~and~~^{After proceeding} several miles we came to some rugged hills, cut sharply by ravines and gorges. We had to carry ~~some~~^{several} heavy instruments, which the various officers had brought along, and ~~As~~ the weather was extremely hot, the going was rather hard. ~~At~~^{Soon} a low word of warning from the leader of the party, ~~we had~~^{brought} our revolvers in ~~readiness~~^{to}. By this time we had ~~passed up~~^{entered} a narrow ravine which turned sharply to the right several hundred yards ahead.

With as much quietness as possible, we approached the turn and waited while one of our officers scouted ahead. ^{Soon he returned.} ~~Soon after,~~ in obedience to his whispered command, we crept along and around the bend. Here a strange sight met our eyes. ~~For there~~ ^{hidden} in a thick clump of cedars, was a small shack, and strung across the narrow sides of the ravine, the ariel of a powerful wireless plant. Quickly surrounding the house, we ~~only~~ found it empty and the wireless instruments gone. Evidently the place had been abandoned recently, for there were signs of a hasty departure. After setting fire to the shack and dismantling the ariel, we made our way back to the ship, ~~arriving~~ ^{several hours later.} When we got on board, there were several natives there selling chickens and eggs. They told us that on May 24th, a German U-boat had torpedoed two Norwegian ships a few miles off the coast. One was sunk, but the other succeeded in beaching herself. The Huns, not satisfied with their ~~vile~~ work, came inside the nets and set fire to the disabled vessel. A little later, the crew of the "sub" landed at the village, and at the point of revolvers demanded provisions. Two trawlers happened to be in the vicinity as the U-boat left, and they opened fire. After a running fight, the Hun managed to make good his escape. Later, however, we learned that the same "sub" had been sunk by a British destroyer. We were the first American ship to put into Sagres for forty-eight years, so the fishermen told us! They were crazy for tobacco and cigarettes, as there was a scarcity of these articles in Portugal. We obtained several bottles of "vinho verde" for a few packs of ~~cigarettes.~~ ^{smokes.}

As the sun crept toward the western horizon, we hove up anchor and started down the coast ~~again~~, at full speed. After a short stay at Casablanca, Morocco, we returned to Gibraltar after an ^{expecting} ~~interesting~~ three day ^{run.} ~~trip.~~ Previous to our trip, whenever the allied ships sent out wireless messages to each other, they were interrupted by some station continually breaking in, and causing a great deal of inconvenience. By means of a recently invented apparatus, ^{now known as the Wireless Compass,} the approximate location of any wireless station can be found. The direction of this secret plant was calculated to be somewhere in close proximity to Cape St. Vincent.

Evidently the operators, undoubtedly German agents, would communicate with their U-boats, which at that time were operating near the coast. During the war, Spain and Portugal were thick with spies, and the operators of the secret station had most likely gotten wind of our expedition, and had fled shortly before our arrival.

During the summer of 1918, our ship went to Lisbon, Portugal for repairs, as the British dockyard in Gibraltar was overcrowded. For six weeks we stayed there, and all hands were granted four days leave. This gave us a very fine opportunity to visit the many historical spots about the city, and to study the customs and people of that picturesque republic. We first came to Lisbon on the 4th of July, and the American Minister, Col. Birch, entertained both officers and men at a reception in the Embassy. During the course of the afternoon, we were shown all over the old palace grounds, which lie next to the American Embassy. Here beneath the heavy shade of giant trees, with the warm air laden with the fragrance of hundreds of flowers, was the place where the unfortunate King Manuel had his famous affair with Gaby Deslys. During the revolution of 1910, which ended in the downfall of the royalty and made Portugal a republic, the city of Lisbon was the center of severe fighting. When the royal palace was bombarded by revolutionary gun-boats lying in the harbor, King Manuel was forced to flee for his life, and with a small band of loyal retainers, he climbed over the garden wall, rushed through the American Embassy, and jumped into a high powered motor car. Arriving at Oporto, not many miles away, he took ship for England never again to return. While in Lisbon, the crews of the three U.S. ships that were there at the time, gave a big field meet for the benefit of the citizens, who thronged the stadium, and were very much interested in everything that took place. Our vessel succeeded in winning the tug o' war, not so much because of our superior strength, but more because the opposing team was a little too much liquored up with Portuguese "vihno" to do much pulling! For winning the tug o' war, the "Seculo", Lisbon's foremost newspaper, presented us with a handsome silver loving cup, suitably engraved in Portuguese.

One night, when Mack and I were coming back to the ship from liberty ashore, we ran into a young revolution, but fortunately escaped with our lives. All the policemen carried loaded rifles, as well as bayonets, and they were having a skirmish with some of the lawless populace. It was twelve o'clock at night, and we were just about to cross the street, when, pop! pop! pop! They were pouring a stream of bullets up the avenue. Mack seemed to have lost his wits, for he started to run across the street. Quickly ^{hauled} ~~hauling~~ him behind a doorway ^{where} we escaped being shot, and waited there until the firing ceased. As we hurriedly crossed the avenue, we noticed the bodies of several fallen citizens. On a great many buildings could be seen the bullet holes, made during the frequent revolutions. The president of Portugal, whom we saw while there, was assassinated recently in the railroad station in Lisbon. I don't believe any one of their presidents has died a natural death.

* * * * *

During the middle of the winter of 1917, we had taken a large convoy from Gibraltar to England, and were about a day's run from our destination. The escort of P-boats and trawlers had arrived, and we left the convoy to proceed at full speed for Pembroke Dock, South Wales. Here we would rest up, and await another south-bound convoy. Perhaps it would be best to explain just what a P-boat is, before going any farther. A P-boat is built to resemble an ordinary tramp steamer in all respects. However, she has powerful engines that can develop twenty knots or more, and only drawing eight feet of water, she is immune to torpedoes, as a torpedo usually travels twelve feet below the surface. Underneath the bridge of the P-boat, and concealed from view by hinged steel plates, are four inch guns, and beneath her stern are chutes containing many depth charges, but invisible from the outside. When a mine is launched, a trap door is let fall. When a submarine is sighted, the P-boat is naturally taken for an innocent merchantman, but as soon as the sub approaches near enough, he discovers differently. At the press of a button, the false sides drop down, the guns swing out, and pour a deadly fire on the surprised U-boat before she has a chance to do anything. Several of these P-boats always formed part of our escort about England.

The day after we had gotten safely into port, one of the P- boats came in that had been with us a few days previously. One of the British seamen came over to our ship for a visit, and told us this story:

"About four hours after you chaps shoved off from the convoy," he began in his broad dockney accent, "the bloody 'un showed his snoot above the water, not more than five hundred yards abaft the port beam of the old P-63. (The name of his ship.) Our old skipper was jolly well on the job that day, most like he 'ad a bit of a tot of rum under his belt; anyway 'e spotted the bloody sub, and soon our old engines were humming along at a good twenty knot. At Quarters, my job is gun pointer on number one port gun. There I was with my mates, all primed and ready to let the old girl fly. Lieutenant 'awkins, 'e stood there like a bloody statue, 'is 'and on the button, ready to let the sides flop down at an order from the bridge. Almost right away, it seemed, the old skipper's voice hollers down, "'Let 'er go, Mr. 'awkins!'" and down went the false sides with a clang. Out swings our old gun, and me sightin' through the telescope, like me eyes would pop out a ~~me~~ lead!"

"A second later the old girl roared out, ^{with} and the bloody sub only three hundred yards away. Just then the P-63 heeled over to starboard, and I knew right then just what the Old Man was goin' to do. About a minute later he did it; he rammed that damned 'un square amidships. Blimme! I was bloody well knocked flat by the collision, and such a rippin' and tearin', I never heard before. Well, mates, we knew the 'un 'ad run his last race, and we all rushed on deck to be in at the killin', as you might say. That old sub sunk quick enough, but the wreckage and oil, and the mangled bodies of the crew were still floating around. Ah! It was a grand sight! "Official credit for a U-boat!", I heard Mr. 'awkins say, and that mates, means ten pound extra apiece, and most likely a trip to dear old London on leave!" (Whenever a British vessel received official credit for sinking a submarine, both officers and men received additional money besides their regular pay.)

There used to be a small brigantine lying in Gibraltar, a very innocent vessel, and I often wondered just what her business was, as she never seemed to be loading on a cargo.

I also noted that she was always prepared for sea. Later I found out that she was, another clever "mystery ship". Concealed beneath her after deck house, were two powerful three inch guns, ready for instant use. The crew were British Navy men, dressed, however, in civilian clothes, and to all outward appearances were simply the civilian crew of an English sailing vessel. This small ship would cruise in and out of the Straits, and along the Spanish coast, waiting for a chance to show the Hun a thing or two.

The officer of a German submarine, peering intently through his periscope, would see would see a British brigantine, with all sails set, evidently bound for Gibraltar.

"Ah ha!" he would think, "here is another one of those accursed English to settle with! There is no use wasting one of our valuable torpedoes on that small tub!"

So he rises to the surface and trains his gun on the poor little vessel. By this time, great excitement is seen to be taking place on the brigantine. A boat is being lowered, and the men run about, panic stricken. The U-boat moves closer in order to make sure his aim, while the small boat from the sailing ship pulls hurriedly away. Then the action starts. The after deck-house collapses, and a second later, two British guns, manned by expert British gunners, are sending shot after shot into the sub before she has a chance to man her gun, or submerge! Fifteen U-boats are said to be to be to the credit of this small, brave "mystery ship". However, she lost several of her crew in her various fights with the enemy.

The average person, sitting at home during the war, and reading in the newspapers about the sinkings of vessels through submarine attacks, had the idea that U-boats were as thick as crows in a corn field, and that hardly a day passed without some thrilling battle with the enemy. This of course was not the case, and I knew of a British P-boat that had not sighted a submarine off the Welsh coast for almost two years. Usually it was a matter of luck, some vessels would always come in contact with them, while others cruised for months without even sighting a suspicious streak of foam.

One early spring morning ^{in 1914} ~~of last year~~, I was standing on the fore'sle head, watching the glorious sunrise, which gave promise of a perfect day. Nowhere but at sea, does one realize the beauty of color to be found in the rising sun, somewhere off the coast of Spain. Ed was there on deck with me and he remarked: "It's been quite a long time since we've had any excitement, isent it? Things are getting rather slow in these latitudes." "Yes," I replied, "Fritz seems to have ignored us completely of late. Perhaps he will give us a little more attention this trip."

Three days before, our convoy had left Gibraltar, passed safely out of the Straits, and were now plowing steadily northward at the usual slow speed of seven and a half knots. The weather had been almost perfect, and though many hundreds of miles from land, the air was laden with the sweet fragrance of the coming spring. Twenty ~~largest~~ merchant ships, heavily loaded with various cargoes, ranging from copper-ore to oranges, made up our convoy. As I looked aft, just as our ship turned on her zig-zag course, I could see all the vessels, keeping almost perfect formation; four columns with five ships in each column. Several empty tramps had shoved off the night before, bound for the states and South America.

^{that night} Bill Bowline voiced the opinion of us all, when he remarked: "Oh Boy! Say, wouldn't I like to be on one of those ships, going back to dear old New York town! No such luck, our job is to stay over here till it's all finished." After cruising about the war-zone for over a year, we were "bloody well fed up with it", as the Limeys say.

As eight bells struck that morning, I hastened on watch in the forward crow's nest. Rising slowly above the horizon, ^{like} ~~was~~ the sun, a huge red lantern, and already sending flashes of fire across the oily waves. On such a day, it was a pleasure to gaze from the tiny perch aloft, over the brilliant expanse of sea, broken only here and there by some lazy white-cap. Shortly after the noonday meal, my watch turned in their hammocks to sleep away their short four hours ~~off watch~~ before going on again at the first dog-watch. As the weather was so mild, a great many of us swung our "dream bags" out on the open deck, and had just gotten to sleep, when our peaceful slumber was ~~suddenly~~ rudely interrupted by the loud ringing of the alarm bell.

Awake in an instant, I was out of my downy nest in one jump, pulling on my trousers as I went. That is the first and only time in my life that I ever did two things at the same time!

My station at General Quarters had been changed, and was now in the main top, as a spotter. The gunnery officer calls out the ranges for the various batteries, by means of speaking tubes running from the bridge to the guns. The sight-setters at the guns have the speaking tubes attached to their ears, and are thus able to hear the orders above the noise of the guns. The gun crew having set their range, fire according to the officer's direction. Should the projectile go over the target, or fall short, or perhaps go too much to the right, it was up to me to correct the error in the range. Our crews had been so thoroughly trained by this time, that there was no excitement or confusion in going to Quarters. Each man knew his station and duties, and thus everything ran off smoothly.

Reaching the crow's nest took but a few seconds, and peering through the powerful glasses that were there, I soon discovered what the disturbance was all about. Sure enough, things were popping on the right flank of our convoy. Shells were dropping into the sea, one after another in quick succession, too close to the ships for comfort, and sending tall geysers of spray high in the air as they hit the sea. The sun, on a bright day in those latitudes, is dazzling, sending a flashing path of sunbeams across the water, which is almost impossible to look into. ^A The Hun U-boat ~~that~~ was shelling our convoy, like the clever snake he was, had chosen his position well. Lying directly in the path of the sun, he was raining shells at us in a most irritating manner. All this time, however, the vessels in the convoy were not idle, and ~~each~~ ^{each} ship on the outboard starboard flank, had opened fire with her stern gun. Our ship, which had been cruising ahead of the convoy, immediately put on full speed, ahead, and rushed over in the direction from which the shells were coming. Straining my eyes to the utmost, I was just barely able to make out the dark outlines of the sub, through the blinding rays of sunlight.

Even after I had reported to the bridge, it was exceedingly difficult to get the proper range. Again and again our guns roared out, sending out shells as fast as the gunners could load ~~their pieces~~. For about fifteen minutes the firing continued, and then the shelling ceased abruptly. The Hun had submerged. With all possible speed, we proceeded to the spot where the submarine had disappeared. At a sharp order from the bridge, ^{bombs} two three hundred pound depth ~~charges~~ were dropped over the side, one about fifty yards from the other. While the mines were being let go, our vessel was steaming ahead with everything wide open, and ^{half minute} a few minutes later with a dull explosion that shook the old ship from stem to stern, ^{at} two columns of water shot high in the air. The depth charges had done their work. After an hour's wait, steaming slowly about the spot, nothing appeared on the surface of the sea, except a quantity of oil. The enemy had a habit of letting oil come to the surface in order to make it appear that they were either sunk or damaged. However, it is always uncertain whether the submarine is really crippled or just deceiving his foes.

After the action was all over, we signaled to the different ships, enquiring whether there had been any casualties, and all reported that no serious damage had been done. Although an extra vigilant watch was kept that night for Fritz, no sign of ^{him} Fritz was seen. Evidently he had had enough shelling for one day, or else a Yankee shell had found its way into his entrails and sent him ^{to the bottom} down. Although we had several false alarms on the remainder of the voyage, from a nervous Italian ship, not a vessel was torpedoed, and all got safely to port.

Gibraltar is connected with Spain by a narrow strip of flat, sandy soil which is ~~called~~ ^{called} "neutral ground". It is about half a mile long, and at one end are the gates to Gibraltar, and at the other are the Spanish lines. Of course no one could enter Spain in uniform, as Spain was neutral, and all belligerents found there in uniform were interned. However, it was the habit of some American and British officers to go over in civilian clothes, as the roulette wheels of Algeceras had a fascination for the younger set of naval officers.

It was very tantalizing to be so close to Spain, to see the white towns snuggled against the rugged Castilian hills, and the queer lateen rigged sail-boats skim across the harbor, and yet never get over there and see it all. The American Admiral had issued strict orders against any United States sailor going over to Spain in civilian clothes, and if he were caught doing so, he would be tried at a General Court Martial. ~~However,~~ ^{But} shortly before our ship sailed for home, George and I decided to risk the court martial and all, just in order to get a glimpse of Spanish life.

There were many perplexing questions to be considered, the main one being how to change our clothes without being detected. This, of course it was impossible to do on shipboard, and no one in Gibraltar would allow us to change at his house, as the British authorities had issued orders against such a thing. Therefore we had to resort to a strategy. Accordingly, one beautiful Sunday morning in December, with most religious faces, we walked up to the young ensign in charge of the deck, saluted, and requested permission to go to church. It was our regular liberty, that afternoon, from one until ten p.m., and with church liberty until noon, the coast seemed clear. But one annoying thing remained. We were told to be back from church in time for the noonday meal, before going ashore at one o'clock. This grave problem was solved in this way: The messenger on watch, whose duty it was to check out and in the liberty party, happened to be an intimate friend of ours. Quietly informing him of our projected adventure, we persuaded him, after many soft words and glittering promises of monetary remuneration, he being an inveterate poker player and sadly in need of funds, to check our names off the church liberty list at twelve o'clock, just as if we had come aboard. Thus with the final question answered, we left the ship.

Our civilian clothes had been secretly borrowed from different members of the crew, and these we concealed beneath rain coats which we carried innocently on our arms, although the day was cloudless. As it was early in the day, not many people were about, as the average Spanish resident of Gibraltar languidly remains in bed until noon, especially on Sunday morning. Therefore we got safely into town without any suspicions being aroused.

The only one that saw two slinking forms glide noisily into the entrance of "The Welcome, Soldier's and Sailor's Rest", was a poor old Spanish scrub woman who was half blind anyway. Fortune certainly smiled broadly upon us that memorable day. Quickly changing into "civies", in the deserted third floor reading room, we wrapped our uniforms in paper and left them in a corner of the office. It was not without a little anxiety that we sallied forth upon the street, passing friends and officers without a glance of recognition. However, it was rather difficult to refrain from saluting officers as they passed, but soon we nonchalantly ignored them. Arriving at the landing where the decrepit side-wheeler leaves for Algeciras across the bay, we found that she left at ten o'clock. We were a little afraid that some of our own officers might be going over, but fortunately none appeared. There were a few American officers aboard, of course in "civies", who had gotten special permission from the Admiral to go over to Spain. They took no notice of us, however, thinking no doubt, that we were officers like themselves.

As the steamer neared the Spanish side, we had a wonderful view of the old Rock, looming up, a mass of grey and green against the clear blue of the sky. On stepping ashore at Algeciras, we soon found an English speaking guide, who showed us all around the town. Almost like Gibraltar, with its narrow, winding cobble-stoned streets, the place on the whole was not very interesting. Several churches attracted us with their beautiful mural paintings. There were also some lovely canvases by famous masters, but they were stuck away in dark corners with little access to the light. ~~Thus Spain appreciates her artists.~~

It was a saint's-day, that Sunday, and the soldiers looked just as if they had stepped out of a Broadway musical comedy. A Spanish second lieutenant wears more medals than Sir Douglas Haig or Marshal Foch, and the only war Spain has had for a long time was with the Moors! Every soldier above a corporal sported a large sword, which clanked along the cobbles behind him, and had an annoying habit of getting entangled in his legs. Nevertheless, very much pleased with themselves, they would go strutting about, often stopping to flirt with the gaily glad senioritas who gazed coyly down upon them from the overhanging balconies.

Bull fighting in Spain ranks with our base ball as a national sport. Luckily enough we were fortunate in seeing one, but it is a disgusting pastime, suited only to the Spanish temperament. It is nothing more than the spectacle of several men murdering an enraged bull, using swords, spears, and darts. Oftentimes many horses are gored and occasionally a man meets his death on the horns of the maddened animal.

After dining at a little cafe, where the food was smothered in olive oil, we strolled down to the Casino. Here the officers spent their time as well as their money at games of chance, the principle one being roulette. One of the officers on our ship was fortunate enough to come back to the extent of nearly one thousand dollars, but usually the house reaped the profits.

Eight o'clock that evening found us on board the boat, which was about to shove off on its last trip to Gibraltar. Quite elated at our success in getting into Spain so easily without detection, we were standing on the deck watching the lights across the bay. Suddenly I looked up, and there saw something that almost brought my heart between my teeth. For coming across the gang plank were five of our own officers! To attempt moving away just then, or going below would mean certain recognition. Luckily enough, George and I were standing in the shadow of one of the life-boats when the officers went by, without even glancing in our direction! But a young ensign, just recently commissioned, and once an enlisted man himself, recognized us! With a grin and a knowing wink, he followed his companions to the other side of the vessel. A huge sigh of relief came from both of us after those tense moments of suspense. But as "safety first" was our motto, we thought it wise to go below, and remained out of sight until we landed on the other side. It was not until all the passengers had gotten well away from the boat that we cautiously crept ashore and quickly made our way up the crowded streets and into the Sailor's Rest, where we soon were back in uniform again. At ten o'clock we were safely aboard our own ship, having successfully smuggled our civilian clothes over the gangway without any mishap. Nothing was ever said about our little escapade, and the ensign, being a "regular feller", kept it to himself. The following Saturday we again ventured forth across the border and this time took a fifteen mile hike around the bay through the most picturesque pastoral land imaginable. When we stopped to consider the

serious consequences—we might have been shot as spies or interned, had we been caught—both of us congratulated ourselves on our adventures, and jokingly considered entering the secret service.

* * * * *

In addition to the various gun-boats, armed yachts and destroyers of the American flotilla stationed at Gibraltar were six of our own Coast Guard cutters. These sturdy little ~~seaworthy~~ craft were better fitted for convoy duty than were the clumsier gun-boats, or the frail converted yachts. Counting the loss of the cutter Tampa, which was torpedoed in the Bristol channel with all hands lost, and the eight men from the cutter Seneca who perished in a heroic attempt to take a torpedoed ship to port, the Coast Guard suffered almost as heavy casualties as any section of the Army or Navy. This was because the total number of men who served overseas with the Coast Guard numbered about five hundred.

The man coming from a large battleship to a small converted yacht or a revenue cutter would find life on shipboard very different. The comfortable quarters and conveniences found on a larger ship are conspicuous by their absence, and he should consider himself lucky to be able to find a place to swing his hammock. The wartime crew of a ship of this type is just double the number of men usually carried in peace time, and naturally things were very crowded. However, in spite of all these discomforts, the most of us managed to keep well and happy. We realized that the boys in the trenches were having a much harder time of it than we. Fortunately we had no cooties, but cockroaches were a common pet, and a popular pastime was races between these sociable little insects. Sometimes they would be found in the soup or the coffee and the man who was unable to fish them out without a murmur, was not considered much of a seagoing sailor. As one of the boys remarked: "They give a flavor to the grub". Officers and men lived like a large family, and the strict discipline found on the larger ships was not so rigidly enforced. This does not mean that there were not certain rules and regulations to be carried out. What I wish to say is that the relations between officers and men were more genial and friendly. There were many times when an officer could have taken advantage of some regulation to get a man in trouble, but the majority of officers on the smaller ships were broadminded men who understood the crew and were in sympathy with them.

A friend of mine, an Annapolis graduate and now a junior lieutenant, was speaking to me on this very subject one night in England. He is on a destroyer where officers and men are in perfect harmony. Being once an enlisted man himself, he knew what he was talking about. "It's the results that we are after", he said, "my men are good, honest workers and when they get ashore it's natural that they should want to let off a little steam. If a man comes aboard about three sheets in the wind and keeps quiet, he is hustled up forward and nothing is said. Unless a man makes a nuisance of himself he isn't punished. No unnecessary court martials take place on board my ship."

During working hours the men did their tasks with willingness. If a man wanted to go below for five minutes for a smoke, it was all right. All took pride in the appearance of their vessel, and were always comparing their vessel with others.

"Gee! Look at that dirty old Limey cruiser over there", someone would say, "Say, I should think they'd be ashamed to live on that lousy old tub! Then look at our own ship, the neatest and best little packet in the harbor. Huh! I guess we got 'em all beat!"

There were always arguments as to the relative merits of the various ships, usually between Yankee and British seamen, and a man was only too ready to defend his vessel's good name with his fists. The debates usually ended in a free-for-all fight, which sometimes necessitated the interference of the Beach Patrol.

The following might have been heard on any small American vessel in Gibraltar during the war:

"Knock off, fellas, there goes mess-gear".

"Hey, Porky, what's your hurry, you aint hungry are you?"

Crowding around the Mess Deck ladder, they wait for the "Jimmy Legs", as the Master at Arms is called, to shout out the familiar words: "Come and get it". Then there ensues such a rush that would make a college football game look like a pink tea. The motto is: "The best man gets down first". The parents of these husky young sailors would perhaps have been shocked at their table manners, but a gob who has been working hard all day painting the stack, perhaps, would hardly pay much attention to the way he handles his knife and fork, just so he satisfies his healthy appetite.

Table talk was confined to such remarks as these:

"Hey Mack, slip me a hunk of punk!" (Bread.)

"Down on the spuds".

"Come on Swede, snap out of it and pass the red lead." (Catsup.)

"For the love of mike, Ham, rig in your booms." (Translation: "Keep your elbows out of my face.")

"Oh Stretch, I hear you like soup." Etc., etc.

At sea the days passed a great deal more swiftly than in port, because of the monotony of watches. The crew was divided into two watches, the port and the starboard, and there were continual discussions as to which one was the best for liberty and on leave. At sea, during our four hours off watch, we had to do our eating and sleeping, as well as washing ourselves and our clothes, and it was always a scramble to get through with the two latter in order that we might turn in our hammocks after the arduous hours on watch. The gun crews stood their watches ceaselessly pacing the deck by their pieces, ready at an instant's notice to train their weapons at the elusive periscope of a lurking sub. In the crow's nests as well as on the searchlight platforms, lookouts were stationed, and both day and night ten men at different places about the ship, each alert and wide awake, were searching the seas for a sign of the enemy. On our ship, as the Ocean Escort, rested the safety of the entire convoy, and thus every precaution was taken. When the Hun did appear, it was always at the most unexpected moments. Many times we had false alarms. Buoys and floating wreckage of all kinds at a distance of several thousand yards may easily be mistaken for the periscope or conning tower of a submarine.

Oftentimes the wake caused by the passage through the water of a whale or blackfish, was mistaken for the enemy. Especially at night was this true in the southern latitudes, for the phosphorescent trail made by a swift moving porpoise, differs very little from the streak of foam left by a German torpedo. Any object, no matter what it was, was always reported to the officer of the watch, on the bridge, whether it was a school of fish or a flock of curious sea-gulls hovering over some unseen thing in the water.

Sometimes a U-boat has been discovered by watching the movements of a flock of these birds, whose keen eyes had discovered the dark outlines of the craft beneath the surface face.

On many of our convoys from Gibraltar, we went right up the English Channel and into various ports along the eastern coast. When this was the case, our destination was Plymouth, and all hands were greatly pleased whenever we visited this place, for Plymouth is quite a lively town and affords many amusements and pleasures not to be found in the small, out-of-the-way Welsh village of Pembroke Dock. Moreover, we usually got a short leave in Plymouth, and a number of us went up to London and enjoyed viewing the sights of that historic old city.

On our return convoy to the Rock, we always steamed down the coast for several hours, and into the harbor at Falmouth. Here the convoy would form up as near the coast as possible. One evening about the middle of May, we were lying in Falmouth harbor, just weighing anchor preparatory to accompanying an out-bound convoy. There seemed to be something unusual about this one, however, as the officers were seen talking among themselves, and casting curious glances at a huge camouflaged British freighter which did not take formation, as did the other vessels, but remained apart. By this time we were well to sea, and I happened to be on watch at the wheel. By listening to the conversation of the officers, I learned that the ship was a "Dynamite vessel" and bound for Alexandria Egypt. She was loaded down to the gunwales with high explosive shells and T.N.T. For this very good reason, she kept to herself, although only about a half a mile from the rest of the ships. We all could'nt keep from thinking what would happen if she came in contact with a torpedo. "The answer's simple," said "Whale-O", the Irish fireman, "Just what happened to Halifax, only the hell of a lot worse." There were thirty large merchant vessels in that convoy, each laden to full capacity with valuable cargoes, some of them bound for Italy, and others destined for the British Expeditionary forces in Egypt and Mesopotamia. It was up to us to see the convoy safely to Gib, and especially the "Dynamite ship". After that we did'nt have to worry, it was someone's else funeral. That ship certainly did some fancy zig-zagging. Day and night she would never go more than several thousand yards ^{in one direction}, then turn and go off on another tack. It could not be truthfully said

that we were exactly comfortable during the seven days that we had that floating arsenal with us, and it was with a great sigh of relief that we sighted the familiar coast of Morocco, with Cape Spartel just visible above the horizon. Several hours later found us safe and sound in the harbor, with the gloomy mass of the old Rock looming above, while our explosive friend was securely moored alongside of the dock. It was afterwards learned that the "dynamite ship" had reached Egypt in safety, and supplied the much needed ammunition, for which the British Forces had waited so long.

* * * * *

Ever since our ship left New York harbor for overseas, I had kept a diary or as the gobs call it, a Log. From day to day I would jot down events of interest, and even now, with the war over so recently, I find it intensely interesting to recall many past occurrences. Friday, November 8th, 1918 is interesting to look over, because it leads up to the day that the armistice was signed, and tells where our ship was at the time this historic event took place:

At sea - - - North Atlantic - - - *November 8, 1918* 11/8/18.

"Three and a half days out from Gib and bound they say for Plymouth. The first day of our voyage was ideal, but the next ^{two} ~~is~~ were horrible, with a nor'easter raging. At one time yesterday afternoon, we plowed into a huge wave, just as it was breaking. With a crash that shook the whole ship, it surged over the fo'c'sle head, completely submerging the guns and the forward companionway. Luckily the gun crews had taken their stations on the bridge or they surely would have been washed overboard during the heavy weather. At dusk last night, the ships bound for the Americas shoved off, leaving but fifteen ships in the convoy. Today the sea is quite calm, the nor'easter subsiding as quickly as it came. A baby moon appeared for a short time in the western sky last night, but retired early. Myriads of stars shone with sharp blue-white luster, the changing colors of Ceres plainly seen. The different constellations also were clearly visible: the Scorpion, Dipper, Sickle, the Little Bear, and many others. Occasionally a meteor was observed flashing across the heavens only to disappear an instant later into infinite space."

"We are constantly receiving wireless news, telling of the great American offensive."

Germany has not long to wait before the end comes. The ~~old~~ Kaiser must feel rather annoyed to see his fond hopes for world power crushed, his army disorganized and routed, his colonies gone, and his seat on the throne of Prussia as the "All Highest", tottering precariously. The end is near, thank God. No submarine warnings (called by the wireless operators 'Aloes') have been received recently. The mutiny of the German sailors at Kiel offers an interesting opportunity for the Allied Fleet to end Germany's naval career. Too bad we couldn't get in it with our ship, but she wouldn't stand much shelling. If events move as rapidly as they have for the last few weeks, I shouldn't wonder if our ship would be home by Christmas. That is probably a foolish conjecture, but there's nothing like hoping!"

November 12, 1918

6 a.m. - - - North Atlantic. - - - 11/12/18.

"Oh Boy! Things are humming right along now! It hardly seems credible! I was dozing peacefully on the carpenter's bench, off watch, about one o'clock yesterday afternoon, when suddenly I was awakened by the sound of cheering, shouting and noise. Jumping up, I found the boys eagerly crowding around the wireless press that had just been posted. Germany has signed the armistice! ~~Both~~ ^{The} Kaiser and Crown Prince have abdicated; ~~not without many tears from the latter.~~ The war is over. Our hopes and ambitions and ideals have been realized. The Hun has been crushed. But most important of all: when are we going home? That's all anyone around this packet thinks about! Last night we received a wireless message from the Admiralty at Plymouth, saying that all ships could ^{turn on} ~~carry~~ their running lights, and if any U-boats were seen on the surface, they were not to be attacked. It ~~all~~ ^{The end} came so suddenly to ~~an~~ end, that it's hard to grasp all the wonderful news at once. The last ship to be torpedoed was the H.M.S. Britannia, in the Straits of Gibraltar. Most of the crew of the battleship were saved, but about fifty men were drowned. A few sinkings may ^{occur because some} still be effected by the U-boats which have not yet received news of the armistice."

* * * * *

The first of December found us back again in Gibraltar after coming down alone from Plymouth. Our work of guarding the convoys was over, and after the eleventh of November all ships proceeded to their destinations unaccompanied. ^{There were} ~~A great many wild rumors were~~

prevalent as to the ^{about} approximate date of our return to the United States. Many American ships left for home during the first half of the month, but still we remained fast to the dock, ~~with~~ officers and men impatient to be off. At last ~~our orders arrived~~ ^{and} ~~it was known that~~ ⁶ our ship was to form part of a large flotilla of American vessels which would accompany the submarine chasers back. These efficient little craft had been stationed all over the war-zone and had rendered effective service.

For December 21 my log reads:

9 "At last we are off! Everything has been made ready for sea, stores for fifty five days loaded aboard, and fuel and water tanks filled. Yesterday about eleven in the morning, the Admiral commanding Base Nine came aboard for a farewell inspection.

9 All hands were in dress blues, with the boatswain piping "attention", and sideboys at the gangway standing stiffly at salute, as the Admiral came up the ladder. His visit was brief, and shortly after he had sped away in his motor boat, a significant little ceremony took place. The chief quartermaster walked aft and hoisted a small, compact bundle to the main truck.

9 "All hands stood about eagerly watching. As it reached the top of the mast, he gave a quick jerk of the halyards, and behold, our Homeward Bound Pennant sprang proudly to the breeze! As it floated grandly astern, three mighty cheers rang out, for that pennant was the symbol of the home-coming to which we had looked forward so long.

9 "At six o'clock this morning, all hands were at work with unusual vigor. The starboard chain was unshackled from the buoy, and two mooring lines made fast, so that we might get away quickly and easily. All boats were hoisted and secured, as well as the boat booms. ⁹ On the poop, the towing lines for the sub chasers lay neatly flaked down. Our old ship actually seemed to strain at her moorings in eagerness to be off. ⁹ Promptly at eight o'clock, the boatswain's shrill pipe sent all men to their stations with the hoarse cry of: "All hands unmoor ship!" In a jiffy the two bow lines were run aft, clear of the buoy, and we were actually under weigh.

9 All the other ships ~~that made up~~ ⁱⁿ our flotille were proceeding slowly out of the

harbor, their long streamers floating lazily in the soft morning breeze. Cheer after cheer resounded from both British and American vessels lying in the harbor, as we steamed away for the last time. After ^{eighteen} ~~fifteen~~ months continuous service in the war zone, we were bound for home.

"For the last time we gazed up at the old Rock, shining brightly in the warm sunlight, where ~~we~~ ^{there} we had spent some happy hours, glad at the time to get ashore after many weary days at sea. Good-bye Gibraltar! Here's luck and long life to you!"

"About noon, when the flotilla had gotten well into the Straits, each ship took its allotted position, including the huge American tanker that was to supply the chasers with fuel all the way across. Three yachts brought up the rear, while the chasers ran between the columns."

* * LATER * *

"With our bows to the sunset, we steam steadily on to westward, over a calm and peaceful sea. HOME! Each turn of the propeller brings us nearer. Now the ships have turned on their running lights, and it seems as if old Broadway had suddenly appeared on the ocean. Behind us, the coasts of Spain and Morocco have sunk below the misty horizon line for the last time. Soon the familiar shores of America will rise out of the west to greet our hungry eyes."

(Finis.)