

Biltmore Oswald eBook

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Title: Biltmore Oswald The Diary of a Hapless Recruit

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BILTMORE OSWALD

THE DIARY OF A HAPLESS RECRUIT

BY

J. Thorne Smith, Jr.
U.S.N.R.F.

WITH 31 ILLUSTRATIONS IN BLACK-AND-WHITE

BY

Richard Dorgan
(*"Dick Dorgan"*)
U.S.N.R.F.

[Illustration]

NEW YORK

FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY



PUBLISHERS

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*Reprinted from
the broadside*

*A journal for
the Naval Reserve force*

DEDICATION

To my buddies, an unscrupulous, clamorous crew of pirates, as loyal and generous a lot as ever returned a borrowed dress jumper with dirty tapes; to numerous jimmy-legs and P.O.'s whose cantankerous tempers have furnished me with much material for this book; and also to a dog, an admirable dog whom I choose to call Mr. Fogerty, with apologies to this dog if in these pages his slave has unwittingly maligned his character or in any way cast suspicion upon his moral integrity.

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BILTMORE OSWALD



The Diary of A Hapless Recruit

Feb. 23d. "And what," asked the enlisting officer, regarding me as if I had insulted him, his family and his live stock, "leads you to believe that you are remotely qualified to join the Navy?"

At this I almost dropped my cane, which in the stress of my patriotic preoccupation I had forgotten to leave home.

"Nothing," I replied, making a hasty calculation of my numerous useless accomplishments, "nothing at all, sir, that is, nothing to speak of. Of course I've passed a couple of seasons at Bar Harbor—perhaps that—"

"Bar Harbor!" exploded the officer. "Bar! bah! bah—dammit," he broke off, "I'm bleating."

"Yes, sir," said I with becoming humility. His hostility increased.

"Do you enlist for foreign service?" he snapped.

"Sure," I replied. "It will all be foreign to me."

The long line of expectant recruits began to close in upon us until a thirsty, ingratiating semi-circle was formed around the officer's desk. Upon the multitude he glared bitterly.

"Orderly! why can't you keep this line in some sort of shape?"

"Yes, give the old tosh some air," breathed a worthy in my ear as he retreated to his proper place.

"What did you do at Bar Harbor?" asked the officer, fixing me with his gaze.



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“Oh,” I replied easily, “I occasionally yachted.”

“On what kind of a boat?” he urged.

“Now for the life of me, sir, I can’t quite recall,” I replied. “It was a splendid boat though, a perfect beauty, handsomely fitted up and all—I think they called her the ‘Black Wing.’”

These few little remarks seemed to leave the officer flat. He regarded me with a pitiful expression. There was pain in his eyes.

“You mean to say,” he whispered, “that you don’t know what kind of a boat it was?”

“Unfortunately no, sir,” I replied, feeling really sorry for the wounded man.

“Do you recall what was the nature of your activities aboard this mysterious craft?” he continued.

“Oh, indeed I do, sir,” I replied. “I tended the jib-sheet.”

“Ah,” said he thoughtfully, “sort of specialized on the jib-sheet?”

“That’s it, sir,” said I, feeling things taking a turn for the better. “I specialized on the jib-sheet.”

“What did you do to this jib-sheet?” he continued.

“I clewed it,” said I promptly, dimly recalling the impassioned instructions an enthusiastic friend of mine had shunted at me throughout the course of one long, hot, horrible, confused afternoon of the past summer—my first, and, as I had hoped at the time, final sailing experience.

The officer seemed to be lost in reflection. He was probably weighing my last answer. Then with a heavy sigh he took my paper and wrote something mysterious upon it.

“I’m going to make an experiment of you,” he said, holding the paper to me. “You are going to be a sort of a test case. You’re the worst applicant I have ever had. If the Navy can make a sailor out of you it can make a sailor out of anybody”; he paused for a moment, then added emphatically, “without exception.”

“Thank you, sir,” I replied humbly.

“Report here Monday for physical examination,” he continued, waving my thanks aside. “And now go away.”



[Illustration: “*Do you enlist for foreign service?*’ He snapped. ‘Sure,’ I replied, ‘it will all be foreign to me”]

I accordingly went, but as I did so I fancied I caught the reflection of a smile lurking guiltily under his mustache. It was the sort of a smile, I imagined at the time, that might flicker across the grim visage of a lion in the act of anticipating an approaching trip to a prosperous native village.

Feb. 25th. I never fully appreciated what a truly democratic nation the United States was until I beheld it naked, that is, until I beheld a number of her sons in that condition. Nakedness is the most democratic of all institutions. Knock-knees, warts and chilblains, bowlegs, boils and bay-windows are respecters of no caste or creed, but visit us all alike. These profound reflections came to me as I stood with a large gathering of my fellow creatures in the offices of the physical examiner.



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“Never have I seen a more unpromising candidate in all my past experience,” said the doctor moodily when I presented myself before him, and thereupon he proceeded to punch me in the ribs with a vigor that seemed to be more personal than professional. When thoroughly exhausted from this he gave up and led me to the eye charts, which I read with infinite ease through long practise in following the World Series in front of newspaper buildings.

“Eyes all right,” he said in a disappointed voice. “It must be your feet.”

These proved to be faultless, as were my ears and teeth.

“You baffle me,” said the doctor at last, thoroughly discouraged. “Apparently you are sound all over, yet, looking at you, I fail to see how it is possible.”

I wondered vaguely if he was paid by the rejection. Then for no particular reason he suddenly tired of me and left me with all my golden youth and glory standing unnoticed in a corner. From here I observed an applicant being put through his ear test. This game is played as follows: a hospital apprentice thrusts one finger into the victim’s ear while the doctor hurries down to the end of the room and whispers tragically words that the applicant must repeat. It’s a good game, but this fellow I was watching evidently didn’t know the rules and he was taking no chances.

“Now repeat what I say,” said the doctor.

“Now repeat what I say,” quoted the recruit.

“No, no, not now,” cried the doctor. “Wait till I whisper.”

“No, no, not now. Wait till I whisper,” answered the recruit, faithfully accurate.

“Wait till I whisper, you blockhead,” shouted the doctor.

“Wait till I whisper, you blockhead,” shouted the recruit with equal heat.

“Oh, God!” cried the doctor despairingly.

“Oh, God!” repeated the recruit in a mournful voice.

This little drama of cross purposes might have continued indefinitely had not the hospital apprentice begun to punch the guy in the ribs, shouting as he did so:

“Wait a minute, can’t you?”

At which the recruit, a great hulk of a fellow, delivered the hospital apprentice a resounding blow in the stomach and turned indignantly to the doctor.



“That man’s interfering,” he said in an injured voice. “Now that ain’t fair, is it, doc?”

“You pass,” said the doctor briefly, producing his handkerchief and mopping his brow.

“Well, what are you standing around for?” he said a moment later, spying me in my corner.

“Oh, doctor,” I cried, delighted, “I thought you had forgotten me.”

“No,” said the doctor, “I’ll never forget you. You pass. Take your papers and clear out.”

I can now feel with a certain degree of security that I am in the Navy.

Feb. 26th. I broke the news to mother to-day and she took it like a little gentleman, only crying on twelve different occasions. I had estimated it much higher than that.

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After dinner she read me a list of the things I was to take with me to camp, among which were several sorts of life preservers, an electric bed warmer and a pair of dancing pumps.

“Why not include spurs?” I asked, referring to the pumps. “I’d look very crisp in spurs, and they would help me in climbing the rigging.”

“But some officer might ask you to a dance,” protested mother.

“Mother,” I replied firmly, “I have decided to decline all social engagements during my first few weeks in camp. You can send the pumps when I write for them.”

A card came to-day ordering me to report on March 1st. Consequently I am not quite myself.

Feb. 27th. Mother hurried into my room this morning and started to pack my trunk. She had gotten five sweaters, three helmets and two dozen pairs of socks into it before I could stop her. When I explained to her that I wasn’t going to take a trunk she almost broke down.

“But at least,” she said, brightening up, “I can go along with you and see that you are nice and comfortable in your room.”

“You seem to think that I am going to some swell boarding school, mother,” I replied from the bed. “You see, we don’t have rooms to ourselves. I understand that we sleep in bays.”

“Don’t jest,” cried mother. “It’s too horrible!”

Then I explained to her that a bay was a compartment of a barracks in which eight human beings and one petty officer, not quite so human, were supposed to dwell in intimacy and, as far as possible, concord.

This distressed poor mother dreadfully. “But what are you going to take?” she cried.

“I’m going to take a nap,” said I, turning over on my pillow. “It will be the last one in a bed for a long, long time.”

At this mother stuffed a pair of socks in her mouth and left the room hastily.

Polly came in to-night and I kissed her on and off throughout the evening on the strength of my departure. This infuriated father, but mother thought it was very pretty. However, before going to bed he gave me a handsome wrist watch, and grandfather, pointing to his game leg, said:

“Remember the Mexican War, my boy. I fought and bled honorably in that war, by gad, sir!”

I know for a fact that the dear old gentleman has never been further west than the Mississippi River.

Feb. 28th (on the train). I have just gone through my suit-case and taken out some of mother’s last little gifts such as toilet water, a padded coat hanger, one hot water bottle, some cough syrup, two pairs of ear-bobs, a paper vest and a blue pokedotted silk muffler. She put them in when I wasn’t looking. I have hidden them under the seat. May the Lord forgive me for a faithless son.



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The departure was moist, but I managed to swim through. I am too excited to read the paper and too rattle-brained to think except in terrified snatches. I wonder if I look different. People seem to be regarding me sympathetically. I recognize two faces on this train. One belongs to Tony, the iceman on our block; the other belongs to one named Tim, a barkeep, if I recall rightly, in a hotel I have frequently graced with my presence. I hope their past friendship was not due to professional reasons. It would be nice to talk over old times with them in camp, for I have frequently met the one in the morning after coming home from the other.

[Illustration: "THE DEPARTURE WAS MOIST"]

March 1st. Subjected myself to the intimate scrutiny of another doctor this morning. I used my very best Turkish bath manners. They failed to impress him. Hospital apprentice treated me to a shot of Pelham "hop." It is taken in the customary manner, through the arm—very stimulating. A large sailor held me by the hand for fully fifteen minutes. Very embarrassing! He made pictures of my fingers and completely demolished my manicure. From there I passed on to another room. Here a number of men threw clothes at me from all directions. The man with the shoes was a splendid shot. I am now a sailor—at least, superficially. My trousers were built for Charlie Chaplin. I feel like a masquerade.

[Illustration: "HOSPITAL APPRENTICE TREATED ME TO A SHOT OF PELHAM 'HOP'"]

[Illustration: "I FEEL LIKE A MASQUERADE"]

A gang of recruits shouted "twenty-one days" at me as I was being led to Mess Hall No. 1. The poor simps had just come in the day before and had not even washed their leggings yet. I shall shout at other recruits to-morrow, though, the same thing that they shouted at me to-day.

Our P.O. is a very terrifying character. He is a stern but just man, I take it.

He can tie knots and box the compass and say "pipe down" and everything. Gee, it must be nice to be a real sailor!

[Illustration: "THIS, I THOUGHT, WAS ADDING INSULT TO INJURY"]

March 2d. Fell out of my hammock last night and momentarily interrupted the snoring contest holding sway. I was told to "pipe down" in Irish, Yiddish, Third Avenue and Bronx. This, I thought, was adding insult to injury, but could not make any one take the same view of it. I hope the thing does not become a habit with me. I form habits so readily. In connection with snoring I have written the following song which I am going to send home to Polly. I wrote it in the Y.M.C.A. Hut this afternoon while crouching

between the feet of two embattled checker players. I'm going to call it "The Rhyme of the Snoring Sailor." It goes like this:

I

The mother thinks of her sailor son
As clutched in the arms of war,
But mother should listen, as I have done,
To this same little, innocent sailor son
Sprawl in his hammock and snore.



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Oh, the sailor man is a rugged man,
The master of wind and wave,
And poets sing till the tea-rooms ring
Of his picturesque, deep sea grave,
And they likewise write of the "Storm at Night"
When the numerous north winds roar,
But more profound is the dismal sound
Of a sea-going sailor's snore.

II

Oh, mothers knit for their sailor sons
Socks for their nautical toes,
But mothers should list to the frightful noise
Made by their innocent sailor boys
By the wind they blow through their nose.

Oh, life at sea is wild and free
And greatly to be admired,
But I would sleep both sound and deep
At night when I'm feeling tired.

So here we go with a yo! ho! ho!
While the waves and the tempests soar,
An artist can paint a shrew as a saint,
But not camouflage on a snore.

III

Oh, mothers, write to your sons at sea;
Write to them, I implore,
A letter as earnest as it can be,
Containing a delicate, motherly plea,
A plea for them not to snore.

Oh, I take much pride in my trousers wide,
The ladies all think them sweet,
And I must admit that I love to sit
In a chair and relieve my feet.
Avast! Belay! and we're bound away
With our hearts lashed fast to the fore,
But when mermaids sleep
In their bowers deep,
Do you think that the sweet things snore?



Our company commander spoke to us this morning in no uncertain terms. He seems to be such a serious man. There is a peculiar quality in his voice, not unlike the tone of a French 75 mm. gun. You can easily hear everything he says—miles away. We rested this afternoon.

March 3d. Sunday—a day of rest, for which I gave, in the words of our indefatigable Chaplain, “three good, rollicking cheers.” Some folks are coming up to see me this afternoon. I hear I must moo through the fence at them like a cow. (Later.) The folks have just left. Mother kept screaming through the wire about my underwear. She seemed to have it on her brain. There were several young girls standing right next to her. I really felt I was no longer a bachelor. Why do mothers lay such tremendous stress on underwear? They seem to believe that a son’s sole duty to his parents consists in publicly announcing that he is clad in winter flannels.

[Illustration: “MOTHER KEPT SCREAMING THROUGH THE WIRE ABOUT MY UNDERWEAR”]

Polly drove up for a moment with Joe Henderson. I hope the draft gets hold of that bird. They were going to have tea at the Biltmore when they got back to the city. I almost bit the end off of a sentry’s bayonet when I heard this woeful piece of news. Liberty looks a long way off.

I made an attempt to write some letters in the Y.M.C.A. this evening but gave up before the combined assault of a phonograph, a piano, and a flanking detachment of checker players. Several benches fell on me and I went to the mat feeling very sorry for myself.

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March 4th. The morning broke badly. I lashed my hand to my hammock and was forced to call on the P.O. to extricate me. He remarked, with ill-disguised bitterness, that I could think of more ineffectual things to do than any rookie it had been his misfortune to meet. I told him that I didn't have to think of them, they just came naturally.

Last night I was nearly frightened out of my hammock by awakening and gazing into the malevolent eye of my high-powered, twin-six wrist watch. I thought for a moment that the Woolworth tower had crawled into bed with me. It gave me such a start. I must get used to my wrist watch—also wearing a handkerchief up my sleeve. I feel like the sweet kid himself now.

Drill all day. My belt fell off and tripped me up. Why do such things always happen to me? Somebody told us to do squads left and it looked as if we were playing Ring Around Rosie. Then we performed a fiendish and complicated little quadrille called a "company square." I found myself, much to my horror, on the inside of the contraption walking directly behind the company commander. It was a very delicate situation for a while. I walked on my tip-toes so that he wouldn't hear me. Had he looked around I know I'd have dropped my gun and lit out for home and mother.

Forgot to take my hat off in the mess room. I was reminded, though, by several hundred thoughtful people.

March 5th. Stood for half an hour in the mail line. Got one letter. A bill from a restaurant for eighteen dollars' worth of past luncheons. I haven't the heart to write more.

[Illustration: "A BILL FROM A RESTAURANT FOR \$18.00 WORTH OF PAST LUNCHEONS"]

March 6th. Bag inspection. I almost put my eye out at right hand salute. However, my bag looked very cute indeed, and although he didn't say anything, I feel sure the inspecting officer thought mine was the best. I had a beautiful embroidered handkerchief holder, prominently displayed, which I am sure must have knocked him cold. He missed the dirty white, but I will never be the same.

[Illustration: "HE MISSED THE DIRTY WHITES, BUT I WILL NEVER BE THE SAME"]

Fire drill! My hammock came unlashed right in front of a C.P.O. and he asked me if I was going to sleep in it on the spot. It was a very inspiring scene. Particularly thrilling was the picture I caught of a very heavy sailor picking on a poor innocent looking little fire extinguisher. He ran the thing right over my foot. I apologized, as usual. I discovered that I have been putting half instead of marlin hitches in my hammock, but not before the inspecting officer did. He seemed very upset about it. When he asked me why I only put six hitches in my hammock instead of seven, I replied that my rope



was short. His reply still burns in my memory. What eloquence! What earnestness!
What a day!

[Illustration: "FIRE DRILL"]

March 7th. Second jab to-morrow. I am too nervous to write to-day. More anon.



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March 16th. Life in the Navy is just one round of engagements to keep. Simply splendid! All we have to do is to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning when it is nice and dark and play around with the cutest little hammock imaginable. When you have arrived at the most interesting part of this game, the four hitch period, and you are wondering whether you are going to beat your previous record and get six instead of five, the bugle blows and immediately throws you into a state of great indecision. The problem is whether to finish the hammock and be reported late for muster or to attend muster and be reported for not having finished your hammock. The time spent in considering this problem usually results in your trying to do both and in failing to accomplish either, getting reported on two counts. Any enlisted man is entitled to play this game and he is sure of making a score. After running around innumerable miles of early morning camp scenery and losing several buttons from your new trousers, you come back and do Greek dances for a man who aspires to become a second Mordkin or a Mr. Isadora Duncan. This is all very sweet and I am sure the boys play prettily together. First he dances, then we dance; then he interprets a bird and we all flutter back at him. This being done to his apparent satisfaction, we proceed to crawl and grind and weave and wave in a most extraordinary manner. This is designed to give us physical poise to enable us to go aloft in a graceful and pleasing manner. After this dancing in the dew you return for a few more rounds with your hammock, clean up your bay and stand in line for breakfast. After breakfast we muster again and a gentleman talks to us in a voice that would lead you to believe that he thought we were all in hiding somewhere in New Rochelle. Then there are any number of things to do to divert our minds—scrub hammocks, pick up cigarettes, drill, hike and attend lectures. As a rule we do all of these things. From 5 p.m. until 8:45 p.m. if we are unfortunate enough not to have a lecture party we are free to give ourselves over to the riotous joy of the moment, which consists of listening to a phonograph swear bitterly at a piano long past its prime. The final act of the drama of the day is performed on the hammock—an animated little sketch of arms and legs conducted along the lines of Houdini getting into a strait-jacket, or does he get out of them? I don't know, perhaps both. Anyway, you get what I mean.

[Illustration: "THIS IS DESIGNED TO GIVE US PHYSICAL POISE"]

March 17th. This spring weather is bringing the birds out in great quantities. They bloomed along the fence today like a Ziegfeld chorus on an outing. One girl carried on a coherent conversation with six different fellows at once and left each of them feeling that he alone had been singled out for her particular favor. As a matter of fact I was flirting with her all the time and I could tell by

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the very way she looked that she would have much rather been talking to me. Last week I had to convince mother that I was wearing my flannels; this week I had to convince her I still had them on. The only way to satisfy her, I suppose, is to appear before her publicly in them. Poor, dear mother, she told me she had written the doctor up here asking him not to squirt my arm full of those horrid little germs any more. She said I came from a good, clean family, and had been bathed once a week all my life, except the time when I had the measles and then it wasn't advisable. I am sure this must have cheered the doctor up tremendously. She also asked him to be sure to see that I got my meals regularly. I can see him now taking me by the hand and leading me to the mess-hall. When I suggested to mother that she write President Wilson asking him to be sure to see that my blankets didn't fall off at night, she said that I was a sarcastic, ungrateful boy.

March 18th. There is something decidedly wrong with me as a sailor. I got my pictures to-day. Try as I may, I am unable to locate the trouble. There seems to be some item left out. Not enough salt in the mixture, perhaps. I don't know exactly what it is but I seem to be a little too, may I say, handsome or, perhaps, polished would be the better word. I'm afraid to send the pictures away because no one will believe them. They will think I borrowed the clothes.

March 19th. A funny thing happened last Sunday that I forgot to record. A girl had her foot on the fence and when she took it down every one yelled, "As you were." Sailors have such a delicate sense of humor. Well, that's about enough for to-day.

March 20th. We had a lecture on boats to-day. The only thing I don't know now is how to tell a bilge from a painter. The oar was easy. It is divided into three parts, the stem, the lead and the muzzle. I must remember this, it is very important. The men are getting so used to inoculations around here that they complain when they don't get enough. We're shaping up into a fine body of men, our company commander told us this morning, and added, that if we continue to pick up cigarette butts several more weeks we'll be able to stack arms without dropping our guns. Eli, the goat, seems unwell to-day. I attribute his unfortunate condition to his constant and unrelenting efforts to keep the canteen clear of paper. It is my belief that goats are not healthy because of the fact that they eat paper, but in spite of it, and I feel sure that if all goats got together and decided to cut out paper for a while and live on a regular diet, they would be a much more robust race. The movies were great to-night. I saw Sidney Drew's left ear and a mole on the neck of the man in front of me.



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March 21st. A fellow in our bay asked last night how much an admiral's pay was a month and when we told him he yawned, turned over on his side and said, "Not enough." He added that he could pick up that much at a first-class parade any time. We all tightened our wrist watches. Been blinking at the blinker all evening. Can't make much sense out of it. The bloomin' thing is always two blinks ahead of me. It's all very nice, I dare say, but I'd much rather get my messages on scented paper. I got one to-day. She called me her "Great, big, cute little sailor boy." Those were her exact words. How clever she is. I'm going to marry her just as soon as I'm a junior lieutenant. She'll wait a year, anyway.

March 22d. I made up verses to myself in my hammock last night. Perhaps I'll send some of them to the camp paper. It would be nice to see your stuff in print. Here's one of the poems:

THE UNREGENERATE SAILOR MAN

I

I take my booze
In my overshoes;
I'm fond of the taste of rubber;
I oil my hair
With the grease of bear
Or else with a bull whale's blubber.

II

My dusky wife
Was a source of strife,
So I left her in Singapore
And sailed away
At the break of day—
Since then I have widowed four.

III

Avast! Belay,
And alack-a-day
That I gazed in the eyes of beauty.
For in devious ways
Their innocent gaze
Has caused me much extra duty.

IV



I never get past
The jolly old mast,
The skipper and I are quite chummy;
He knows me by sight
When I'm sober or tight
And calls me a "wicked old rummy."

A sort of sweetheart-in-every-port type I intend to make him—a seafaring man of the old school such as I suppose some of the six-stripers around here were. I don't imagine it was very difficult to get a good conduct record in the old days, because from all the tales I've heard from this source and that, a sailor-man who did not too openly boast of being a bigamist and who limited his homicidal inclinations to half a dozen foreigners when on shore leave, was considered a highly respectable character. Perhaps this is not at all true and I for one can hardly believe it when I look at the virtuous and impeccable exteriors of the few remaining representatives with whom I have come in contact. However, any one has my permission to ask them if it is true or not, should they care to find out for themselves. I refuse to be held responsible though. I think I shall send this poem to the paper soon.

It must be wonderful to get your poems in print. All my friends would be so proud to know me. I wonder if the editors are well disposed, God-fearing men.

[Illustration: "LIBERTY PARTY"]

From all I hear they must be a hard lot. Probably they'll be nice to me because of my connections. I know so many bartenders. Next week I rate liberty! Ah, little book, I wonder what these pages will contain when I come back. I hate to think. New York, you know, is such an interesting place.



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March 25th. Man! Man! How I suffer! I'm so weary I could sleep on my company commander's breast, and to bring oneself to that one must be considerably fatigued, so to speak. Who invented liberty, anyway? It's a greatly over-rated pastime as far as I can make out, consisting of coming and going with the middle part omitted.

One man whispered to me at muster this morning that all he could remember of his liberty was checking out and checking in. He looked unwell. My old pal, "Spike" Kelly, I hear was also out of luck. His girl was the skipper of a Fourteenth Street crosstown car, so he was forced to spend most of his time riding, between the two rivers. He nicked himself to death in doing it. He said if Mr. Shonts plays golf, as no doubt he does, he has "Spike" Kelly to thank for a nice, new box of golf balls. And while on the subject, "Spike" observes that one of those engaging car signs should read:

"Is it Gallantry, or the Advent of Woman Suffrage, or the Presence of the Conductorette that Causes So Many Sailors to Wear Out Their Seats Riding Back and Forth, and So Many Unnecessary Fares to Be Rung Up in So Doing?"

His conversation with "Mame," his light-o'-love, was conducted along this line:

"Say, Mame."

"Yes, George, dear (fare, please, madam). What does tweetums want?"

"You look swell in your new uniform."

"Oh, Georgie, do you think it fits? (Yes, madam, positively, the car was brushed this morning, your baby will be perfectly safe inside.)"

"Mame."

"George! (Step forward, please.) Go on, dear."

"Mame, it's doggon hard to talk to you here." "Isn't it just! (What is it lady? Cabbage? Oh, baggage! No, no, you can't check baggage here; this isn't a regular train.) George, stop holding my hand! I can't make change!"

"Aw, Mame, who do you love?"

"Why, tweetums, I love—(plenty of room up forward! Don't jam up the door) you, of course. (Fare, please! Fare, please! Have your change ready!)"

"Can't we get a moment alone, Mame?"

"Yes, dear; wait until twelve-thirty, and we'll drive to the car barn then. (Transfers! Transfers!)"

“Spike” says that his liberty was his first actual touch with the horrors of war.

Another bird that lived in some remote corner of New York State told me in pitiful tones that all he had time to do was to walk down the street of his home town, shake hands with the Postmaster, lean over the fence and kiss his girl (it had to go two ways, Hello and Good-by), take a package of clean underwear from his mother as he passed by and catch the outbound train on the dead run. All he could do was to wave to the seven other inhabitants. He thought the Grand Central Terminal was a swell dump, though. He said: “There was quite a lot of it,” which is true.



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As for myself, I think it best to pass lightly over most of the incidents of my own personal liberty. The best part of a diary is that one can show up one's friends to the exclusion of oneself. Anyway, why put down the happenings of the past forty-three hours? They are indelibly stamped on my memory. One sight I vividly recall, "Ardy" Muggins, the multi-son of Muggins who makes the automatic clothes wranglers. He was sitting in a full-blooded roadster in front of the Biltmore, and the dear boy was dressed this wise ("Ardy" is a sailor, too, I forgot to mention): There was a white hat on his head; covering and completely obliterating his liberty blues was a huge bearskin coat, which when pulled up disclosed his leggins neatly strapped over patent leather dancing pumps. It was an astounding sight. One that filled me with profound emotion.

"Aren't you a trifle out of uniform, Ardy?" I asked him. One has to be so delicate with Ardy, he's that sensitive. "Why, I thought I might as well embellish myself a bit," says Ardy.

"You've done all of that," says I, "but for heaven's sake, dear, do keep away from Fourteenth Street; there are numerous sea-going sailors down there who might embellish you still further."

"My God!" cries Ardy, striving to crush the wind out of the horn, "I never slum."

"Don't," says I, passing inside to shake hands with several of my friends behind the mahogany. Shake hands, alas, was all I did.

March 26th. I must speak about the examinations before I forget it. What a clubby time we had of it. I got in a trifle wrong at the start on account of my sociable nature. You know, I thought it was a sort of a farewell reception given by the officers and the C.P.O.'s to the men departing after their twenty-one days in Probation, so the first thing I did when I went in was to shake hands with an Ensign, who I thought was receiving. He got rid of my hand with the same briskness that one removes a live coal from one's person. The whole proceeding struck me as being a sort of charity bazaar. People were wandering around from booth to booth, in a pleasant sociable manner, passing a word here and sitting down there in the easiest-going way imaginable. Leaving the Ensign rather abruptly, I attached myself to the throng and started in search of ice cream and cake. This brought me up at a table where there was a very pleasant looking C.P.O. holding sway, and with him I thought I would hold a few words. What was my horror on hearing him snap out in a very crusty manner:

"How often do you change your socks?"

This is a question I allow no man to ask me. It is particularly objectionable. "Why, sir," I replied, "don't you think you are slightly overstepping the bounds of good taste? One does not even jest about such totally personal matters, ye know." Then rising, I was

about to walk away without even waiting for his reply, but he called me back and handed me my paper, on which he had written “Impossible” and underlined it.



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The next booth I visited seemed to be a little more hospitable, so I sat down with the rest of the fellows and prepared to talk of the events of the past twenty-one days.

“How many Articles are there?” suddenly asked a C.P.O. who hitherto had escaped my attention.

“Twelve,” I replied promptly, thinking I might just as well play the game, too.

“What are they based on?” he almost hissed, but not quite.

“The Constitution of these United States,” I cried in a loud, public-spirited voice, at which the C.P.O. choked and turned dangerously red. It seems that not only was I not quite right, but that I couldn’t have been more wrong.

“Go,” he gasped, “before I do you some injury.” A very peculiar man, I thought, but, nevertheless, his heart seemed so set on my going that I thought it would be best for us to part.

“I am sure I do not wish to force myself upon you,” I said icily as I left. The poor man appeared to be on the verge of having a fit.

“Do you want to tie some knots?” asked a kind-voiced P.O. at the next booth.

“Crazy about it,” says I, easy like.

“Then tie some,” says he. So I tied a very pretty little knot I had learned at the kindergarten some years ago and showed it to him.

“What’s that?” says he.

“That,” replies I coyly. “Why, that is simply a True Lover’s knot. Do you like it?”

“Orderly,” he screamed. “Orderly, remove this.” And hands were laid upon me and I was hurled into the arms of a small, but ever so sea-going appearing chap, who was engaged in balancing his hat on the bridge of his nose and wig-wagging at the same time. After beating me over the head several times with the flags, he said I could play with him, and he began to send me messages with lightning-like rapidity. “What is it?” he asked.

“Really,” I replied, “I lost interest in your message before you finished.”

After this my paper looked like a million dollars with the one knocked off.

“What’s a hackamatack?” asked the next guy. Thinking he was either kidding me or given to using baby talk, I replied:



“Why, it’s a mixture between a thingamabob and a nibleck.”

His treatment of me after this answer so unnerved me that I dropped my gun at the next booth and became completely demoralized. The greatest disappointment awaited me at “Monkey Drill,” or setting up exercises, however. I thought I was going to kill this. I felt sure I was going to outstrip all competitors. But in the middle of it all the examiner yelled out in one of those sarcastic voices that all rookies learn to fear: “Are you trying to flirt with me or do you think you’re a bloomin’ angel?”

This so sickened me at heart that I left the place without further ado, whatever that might be. Pink teas in the Navy are not unmixed virtues.

March 27th. My birthday, and, oh, how I do miss my cake. It’s the first birthday I ever had without a cake except two and then I had a bottle. Oh, how well I remember my last party (birthday party)!



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There was father and the cake all lit up in the center of the table; I mean the cake, not father, of course. And there was Gladys (I always called her "Glad"). She'd been coming to my birthday parties for years and years. She always came first and left last and ate the most and got the sickest of all the girls I knew. It was appalling how that girl could eat.

But, as I was saying, there was father and the cake, and there was mother and "Glad" and all the little candles were twinkling, lighting up my presents clustered around, among them being half a dozen maroon silk socks, a box of striped neck ties, all perfect joys; spats, a lounging gown, ever so many gloves and the snappiest little cane in all the world. And what have I around me now? A swab on one side, a bucket on the other, a broom draped over my shoulder, C.P.O.'s in front of me, P.O.'s behind me and work all around me—oh, what a helluvabirthday! I told my company commander last night that the next day was going to be my birthday, hoping he would do the handsome thing and let me sleep a little later in the morning, but did he? No, the Brute, he said I should get up earlier so as to enjoy it longer. As far as I can find out, the Camp remains totally unmoved by the fact that I am one year older to-day—and what a hubbub they used to raise at home. I think the very least they could do up here would be to ask me to eat with the officers.

March 28th. These new barracks over in the main camp are too large; not nearly so nice as our cosy little bays. I'm really homesick for Probation and the sound of our old company commander's dulcet voice. I met Eli on the street to-day and I almost broke down on his neck and cried. He was the first familiar thing I had seen since I came over to the main camp.

March 29th. This place is just like the Probation Camp, only more so. Life is one continual lecture trimmed with drills and hikes—oh, when will I ever be an Ensign, with a cute little Submarine Chaser all my own?

April 6th. The events of the past few days have so unnerved me that I have fallen behind in my diary. I must try to catch up, for what would posterity do should the record of my inspiring career in the service not be faithfully recorded for them to read with reverence and amazement in days to come?

One of the unfortunate events arose from scraping a too intimate acquaintance with that horrid old push ball. How did it ever get into camp anyway, and who ever heard of a ball being so large? It doesn't seem somehow right to me—out of taste, if you get what I mean. There is a certain lack of restraint and conservatism about it which all games played among gentlemen most positively should possess. But the chap who pushed that great big beast of a push ball violently upon my unsuspecting nose was certainly no gentleman. Golly, what a resounding whack! This fellow (I suspect him of being a German spy, basing my suspicions upon his seeming disposition for atrocities) was

standing by, looking morosely at this small size planet when I blows gently up and says playfully in my most engaging voice:



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"I say, old dear, you push it to me and I'll push it to you—softly, though, chappy, softly." And with that he flung himself upon the ball and hurled it full upon my nose, completely demolishing it. Now I have always been a little partial to my nose. My eyes, I'll admit, are not quite as soulful as those liquid orbs of Francis X. Bushman's, but my nose has been frequently admired and envied in the best drawing rooms in New York. But it won't be envied any more, I fear—pitied rather.

Of course I played the game no more. I was nauseated by pain and the sight of blood. My would-be assassin was actually forced to sit down, he was so weak from brutal laughter. I wonder if I can ever be an Ensign with a nose like this?

[Illustration: "OF COURSE I PLAYED THE GAME NO MORE"]

April 7th. On the way back from a little outing the other day my companion, Tim, who in civil life had been a barkeeper and a good one at that, ingratiated himself in the good graces of a passing automobile party and we consequently were asked in. There were two girls, sisters, I fancy, and a father and mother aboard.

"And where do you come from, young gentlemen?" asked the old man.

"Me pal comes from San Diego," pipes up my unscrupulous friend, "and my home town is San Francisco."

I knew for a fact that he had never been farther from home than the Polo Grounds, and as for me I had only the sketchiest idea of where my home town was supposed to be.

"Ah, Westerners!" exclaimed the old lady. "I come from the West myself. My family goes back there every year."

"Yes," chimed in the girls, "we just love San Diego!"

"In what section of the town did you live?" asked the gentleman, and my friend whom I was inwardly cursing, seeing my perplexity, quickly put in for me:

"Oh, you would never know it, sir," and then lowering his voice in a confidential way, he added, "he kept a barroom in the Mexican part of the town."

"A barroom!" exclaimed the old lady. "Fancy that!" She looked at me with great, innocent interest.

"Yes," continued this lost soul, "my father, who is a State senator, sent him to boarding school and tried to do everything for him, but he drifted back into the old life just as soon as he could. It gets a hold on them, you know."

"Yes, I know," said the old lady, sadly, "my cook had a son that went the same way."



“He isn’t really vicious, though,” added my false friend with feigned loyalty—“merely reckless.”

“Well, my poor boy,” put in the old gentleman with cheery consideration, “I am sure you must find that navy life does you a world of good—regular hours, temperate living and all that.”

“Right you are, sport,” says I bitterly, assuming my enforced role, “I haven’t slit a Greaser’s throat since I enlisted.”

“We must all make sacrifices these days,” sighed the old lady.



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“And perhaps you will be able to exercise your—er—er rather robust inclinations on the Germans when you meet them on the high seas,” remarked the old man, who evidently thought to comfort me.

“If I can only keep him out of the brig,” said this low-down friend of mine, “I think they might make a first-rate mess hand out of him,” at which remark both of the girls, who up to this moment had been studying me silently, exploded into loud peals of mirth and then I knew where I had met them before—at Kitty Van Tassel’s coming out party, and I distinctly recalled having spilled some punch on the prettier one’s white satin slipper.

“We get out here,” I said, hoarsely, choking with rage.

“But!” exclaimed the old lady, “it’s the loneliest part of the road.”

“However that may be,” I replied with fine firmness, “I must nevertheless alight here. I have a great many things to do before I return to camp and lonely roads are well suited to my purposes. My homicidal leanings are completely over-powering me.”

“Watch him closely,” said the old lady to my companion, as the car came to a stop.

“He will have to,” I replied grimly, as I prepared to alight.

“Perhaps Mr. Oswald will mix us a cocktail some day,” said one of the sisters, leaning over the side of the car. “I have heard that he supported many bars at one time, but I never knew he really owned one.”

“What,” I heard the old lady exclaiming as the car pulled away, “he really isn’t a bartender at all—well, fancy that!”

There were a couple of pairs of rather dusty liberty blues in camp that night.

April 8th. Yesterday mother paid a visit to camp and insisted upon me breaking out my hammock in order for her to see if I had covers enough.

“I can never permit you to sleep in that, my dear,” she said after pounding and prodding it for a few numbers; “never—and I am sure the Commander will agree with me after I have explained to him how delicate you have always been.”

Later in the afternoon she became a trifle mollified when I told her that the master-at-arms came around every night and distributed extra blankets to every one that felt cold. “Be sure to see that he gives you enough coverings,” she said severely, “or else put him on report,” which I faithfully promised to do.

She was greatly delighted with the Y.M.C.A. and the Hostess Committee. Here I stood her up for several bricks of ice cream and a large quantity of cake. My fourth attempt



she refused, however, saying by way of explanation to a very pretty girl standing by, “It wouldn’t be good for him, my dear; my son has always had such a weak stomach. The least little thing upsets him.”

[Illustration: “SHE WAS GREATLY DELIGHTED WITH THE Y.M.C.A.”]

“I believe you,” replied the young lady, sympathetically, as she gazed at me. I certainly looked upset at the moment. This was worse than the underwear.



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“So that’s an Ensign!” she exclaimed later in an obviously disappointed tone of voice; “well, I’m not so sure that I want you to become one now.” The passing ensign couldn’t help but hear her, as she had practically screamed in his ear. He turned and studied my face carefully. I think he was making sure that he could remember it.

“Now take me to your physician,” commanded mother, resolutely. “I want to be sure that he sees that you take your spring tonic regularly.”

“Mother,” I pleaded, “don’t you think it is time you were going? I have a private lesson in sale embroidery in ten minutes that I wouldn’t miss for the world—the sweetest man teaches it!”

“Well, under the circumstances I won’t keep you,” said mother, “but I’ll write to the doctor just the same.”

“Yes, do,” I urged, “send it care of me so that he’ll be sure to get it.”

Mother is not a restful creature in camp.

April 9th. “Say, there, you with the nose,” cried my P.O. company commander to-day, “are you with us or are you playing a little game of your own?”

I wasn’t so very wrong—just the slight difference between port and present arms.

“With you, heart and soul,” I replied, hoping to make a favorable impression by a smart retort.

“That don’t work in the manual,” he replied; “use your brain and ears.”

Unnecessarily rough he was, but I don’t know but what he wasn’t right.

[Illustration: “I WASN’T SO VERY WRONG—JUST THE SLIGHT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PORT AND PRESENT ARMS”]

April 10th. I hear that I am going to be put on the mess crew. God pity me, poor wretch! How shall I ever keep my hands from becoming red? What a terrible war it is!

April 11th. Saw a basket ball game the other night. Never knew it was so rough. I used to play it with the girls and we had such sport. There seemed to be some reason for it then. There are a couple of queer looking brothers on our team who seem to try utterly to demolish their opponents. They remind me of a couple of tough gentlemen from Scranton I heard about in a story once.

April 12th. The price of fags (gee! I’m getting rough) has gone up again. This war is rapidly cramping my style.



April 14th. I have been too sick at heart to write up my diary—Eli is dead! “Pop,” the Jimmy-legs, found the body and has been promoted to Chief Master-at-arms. It’s an ill wind that blows no good. I don’t know whether it was because he found Eli or because he runs one of the most modernly managed mess halls in camp or because his working parties are always well attended that “Pop” received his appointment, but whatever it was it does my heart good to see a real seagoing old salt, one of our few remaining ex-apprentice boys, receive recognition that is so well merited. However, I was on much more intimate terms with Eli when I was over in Probation Camp than I was with “Pop.”

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He almost had me in his clutches once for late hammocks, me and eight other poor victims I had led into the trouble, and he had our wheelbarrows all picked out for us, and a nice large pile of sand for us to play with when fate interceded in our behalf. The poor man nearly cried out of sheer anguish of soul, and I can't justly blame him. It's hard lines to have a nice fat extra duty party go dead on your hands.

But with Eli it was different. When I was a homeless rookie he took me in and I fed him—cigarette butts—and I'll honestly say that he showed more genuine appreciation than many a flapper I have plied with costly viands. He was a good goat, Eli. Not a refined goat, to be sure, but a good, honest, whole-souled goat just the same. He did his share in policing the grounds, never shirked a cigar end or a bit of paper and amused many a mess gear line. He was loyal to his friends, tolerant with new recruits and a credit to the service in general. Considering the environment in which he lived, I think he deported himself with much dignity and moderation. I for one shall miss Eli. Some of the happier memories of my rookie days die with him. He is survived by numerous dogs.

April 25th. Yesterday I wandered around Probation Camp in a very patronizing manner and finally stopped to shed a tear on the humble grave of Eli.

"Poor sinful goat," I thought sadly, "here you lie at last in your final resting place, but your phantom, I wonder, does it go coursing madly down the Milky Way, butting the stars aside with its battle-scarred head and sending swift gleams of light through the heavens as its hoofs strike against an upturned planet? Your horns, are they tipped with fire and your beard gloriously aflame, or has the great evil spirit of Wayward Goats descended upon you and borne you away to a place where there is never anything to butt save unsatisfactorily yielding walls of padded cotton? Many changes have taken place, Eli, since you were with us, much adversity has befallen me, but the world in the large is very much the same. Bill and Mike have been shipped to sea and strange enough to say, old Spike Kelly has made the Quartermasters School. I alone of all the gang remain unspoken for—nobody seems anxious to avail themselves of my services. My tapes are dirtier and my white hat grows less "sea-going" every day and even you, Eli, are being forgotten. The company commander still carols sweetly in the morning about "barrackses" and fire "distinguishers," rookies still continue to rook about the camp in their timid, mild-eyed way, while week-old sailors with unwashed leggins delight their simple souls with cries of 'twenty-one days.' New goats have sprung up to take your place in the life of the camp and belittle your past achievements, but to me, O unregenerate goat, you shall ever remain a refreshing memory. Good butting, O excellent ruminant, wherever thou should chance to be. I salute you."



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This soliloquy brought me to the verge of an emotional break-down. I departed the spot in silence. On my way back through Probation I chanced upon a group of rookies studying for their examinations and was surprised to remember how much I had contrived to forget. Nevertheless I stopped one of the students and asked him what a “hakamaback” was and found to my relief that he didn’t know.

“Back to your manual,” said I gloomily, “I fear you will never be a sailor.”

Having thus made heavy the heart of another, I continued on my way feeling somehow greatly cheered only to find upon entering my barracks that my blankets were in the lucky bag. How did I ever forget to place them in my hammock? It was a natural omission though, I fancy, for the master-at-arms so terrifies me in the morning with his great shouts of “Hit the deck, sailor! Shake a leg—rise an’ shine” that I am unnerved for the remainder of the day.

April 29th. Life seems to be composed of just one parade after another. I am weary of the plaudits and acclamation of the multitude and long for some sequestered spot on a mountain peak in Thibet. Every time I see a street I instinctively start to walk down the middle of it. Last week I was one of the many thousands of Pelham men who marched along Fifth Avenue in the Liberty Loan parade. I thought I was doing particularly well and would have made a perfect score if one of my leggins hadn’t come off right in front of the reviewing stand much to the annoyance of the guy behind me because he tripped on it and almost dropped his gun. For the remainder of the parade I was subjected to a running fire of abuse that fairly made my flesh crawl.

At the end of the march I ran into a rather nebulous, middle-aged sort of a gentleman soldier who was sitting on the curb looking moodily at a manhole as if he would like to jump in it.

“Hello, stranger,” says I in a blustery, seafaring voice, “you look as if you’d been cursed at about as much as I have. What sort of an outfit do you belong to?”

He scrutinized one of his buttons with great care and then told me all about himself.

“I’m a home guard, you know,” he added bitterly, “all we do is to escort people. I’ve escorted the Blue Devils, the Poilus, the Australians, mothers of enlisted men, mothers of men who would have enlisted if they could, Boy Scouts and loan workers until my dogs are jolly well near broken down on me. Golly, I wish I was young enough to enjoy a quiet night’s sleep in the trenches for a change.”

Later I saw him gloomily surveying the world from the window of a passing cab. He was evidently through for the time being at least.



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April 30th. I took my bar-keeping pal home over the last week-end liberty. It was a mistake. He admits it himself. Mother will never have him in the house again. Mother could never get him in the house again. He fears her. The first thing he did was to mix poor dear grandfather a drink that caused the old gentleman to forget his game leg which had been damaged in battles, ranging anywhere from the Mexican to the Spanish wars, according to grandfather's mood at the time he is telling the story, but which I believe, according to a private theory of mine, was really caught in a folding bed. However it was, grandfather forgot all about this leg of his entirely and insisted on dancing with Nora, our new maid. Mother, of course, was horrified. But not content with that, this friend of mine concocted some strange beverage for the pater which so delighted him that he loaned my so-called pal the ten spot I had been intending to borrow. The three of them sat up until all hours of the night playing cards and telling ribald stories. As mother took me upstairs to bed she gazed down on her father-in-law and her husband in the clutches of this demon and remarked bitterly to me:

"Like father, like son," and I knew that she was thoroughly determined to make both of them pay dearly for their pleasant interlude. Breakfast the next morning was a rather trying ordeal. Grandfather once more resorted to his game leg with renewed vigor, referring several times to the defense of the Alamo, so I knew he was pretty low in his mind. Father withdrew at the sight of bacon. Mother laughed scornfully as he departed. My friend ate a hearty breakfast and kept a sort of a happy-go-lucky monologue throughout its entire course. I took him out walking afterward and forgot to bring him back.

[Illustration: "THE FIRST THING HE DID WAS TO MIX POOR DEAR GRANDFATHER A DRINK"]

April 31st. Have just come off guard duty and feel quite exhausted. The guns are altogether too heavy. I can think of about five different things I could remove from them without greatly decreasing their utility. The first would be the barrel. The artist who drew the picture in the last camp paper of Dawn appearing in the form of a beautiful woman must have had more luck than I have ever had. I think he would have been closer to the truth if he had put her in a speeding automobile on its way home from a road house. It surely is a proof of discipline to hear the mocking, silver-toned laughter of women ring out in the night only ten feet away and not drop your gun and follow it right through the barbed wire. After the war, I am going to buy lots of barbed wire and cut it up into little bits just to relieve my feelings.

Last night I had the fright of my life. Some one was fooling around the fence in the darkness.

"Who's there?" I cried.

"Why, I'm Kaiser William," came the answer in a subdued voice.



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"Well, I wish you'd go away, Kaiser William," said I nervously, "you're busting the lights out of rule number six."

"What's that?" asks the voice.

"Not to commit a nuisance with any one except in a military manner," I replied, becoming slightly involved.

"That's not such a wonderful rule," came back the voice in complaining tones. "I could make up a rule better than that."

"Don't try to to-night," I pleaded.

There was silence for a moment, then the voice continued seriously, "Say, I'm not Kaiser William really. Honest I'm not."

"Well, who are you?" I asked impatiently.

"Why, I'm Tucks," the voice replied. "Folks call me that because I take so many of them in my trousers."

"Well, Tucks," I replied, "you'd better be moving on. I don't know what might happen with this gun. I'm tempted to shoot the cartridge out of it just to make it lighter."

"Oh, you can't shoot me," cried Tucks, "I'm crazy. I bet you didn't know that, did you?"

"I wasn't sure," I answered.

"Oh, I'm awfully crazy," continued Tucks, "everybody says so, and I look it, too, in the daylight."

"You must," I replied.

"Well, good night," said Tucks in the same subdued voice. "If you find a flock of pink Liberty Bonds around here, remember I lost them." He departed in the direction of City Island.

[Illustration: "I WAS TEMPTED TO SHOOT THE CARTRIDGE OUT JUST TO MAKE IT LIGHTER"]

May 1st. I visited the office of the camp paper to-day and found it to be an extremely hectic place. In the course of a conversation with the Chief I chanced to look up and caught two shining eyes staring malevolently at me from a darkened corner of the room. This creature blinked at me several times very rapidly, wiggled its mustache and suddenly disappeared into the thick shadows.



“Who is that?” I cried, startled.

“That’s our mad photographer,” said the Chief. “What do you think of him?”

“Do you keep him in there?” I asked, pointing to the coal-black cupboard-like room into which this strange creature had disappeared.

“Yes,” said the Chief, “and he likes it. Often he stays there for days at a time, only coming out for air.” At this juncture there came from the dark room the sounds of breaking glass, which was immediately followed by strange animal-like sounds as the mad photographer burst out of his den and proclaimed to all the world that nothing meant very much in his life and that it would be absolutely immaterial to him if the paper and its entire staff should suddenly be visited with flood, fire and famine. After this gracious and purely gratuitous piece of information he again withdrew, but strange mutterings still continued to issue forth from his lair. While I was sitting in the office the editor happened to drift in from the adjacent room crisply attired in a pair of ragged, disreputable trousers and a sleeveless gray sweater which was raveling in numerous places. It was the shock of my life.



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“Where’s our yeoman?” he grumbled, at which the yeoman, who somehow reminded me of some character from one of Dickens’s novels, edged out of the door, but he was too late. Spying him, the editor launched forth on a violent denunciation, in which for no particular reason the cartoonist and sporting editor joined. There they stood, the three of them, abusing this poor simple yeoman in the most unnecessary manner as far as I could make out. Three harder cut-throats I have never encountered. While in the office, I came upon a rather elderly artist crouched over in a corner writhing as if he was in great pain. He was in the throes of composition, I was told, and he looked it. Poor wretch, he seemed to have something on his mind. The only man I saw who seemed to have anything like a balanced mind was the financial shark, a little ferret-eyed, onery-looking cuss whom I wouldn’t have trusted out of my sight. He was sitting with his nose thrust in some dusty volume totally oblivious of the pandemonium that reigned around him. He either has a great mind or none at all—probably the latter. I fear I would never make an editor. The atmosphere is simply altogether too strenuous for me.

May 4th. There seems to be no place in the service for me; I cannot decide what rating to select. To be a quartermaster one must know how to signal, and signaling always tires my arms. One must know how to blow a horrid shrill little whistle in order to become a boatswain mate, and my ears could never stand this. To be a yeoman, it is necessary to know how to rattle papers in an important manner and disseminate misinformation with a straight face, and this I could never do. I fear the only thing left for me is to try for a commission. I’m sure I would be a valuable addition to any wardroom.

May 6th. “Man the drags! Hey, there, you flannel-footed camel, stop galloping! What are you doing, anyway—playing horses?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” I cried out, hot with rage and humiliation; “you know perfectly well I’m not playing horse. I realize as well as you do that this is a serious—”

At this juncture of my brave retort a gun barrel stove in the back of my head, some one kicked me on the shin and in some indescribable manner the butt of a rifle became entangled between my feet, and down I went in a cloud of dust and oaths. One-fourth of the entire Pelham field artillery passed over my body, together with its crew, while through the roar and confusion raised by this horrible cataclysm I could hear innumerable C.P.O.’s howling and blackguarding me in frenzied tones, and I dimly distinguished their forms dancing in rage amid descending billows of dust. The parade ground swirled dizzily around me, but I had no desire to arise and begin life anew. It would not be worth while. I felt that I had at the most only a short time to live, and that that was too long. The world offered nothing but the most horrifying possibilities to me. “What

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is the Biltmore to a man in uniform, anyway?" I remember thinking to myself as I lay there with my nose pressed flat to an ant hill, "all the best parts of it are arid districts, waste places, limitless Saharas to him. Death, where is thy sting?" I continued, as an outraged ant assaulted my nose. The world came throbbing back. I felt myself being dragged violently away from my resting place. I was choking. Bidding farewell to the ants, I prepared myself to swoon when gradually, as if from a great distance, I heard the voice of my P.O. He was almost crying.

"Take him out," he pleaded; "for Gord sake, take him out. He's hurtin' our gun."

[Illustration: "ONE FOURTH OF THE ENTIRE PELHAM FIELD ARTILLERY PASSED OVER MY BODY"]

This remark gave me the strength to rise, but not gracefully. My intention was to address a few handpicked words to this P.O. of mine, but fortunately for my future peace of mind I was beyond utterance. Weakly I tottered in the direction of the gun, hoping to support myself upon it.

"Hey, come away from that gun!" howled the P.O. "Don't let him touch it, fellers," he pleaded. "Don't let him even go near it. He'll spoil it. He'll completely destroy it."

"Say, Buddy," said the Chief to me, and how I hated the ignominy of the word, "I guess I'll take you out of the game for to-day. I'm responsible for Government property, and you are altogether too big a risk."

"What shall I do?" I asked, huskily. "Where shall I go?"

"Do?" he repeated, in a thoughtful voice. "Go? Well, here's where you can go," and he told me, "and this is what you can do when you get there," and as I departed rather hastily he told me this also. The entire parade ground heard him. How shall I ever be able to hold up my head again in Camp? I departed the spot, but only under one boiler; however, I made fair speed. Like a soldier returning from a week in the trenches, I sought the comfort and seclusion of the Y.M.C.A. Here I witnessed a checker contest of a low order between two unscrupulous brothers. They had a peculiar technique completely their own. It consisted of arts and dodges and an extravagant use of those adjectives one is commonly supposed to shun.

"Say, there's a queen down at the end of the room," one of them would suddenly exclaim, and while the other brother was gazing eagerly in that direction he would deliberately remove several of his men from the board. But the other brother, who was not so balmy as he looked, would occasionally discover this slight irregularity and proceed to express his opinion of it by word of mouth, which for sheer force of



expression was in the nature of a revelation to me. It was appalling to sit there and watch those two young men, who had evidently at one time come from a good home, sit in God's bright sunshine and cheat each other throughout the course of an afternoon and lie out of it in the most obvious manner.

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The game was finally discontinued, owing to a shortage of checkermen which they had secreted in their pockets, a fact which each one stoutly denied with many weird and rather indelicate vows. I left them engaged in the pleasant game of recrimination, which had to do with stolen golf balls, the holding out of change and kindred sordid subjects. In my weakened condition this display of fraternal depravity so offended my instinctive sense of honor that I was forced to retire behind the protecting pages of a 1913 issue of "The Farmer's Wife Indispensable Companion," where I managed to lose myself for the time in a rather complicated exposition of how to tell which chicken laid what egg if any or something to that effect, an article that utterly demolished the moral character of the average hen, leaving her hardly a leg to roost on.

May 8th. "Give away," said the coxswain to-day, when we were struggling to get our cutter off from the pier, and I gave away to such an extent, in fact, that I suddenly found myself balanced cleverly on the back of my neck in the bottom of the boat, so that I experienced the rather odd sensation of feeling the hot sun on the soles of my feet. This procedure, of course, did not go unnoticed. Nothing I do goes unnoticed, save the good things. The coxswain made a few comments which showed him to be a thoroughly ill-bred person, but further than this I was not persecuted. After we had rowed interminable distances through leagues upon leagues of doggedly resisting water a man in the bow remarked casually that he had several friends in Florida we might call upon if we kept it up a little longer, but the coxswain comfortably ensconced upon the hackamatack, was so deeply engrossed in the perusal of a vest pocket edition of the "Merchant of Venice" that he failed to grasp the full meaning of the remark. I lifted my rapidly glazing eyes with no little effort from the keelson and discovered to my horror that we had hardly passed more than half a mile of shore-line at the most. What we had been doing all the time I was unable to figure out. I thought we had been rowing. I could have sworn we had been rowing, but apparently we had not. I looked up from my meditation in time to catch the ironical gaze of the coxswain upon me, and I involuntarily braced myself to the assault.

[Illustration: "THE PROCEDURE, OF COURSE, DID NOT GO UNNOTICED"]

"Say, there, sailor," said he, with a slow, unpleasant drawl, "you're not rowing; you're weaving. It's fancy work you're doing, blast yer eyes!"

All who had sufficient strength left in them laughed jeeringly at this wise observation, but I retained a dignified silence—that is, so far as a man panting from exhaustion can be silent. At this moment we passed a small boat being rowed briskly along by a not unattractive girl.

"Now, watch her," said the coxswain, helpfully, to me; "study the way that poor fragile girl, that mere child, pulls the oars, and try to do likewise."



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I observed in shamed silence. My hands ached. A motor boat slid swiftly by and I distinctly saw a man drinking beer from the bottle. "Hell isn't dark and smoky," thought I to myself; "hell is bright and sunny, and there is lots of sparkling water in it and on the sparkling water are innumerable boats and in these boats are huddled the poor lost mortals who are forced to listen through eternity to the wise cracks of cloven-hoofed, spike-tailed coxswains. That's what hell is," thought I, "and I am in my probation period right now."

"Feather your oars!" suddenly screamed our master at the straining crew.

"Feather me eye!" yelled back a courageous Irishman. "What do you think these oars are, anyway—a flock of humming birds? Whoever heard of feathering a hundred-ton weight? Feather Pike's Peak, say I; it's just as easy."

Somehow we got back to the pier, but I was almost delirious by this time. The last part of the trip was all one drab, dull nightmare to me. This evening my hands were so swollen I was forced to the extremity of bribing a friend to hold the telephone receiver for me when I called up mother.

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"Rowing," came my short answer.

"What a splendid outing!" she exclaimed. "You had such a lovely day for it, didn't you, dear?"

"Hang up that receiver!" I shouted to my friend; "hang it up, or my mother shall hear from the lips of her son words she should only hear from her husband."

May 9th. I am just after having been killed in a sham battle, and so consequently I feel rather ghastly to-day. I don't exactly know whether I was a Red or a Blue, because I did a deal of fighting on both sides, but always with the same result. I was killed instantly and completely. People got sick of putting me out of my misery after a while and I was allowed to wander around at large in a state of great mystification and excitement, shooting my blank bullets into the face of nature in an aimless sort of manner whenever the battle began to pall upon me.

Most of the time I passed pleasantly on the soft, fresh flank of a hill where for a while I slept until a cow breathed heavily in my face and reminded me that it was war after all. My instructions were to keep away from the guns, and get killed as soon as possible. As these instructions were not difficult to follow, I carried them out to the letter. I stayed away from the guns and I permitted myself to be killed several times in order to make sure it would take. After that I became a sort of composite camp follower, deserter and straggler.



In my wandering I chanced upon an ancient enemy of many past encounters.

“Are you Red or Blue?” I asked, preparing to die for the fifth time.

“No,” he answered, sarcastically, “I’m what you might call elephant ear gray.”

“Are you the guy the reporter for the camp paper was referring to in his last story?” I asked him.



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“Yes,” he replied, “the slandering blackguard.”

“You hit me on the nose with a push-ball,” said I.

“I’ll do it again,” said he.

“That reporter, evidently a man of some observation, said you didn’t wash your neck and that you had the habits of a camel.”

“But I do wash my neck,” he said, stubbornly, “and I don’t know anything about the habits of a camel, but whatever they might happen to be, I haven’t got ’em.”

“Yes,” I replied, as if to myself, “you certainly should wash your neck. That’s the very least you could do.”

“But I tell you,” he cried, desperately, “I keep telling you that I do wash my neck. Why do you go on talking about it as if I didn’t! I tell you now, once for all time, that I do wash my neck, and that ends it. Don’t talk any more. I want to think.”

We sat in silence for a space, then I remarked casually, almost inaudibly, “and you certainly shouldn’t have the habits of a camel.”

The depraved creature stirred uneasily. “I ain’t got ’em,” he said.

“Good,” I cried heartily. “We understand each other perfectly. In the future you will try to wash your neck and cease from having the habits of a camel. No compromise is necessary. I know you will keep your word.”

“Go away quickly,” he gasped, searching around for a stone to hurl at me, and discarding several because of their small size. “Go away to somewhere else. I’m telling you now, go away or else a special detail will find your lifeless body here in the bushes some time to-morrow.”

“I’ve already been thoroughly killed several times to-day,” I said, putting a tree between us, “but don’t forget about the camel, and for heaven’s sake do try to keep your neck—”

A stone hit the tree with a resounding crack, and I increased the distance.

“Damn the torpedoes!” I shouted back as I disappeared into the pleasant security of the sun-warmed woods.

May 11th. “What navy do you belong to?” asked an Ensign, stopping me to-day, “the Chinese?”



“Why do you ask, sir?” I replied, saluting gracefully. “Of course I don’t belong to the Chinese Navy.”

“What’s your rating?” he snapped. “Show girl first class attached to the good ship Biff! Bang! sir,” came my prompt retort.

“Well, put a watch mark on your arm, sailor, and put it there pronto, or you’ll be needing an understudy to pinch hit for you.”

As a matter of fact I have never put my watch mark on, for the simple reason that I have been rather expecting a rating at any moment, but it seems as if my expectations were doomed to disappointment.

Nothing matters much, anyway, now, however, for I have been selected from among all the men in the station to play the part of a Show Girl in the coming magnificent Pelham production, “Biff! Bang!” At last I have found the occupation to which by training and inclination I am naturally adapted. The Grand Moguls that are running this show came around the barracks the other day looking for material, and when they gazed upon me I felt sure that their search had not been in vain.



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"Why don't you write a 'nut' part for him?" asked one of them of the playwright as they surveyed me critically as if I was some rare specimen of bug life.

"That would never do," he answered. "Real 'nuts' can never play the part on the stage. You've got to have a man of intelligence."

"Look here," I broke in. "You've got to stop talking about me before my face as if I wasn't really present. Nuts I may be, but I can still understand English, even when badly spoken, and resent it. Lay off that stuff or I'll be constrained to introduce you to a new brand of 'Biff! Bang!'"

Saying this, I struck an heroic attitude, but it seemed to produce no startling change in their calm, deliberate examination of me.

"He'll do, I think, as a Show Girl," the dance-master mused dreamily. "Like a cabbage, every one of his features is bad, but the whole effect is not revolting. Strange, isn't it, how such things happen." At this point the musician broke in.

"He ain't agoing to dance to my music if I know it. He'll ruin it." At which remark I executed a few rather simple but nevertheless neat steps I had learned at the last charity Bazaar to which I had contributed my services, and these few steps were sufficient to close the deal. I was signed up on the spot. As they were leaving the barracks one excited young person ran up and halted the arrogant Thespians. "If I get the doctor to remove my Adam's Apple," he pleaded wistfully, "do you think you could take me on as a pony?"

"No," said one of them, not without a certain show of kindness. "I fear not. It would be necessary for him to remove the greater part of your map and graft a couple of pounds on to your sadly unendowed limbs."

From that day on my life has become one of unremitting toil. Together with the rest of the Show Girls I vamp and slouch my way around the clock with ever increasing seductiveness. We are really doing splendidly. The ponies come leaping lightly across the floor waving their freckled, muscular arms from side to side and looking very unattractive indeed in their B.V.D.'s, high shoes and sock supporters. "I can see it all," says the Director, in an enthusiastic voice, and if he can I'll admit he has some robust quality of imagination that I fail to possess.

Us Show Girls, of course, have to be a little more modest than the ponies, so we retain our white trousers. These are rolled up, however, in order to afford the mosquitoes, who are covering the show most conscientiously, room to roost on. And sad to relate, the life is beginning to affect the boys. Only yesterday I saw one of our toughest ponies vamping up the aisle of Mess Hall No. 2 with his tray held over his head in the manner of a Persian slave girl. The Jimmy-legs, witnessing this strange sight, dropped his jaw

and forgot to lift it up again. "Sweet attar of roses," he muttered. "What ever has happened to our poor, long-suffering navy?" At the door of the Mess Hall the pony bowed low to the deck and withdrew with a coy backward flirt of his foot.



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I can't express in words the remarkable appearance made by some of our seagoing chorus girls when they attempt to assume the light and airy graces of the real article. Some of the men have so deeply entered into their parts that they have attained absolute self-forgetfulness, with the result that they leap and preen about in a manner quite startling to the dispassionate spectator. My career so far has not been a personal triumph. In the middle of a number, the other night, the dancing master clapped his hands violently together, a signal he uses when he wants all motion to cease.

"Take 'em down to the end of the room, boys," he said. "I can tell three minutes ahead of time when things are going to go wrong. That man on the end didn't have a thought in his head. He would have smeared the entire number." I was the man on the end.

May 23d. This has not been a particularly agreeable day, although to a woman no doubt it would have been laden with moments of exquisite ecstasy. Feminine apparel for me has lost for ever the charm of mystery that formerly touched it with enchantment. There is nothing I do not know now. Its innermost secret has been revealed and its revelation has brought with it its full burden of woe. All knowledge is pain and vice versa. I have always admired women; whether so profoundly as they have admired me I know not; however that may be, I have always admired them collectively and individually in the past, but after today's experience my admiration is tinged with pity. The source of these reflections lies in no less an article than a corset. As a Show Girl, it has been my lot to be provided with one of these fiendish devices of medieval days. It is too much. The corset must go. No woman could have experienced the pain and discomfort I have been subjected to this day without feeling entitled to the vote. Yet I dare say there are women who would gladly be poured into a new corset every day of their lives. They can have mine for the asking. Life at its best presents a narrow enough outlook without resorting to cunningly wrought devices such as corsets in order further to confine one's point of view or abdomen, which amounts to the same thing. The whale is a noble animal, it was a very good idea, the whale, and I love every bone in its body, so long as it keeps them there. So tightly was my body clutched in the embrace of this vicious contraption that I found it impossible to inhale my much needed cigarette. The smoke would descend no further than my throat. The rest of me was a closed port, a roadway blocked to traffic. I have suffered.

But there were also other devices, other soft, seductive under strappings. I know them all to their last most intimate detail. I feel that now I could join a woman's sewing circle and talk with as much authority and wisdom as the most veteraned corset wearer present. My views would be radical perhaps but at least they would have the virtue of being refreshing.



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However, I can see some good coming out of my unavoidably acquired knowledge of female attire. In future days, while my wife is out purchasing shirts and neckties for me, I can easily employ my time to advantage in shopping around Fifth Avenue in search of the correct thing in lingerie for her. It will be a great help to the household and I am sure impress my wife with the depth and range of my education, which I will be able to tell her, thank God, was innocently acquired.

May 28th. I am slowly forming back into my pristine shape but only after having been freed from bondage for some hours. After several more sodas, concoctions which up till recently I have despised as injurious, I guess I will have filled out to my usual dimensions around the waist line, but when I consider the long days of womanhood stretched out before me in the future I will admit it is with a sinking not only of the waist, but also of the heart.

More indignities have been heaped upon me. Why did I ever take up the profession of a show girl? To-day I fell into the clutches of the barbers. They were not gentle clutches, brutal rather; and such an outspoken lot they were at that.

“What’s that?” asked one of them as I stood rather nervously before him with bared chest.

“Why, that,” I replied, a trifle disconcerted, “that’s my chest.”

He looked at me for a moment, then smiled a slow, pitying smile. “Hey, Tony,” he suddenly called to his colleague, “come over here a moment and see what this bird claims to be a chest.”

All this yelled in the faces of the entire Biff-Bang company. It was more inhuman and debasing than my first physical examination in public. The doctors on this occasion, although they had not complimented me, had at least been comparatively impersonal in despatching their offices, but these men were far from being impersonal. I perceived with horror that it was their intention to use my chest as a means of bringing humor into their drab existences. Tony came and surveyed me critically.

“That,” he drawled musically, “ees not a chest. That ees the bottom part of hees neck.”

“I know it is,” replied the other, “but somehow his arms have gotten mixed up in the middle of it.”

Tony shrugged his shoulders eloquently. He assumed the appearance of a man completely baffled.

“Honestly, now, young feller,” continued my first tormentor, “are you serious when you try to tell us that that is your chest?”



He drew attention to the highly disputed territory by poking me diligently with his thumb.

“That’s the part the doctor always listened to whenever I had a cold,” I replied as indifferently as possible. The man pondered over this for a moment.

“Well,” he replied at length, “probably the doctor was right, but to the impartial observer it would seem to be, as my friend Tony so accurately observed, the bottom part of your neck.”



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"It really doesn't matter much after all," I replied, hoping to close the conversation. "You all were not sent here to establish the location of the different parts of my anatomy, anyway."

The man appeared not to have heard me. "I'd swear," he murmured musingly, standing back and regarding me with tilted head, "I'd swear it was his neck if it warn't for his arms." He suddenly discontinued his dreamy observations and became all business.

"Well, sir," he began briskly, "now that we've settled that what do you want me to do to it?"

"Why, shave it, of course," I replied bitterly. "That's what you're here for, isn't it? All us Show Girls have got to have our chests shaved."

"An' after I've shaved your chest, dear," he asked in a soothing voice, "what do you want me to do with it?"

"With what?" I replied, enraged, "with my chest?"

"No," he answered easily, "not your chest, but that one poor little pitiful hair that adorns it. Do you want me to send it home to your ma, all tied around with a pink ribbon?"

I saw no reason to reply to this insult, but stood uneasily and tried to maintain my dignity while he lathered me with undue elaboration. When it was time for him to produce his razor he faltered.

"I can't do it," he said brokenly, "I haven't the heart to cut it down in its prime. It looks so lonely and helpless there by itself." He swept his razor around several times with a free-handed, blood-curdling swoop of his arm. "Well, here goes," he said, shutting his eyes and approaching me. Tony turned away as if unable to witness the scene. I was unnerved, but I stood my ground. The deed was done and I was at last free to depart. "That's a terrible chest for a Show Girl," I heard him to say to Tony as I did so.

May 29th. The world has come clattering down around my ears and I am buried, crushed and bruised beneath the debris. There was a dress rehearsal to-day, and I, from the whole company, was singled out for the wrath of the gods.

"Who is that chorus girl on the end acting frantic?" cried out one of the directors in the middle of a number. My name was shouted across the stage until it echoed and resounded and came bounding back in my face from every corner of the shadow-plunged theater. I knew I was in for it and drew myself up majestically although I turned pale under my war paint.

"Well, tell him he isn't walking on stilts," continued the director, and although it was perfectly unnecessary, I was told that and several other things with brutal candor. The

dance went on but I knew the eyes of the director were on me. My legs seemed to lose all proper coordination. My arms became unmanageable. I lost step and could not pick it up again, yet, as in a nightmare, I struggled on desperately. Suddenly the director clapped his hands. The music ceased, and I slowed down to an uneasy shuffle.



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“Sweetheart,” said the director, addressing me personally, “you’re not dancing. You’re swimming, that’s what you’re doing. As a Persian girl you would make a first class squaw.” He halted for a moment and then bawled out in a great voice, “Understudy!” and I was removed from the stage in a fainting condition. This evening I was shipped back to camp a thoroughly discredited Show Girl. I had labored long in vicious, soul-squelching corsets and like Samson been shorn of my locks, and here I am after all my sacrifices relegated back to the scrap heap. Why am I always the unfortunate one? I must have a private plot in the sky strewn with unlucky stars. Camp routine after the free life of the stage is unbearably irksome. My particular jimmy legs was so glad to see me back that he almost cried as he thrust a broom and a swab into my hands.

“Bear a hand,” he said gleefully, “get to work and stick to it. We’re short of men,” he added, “and there is no end of things for you to do.”

I did them all and he was right. There surely is no end to the things he can devise for me to do. I long for the glamour and footlights of the gay white way, but I have been cast out and rejected as many a Show Girl has been before me.

June 1st. The morning papers say all sort of nice things about Biff-Bang but I can hardly believe them sincere after the treatment I received. I know for a fact that the man who took my place was knock-kneed and that the rest of his figure could not hold a candle to mine.

I still feel convinced that Biff-Bang lost one of its most prepossessing and talented artists when I was so unceremoniously removed from the chorus.

June 10th. I was standing doing harm to no one in a vague, rather unfortunate way I have, when all of a sudden, without word or warning, a very competent looking sailor seized me by the shoulders and, thrusting his face close to mine, cried out:

“Do you want to make a name for yourself in the service?”

I left the ground two feet below me in my fright and when I alighted there were tears of eagerness in my eyes.

“Yes,” I replied breathlessly, “oh, sir, yes.”

“Then pick up that,” he cried dramatically, pointing to a cigar butt on the parade ground. I didn’t wait for the laughter. I didn’t have to. It was forthcoming immediately. Huge peals of it. Sailors are a very low tribe of vertebrate. They seem to hang around most of the time waiting for something to laugh at—usually me. It is my belief that I have been the subject of more mirth since I came to camp than any other man on the station. Whatever I do I seem to do it too much or too little. There even seems to be something mirth-provoking in my personal appearance, which I have always regarded hitherto not



without a certain shade of satisfaction. Only the other day I caught the eyes of the gloomiest sailor in camp studying me with a puzzled expression. He gazed at me for such a long time that I became quite disconcerted. Slowly a smile spread over his face, then a strange, rusty laugh forced itself through his lips.



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“Doggone if I can solve it,” he chuckled, turning away and shaking his head; “it’s just simply too much for me.”

He looked back once, clapped his hands over his mouth and proceeded merrily on his way. I am glad of course to be able to bring joy into the lives of sailors, but I did not enlist for that sole purpose. Returning to the cigar butt, however, I was really quite disappointed. I do so want to make a name for myself in the service that I would eagerly jump at the chance of sailing up the Kiel canal in a Barnegat Sneak Box were it not for the fact that sailing always makes me deathly sick. I don’t know why it is, but the more I have to do with water the more reasons I find for shunning it. The cigar butt episode broke my heart though. I was all keyed up for some heroic deed—what an anti-climax! I left the spot in a bitter, humiliated mood. There is only one comforting part about the whole affair—I did not pick up that cigar butt. He did, I’ll bet, though when nobody was looking. I don’t know as I blame him—there were still several healthy drags left in it.

June 11th. This war is going to put a lot of Chinamen out of business if it keeps up much longer. The first thing a sailor will do after he has been paid off will be to establish a laundry, and he won’t be a slouch at the business at that. I feel sure that I am qualified right now to take in family laundry and before the end of summer I guess I’ll be able to do fancy work. At present I am what you might call a first class laundryman, but I’m not a fancy laundryman yet. Since they’ve put us in whites I go around with the washer-woman’s complaint most of the time. Terrible shooting pains in my back! My sympathy for the downtrodden is increasing by leaps and bounds. I can picture myself without any effort of the imagination bending over a tub after the war doing the family washing while my wife is out running for alderman or pulling the wires to be appointed Commissioner of the Docks. The white clothes situation, however, is serious. It seems that every spare moment I have I am either washing or thinking of washing or just after having washed, and to one who possesses as I do the uncanny faculty of being able to get dirtier in more places in the shortest space of time than any ten street children picked at random could ever equal, life presents one long vista of soap and suds.

[Illustration: “THIS WAR IS GOING TO PUT A LOT OF CHINAMEN OUT OF BUSINESS”]

“You boys look so cute in your funny white uniforms,” a girl said to me the other day. “It must be so jolly wearing them.”

I didn’t strike her, for she was easily ten pounds heavier than I was, but I made it easily apparent that our relations would never progress further than the weather vane. I used to affect white pajamas, the same seeming to harmonize with the natural purity of my nature, but after the war I fear I shall be forced to discontinue the practise in favor of more lurid attire. However, I still believe that a bachelor should never wear anything

other than white pajamas or at the most lavender, but this of course is merely a personal opinion.



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June 14th. I have been hard put to-day. The Lord only knows what trials and tribulations will be visited upon me next. At present I am quite unnerved. To-day I was initiated into all the horrifying secrets and possibilities of the bayonet, European style. Never do I remember spending a more unpleasant half an hour. The instructor was a resourceful man possessed of a most vivid imagination. Before he had finished with us potential delicatessen dealers were lying around as thick as flies. We were brushing them off.

After several hair-raising exhibitions he formed us into two lines facing each other and told us to begin.

“Now lunge,” he said, “and look as if you meant business.”

I glanced ingratiatingly across at my adversary. He was simply glaring at me. Never have I seen an expression of greater ferocity. It was too much. I knew for certain that if he ever lunged at me I'd never live to draw another yellow slip.

“Mister Officer,” I gasped, pointing across at this blood-thirsty man, “don't you think that he's just a little too close? I'm afraid I might hurt him by accident.”

The officer surveyed the situation with a swift, practical eye.

“Oh, I guess he can take care of himself all right,” he replied. That was just what I feared.

The man smiled grimly.

“But does he know that this is only practise?” I continued. “He certainly doesn't look as if he did.”

“That's the way you should look,” said the officer, “work your own face up a bit. This isn't a vampire scene. Don't look as if you were going to lure him. Y'know you're supposed to be angry with your opponent when you meet him in battle, quite put out in fact. And furthermore you're supposed to look it.”

I regarded my opponent, but only terror was written on my face. Then suddenly we lunged and either through fear or mismanagement I succeeded only in running my bayonet deep into the ground. In some strange manner the butt of the gun jabbed me in the stomach and I was completely winded. My opponent was dancing and darting around me like a local but thorough-going lightning storm. I abandoned my gun and stood sideways, thus decreasing the possible area of danger. Had the exercises continued much longer I would have had a spell of something, probably the blind staggers.

[Illustration: “I STOOD SIDE-WAYS, THUS DECREASING THE POSSIBLE AREA OF DANGER”]



“You’re not pole vaulting,” said the instructor to me, as he returned the gun. “In a real show you’d have looked like a pin cushion by this time.” I felt like one.

Then it all started over again and this time I thought I was doing a little better, when quite unexpectedly the instructor shouted at me.

“Stop prancing around in that silly manner,” he cried, “you’re not doing a sword dance, sonny.”

“He thinks he’s still a show girl,” some one chuckled, “he’s that seductive.”



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Mess gear interrupted our happy morning. The sight of a knife fairly sickened me.

June 24th. Last week I caught a liberty—a perfect Forty-three—and went to spend it with some cliff dwelling friends of mine who, heaven help their wretched lot! lived on the sixth and top floor of one of those famous New York struggle-ups. Before shoving off there was some slight misunderstanding between the inspecting officer and myself relative to the exact color of my, broadly speaking, Whites.

“Fall out, there,” he said to me. “You can’t go out on liberty in Blues.”

“But these, sir,” I responded huskily, “are not Blues; they’re Whites.”

“Look like Blues to me,” he said skeptically. “Fall out anyway. You’re too dirty.”

For the first time in my life I said nothing at the right time. I just looked at him. There was a dumb misery in my eyes, a mute, humble appeal such as is practised with so much success by dogs. He couldn’t resist it. Probably he was thinking of the days when he, too, stood in line waiting impatiently for the final formalities to be run through before the world was his again.

“Turn around,” he said brokenly. I did so.

“Fall in,” he ordered, after having made a prolonged inspection of my shrinking back. “I guess you’ll do, but you are only getting through on a technicality—there’s one white spot under your collar.”

Officers are people after all, although sometimes it’s hard to realize it. This one, in imagination, I anointed with oil and rare perfumes, and costly gifts I laid at his feet, while in a glad voice I called down the blessings of John Paul Jones upon his excellent head. Thus I departed with my kind and never did the odor of gasoline smell sweeter in my nose than did the fumes that were being emitted by the impatient flivver that waited without the gate. And sweet, too, was the fetid atmosphere of the subway after the clean, bracing air of Pelham, sweet was the smell of garlic belonging to a mustache that sat beside me, and sweet were the buttery fingers of a small child who kept clawing at me while their owner demanded of the whole car if I was a “weal mavy sailor boy?” I didn’t look it, and I didn’t feel it, but I had forty-three hours of freedom ahead of me, so what did I care?

All went well with me until I essayed the six flight climb-up to the cave of these cliff-dwelling people, when I found that the one-storied existence I had been leading in the Pelham bungalows had completely unfitted me for mountain climbing. As I toiled upward I wondered dimly how these people ever managed to keep so fat after having mounted to such a great distance for so long a time. Somehow they had done it, not only maintained their already acquired fat but added greatly thereto. There would be no

refreshing cup to quaff upon arriving, only water, or at best milk. This I knew and the knowledge added pounds to my already heavy feet.



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“My, what a dirty sailor you are, to be sure,” they said to me from the depth of their plump complacency.

“Quite so,” I gasped, falling into a chair, “I seem to remember having heard the same thing once before to-day.”

June 25th. Neither Saturday nor Sunday was a complete success and for a while Saturday afternoon assumed the proportions of a disaster. After having rested from my climb, I decided to wash my Whites so that I wouldn't be arrested as a deserter or be thrown into the brig upon checking in. The fat people on learning of my intentions decided that the sight of such labor would tire them beyond endurance, so they departed, leaving me in solitary possession of their flat. I thereupon removed my jumper, humped my back over the tub, scrubbed industriously until the garment was white, then hastened roofwards and arranged it prettily on the line. This accomplished, I hurried down, removed my trousers, rehumped my back over the tub, scrubbed industriously until the trousers in turn were white and once more dashed roofwards. I have always been absent minded, but never to such an appalling extent as to appear clad only in my scanty underwear in the midst of a mixed throng of ladies, gentlemen and children. This I did. Some venturous souls had claimed the roof as their own during my absence so that when I sprang from the final step to claim my place in the sun I found myself by no means alone. With a cry of horror I leaped to the other side of the clothes-line and endeavored to conceal myself behind an old lady's petticoat or a lady's old petticoat or something of that nature. Whoever wore the thing must have been a very short person indeed, for the garment reached scarcely down to my knees, below which my B.V.D.'s fluttered in an intriguing manner.

“Sir,” thundered a pompous gentleman, “have you any explanation for your surprising conduct?”

“Several,” I replied briskly from behind my only claim on respectability. “In the first place, I didn't expect an audience. In the second—”

“That will do, sir,” broke in this heavy person in a quarterdeck voice. “Who, may I ask, are you?”

“You may,” I replied. “I'm a God-fearing sailor man who is doing the best he can to keep nice and clean in spite of the uncalled for intervention of a red-faced oaf of a plumber person who should know better than to stand around watching him.”

[Illustration: “I'M A GOD-FEARING SAILOR MAN WHO IS DOING THE BEST HE CAN TO KEEP CLEAN”]



“Don’t take on so, George,” said one of the women whom I suspected of edging around in order to get a better view of me, “the poor young man is a sailor—where is your patriotism?”

“Yes,” broke in the other woman, edging around on the other side, “he’s one of our sailor boys. Treat him nice.”

“Patriotic, I am,” roared George wrathfully, “but not to the extent of condoning and looking lightly upon such a flagrant breach of decency as this semi-nude, so-called sailor has committed in our midst.”



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“If you’d give me a couple of Thrift Stamps,” I suggested, “I might be able to come out from behind this blooming barrage.”

“Shameless,” exploded the man.

“Not at all,” I replied, “in the olden days it was quite customary for young gentlemen and elderly stout ones like yourself, for instance, to drop in at the best caves with very much less on than I have without any one considering their conduct in any degree irregular. In fact, the ladies of this time were no better themselves, it being deemed highly proper for them to appear in some small bit of stuff and nobody thought the worst of it at all. Take the early days of the fifteenth century B.C.—”

At this point in my eloquent address a young child, who had hitherto escaped my attention, took it upon herself to swing on the line with the result that it parted with a snap and my last vestige of protection came fluttering to the roof. For one tense moment I stood gazing into the dilated eyes of those before me. Then with surprising presence of mind, I sprang to a ladder that led to the water tank, swarmed up it with the agility of a cat and lowered myself with a gasp of despair into the cold, cold water of the tank. From this place of security I gazed down on the man who had been responsible for my unfortunate plight. I felt myself sinned against, and the longer I remained in that water, up to my neck, the more I felt my wrongs. I gave voice to them. I said bitter, abusive things to the man.

“Clear the quarter deck,” I shouted, “get aft, or, by gad, I’ll come fluttering down there on your flat, bald head like a blooming flood. Vamoos, hombre, pronto—plenty quick and take your brood with you.” Then I said some more things as my father before me had said them, and the man withdrew with his women.

“He’s a sailor,” he said as he did so. “Hurry, my dears, this is worse than nakedness.”

I emerged and sat in a borrowed bathrobe the rest of the evening. The next morning my clothes were still damp. Now, that’s what I call a stupid way to spend a Saturday night on liberty. The fat people enjoyed it.

June 29th. I met a very pleasant dog yesterday, whom I called Mr. Fogerty because of his sober countenance and the benign but rather puzzled expression in his large, limpid eyes, which were almost completely hidden by his bangs. He was evidently a visitor in camp, so I took him around and introduced him to the rest of the dogs and several of the better sort of goats. In all of these he displayed a friendly but dignified interest, seeming to question them on the life of the camp, how they liked the Navy and what they thought were the prospects for an early peace. He refused to be separated from me, however, and even broke into the mess hall, from which he was unceremoniously ejected, but not before he had gotten half of my ration. In some strange manner he must have found out from one of the other dogs my name and address and exactly



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where I swung, for in the middle of the night I awoke to hear a lonesome whining in the darkness beneath my hammock and then the sniff, sniff of an investigating nose. As I know how it feels to be lonely in a big black barracks in the dead of night I carefully descended to the deck and collected this animal—it was my old friend, Mr. Fogerty, and he was quite overjoyed at having once more found me. After licking my face in gratitude he sat back on his haunches and waited for me to do something amusing. I didn't have the heart to leave him there in the darkness. Dogs have a certain way about them that gets me every time. I lifted Mr. Fogerty, a huge hulk of a dog, with much care, and adjusting of overlapping paws into my hammock, and received a kiss in the eye for my trouble. Then I followed Mr. Fogerty into the hammock and resumed my slumber, but not with much comfort. Mr. Fogerty is a large, sprawly dog, who evidently has been used to sleeping in vast spaces and who sees no reason for changing a lifelong habit. Consequently he considered me in the nature of a piece of gratifying upholstery. He slept with his hind legs on my stomach and his front paws propped against my chin. When he scratched, as he not infrequently did, what I decided must be a flea, his hind leg beat upon the canvas and produced a noise not unlike a drum. Thus we slept, but through some miscalculation I must have slept over, for it seems that the Master-at-arms, a very large and capable Irishman, came and shook my hammock.

[Illustration: "I TOOK HIM AROUND AND INTRODUCED HIM TO THE REST OF THE DOGS AND SEVERAL OF THE BETTER SORT OF GOATS"]

"Hit the deck there, sailor," he said, "shake a leg, shake a leg."

At this point Mr. Fogerty took it upon himself to peer over the side of the hammock to see who this disturber of peace and quiet could be. This was just a little out of the line of duty for the jimmy legs, and I can't say as I blame him for his conduct under rather trying circumstances. Mr. Fogerty has a large, shaggy head, not unlike a lion's, and his mouth, too, is quite large and contains some very long and sharp teeth. It seems that Mr. Fogerty, still heavy with slumber, quite naturally yawned into the horrified face of the Jimmy-legs, who, mistaking the operation for a hostile demonstration, retreated from the barracks with admirable rapidity for one so large, crying in a distracted voice as he did so:

"By the saints, it's a beast he's turned into during the night. Sure, it's a visitation of Providence, heaven preserve us."

It seems I have been washing hammocks ever since. Mr. Fogerty sits around and wonders what it's all about. I like Fogerty, but he gets me in trouble, and in this I need no help whatsoever.

[Illustration: "I RESUMED MY SLUMBER, BUT NOT WITH MUCH COMFORT"]



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July 1st. This day I almost succeeded in sinking myself for the final count. The fishes around about the environs of City Island were disappointed beyond words when I came up for the fourth time and stayed up. In my delirium I imagined that school had been let out in honor of my reception and that all the pretty little fishes were sticking around in expectant groups cheering loudly at the thought of the conclusion of their meatless days. Fortunately for the Navy, however, I cheated them and saved myself in order to scrub many more hammocks and white clothes, an object to which I seem to have dedicated my life.

It all come about, as do most drowning parties, in quite an unexpected manner. For some reason it had been arranged that I should take a swim over at one of the emporiums at City Island, and, as I interposed no objections, I accordingly departed with my faithful Mr. Fogerty tumbling along at my heels. Since Mr. Fogerty involved me in trouble the other day by barking at the Jimmy-legs he has endeavored in all possible ways to make up for his thoughtless irregularity. For instance, he met me this morning with an almost brand new shoe which in some manner he had managed to pick up in his wanderings. It fits perfectly, and if he only succeeds in finding the mate to it I shall probably not look for the owner. As a further proof of his good will Mr. Fogerty bit, or attempted to bite, a P.O. who spoke to me roughly regarding the picturesque way I was holding my gun.

“Whose dog is that?” demanded the P.O.

Silence in the ranks. Mr. Fogerty looked defiantly at him for a moment and then trotted deliberately over and sat down upon my foot.

“Oh, so he belongs to you!” continued the P.O. in a threatening voice.

“No, sir,” I faltered; “you see, it isn’t that way at all. I belong to Mr. Fogerty.”

“Who in—who in—who is Mr. Fogerty?” shouted the P.O. “And how in—how in—how did *he* happen to get into the conversation?”

“Why, this is Mr. Fogerty,” I replied; “this dog here, sitting on my foot.”

“Oh, is that so?” jeered the P.O., a man noted for his quick retorts. “Well, you take your silly looking dog away from here and secure him in some safe place. He ain’t no fit associate for our camp dogs. And, furthermore,” he added, “the next time Mr. Fogerty attempts to bite me I’m going to put you on report—savez?”

Mr. Fogerty is almost as much of a comfort in camp as mother.

Well, that’s another something else again and has nothing to do with my swim and approximate drowning at City Island. Swimming has always been one of my strong points, and I have taken in the past no little pride in my appearance, not only in a

bathing outfit, but also in the water. However, the suit they provided me with on this occasion did not show me up in a very alluring light. It was quite large and evidently built according to a model of the early



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Victorian Era. I was swathed in yards of cloth much in the same manner as is a very young child. It delighted Mr. Fogerty, who expressed his admiration by attaching himself to the lower half of my attire and remaining there until I had waded through several colonies of barnacles far out into the bay. Bidding farewell to Mr. Fogerty at this point, I gave myself over to the joy of the moment and went wallowing along, giving a surprising imitation of the famous Australian crawl. Far in the distance I sighted an island, to which I decided to swim. This was a very poor decision, indeed, because long before I had reached the spot I was in a sinking condition owing to the great heaviness of my suit and a tremendous slacking down of lung power. It was too late to retreat to the shore; the island was the nearest point, and that wasn't near. On I gasped, my mind teeming with cheerless thoughts of the ocean's bed waiting to receive me. Just as I was about to shake hands with myself for the last time I cleared the water from my eyes and discovered that the island though still distant was not altogether impossible. Therewith I discarded the top part of my suit and struck out once more. The island was now almost within my grasp. Life seemed to be not such a lost cause after all. Then suddenly, quite clearly, just as I was about to pull myself up on the shore, I saw a woman standing on the bank and heard her shouting in a very conventional voice:

"Private property! Private property!"

I sank. This was too much. As I came up for the first count, and just before I sank back beneath the blue, I had time to hear her repeat:

"Private property! Please keep off!"

I went down very quickly this time and very far. When I arose I saw as though in a dream another woman standing by the first one and seemingly arguing with her.

"He's drowning!" she said.

"I'm sure I can't help that!" the other one answered. And then in a loud, imperious voice:

"Private property! No visitors allowed!"

The water closed over my head and stilled her hateful voice.

"No," she was saying as I came up for the third time; "I can't do it. If I make an exception of one I must make an exception of all."

Although I hated to be rude about it, having always disliked forcing myself upon people, I decided on my fourth trip down that unless I wanted to be a dead sailor I had better be



taking steps. It was almost too late. There wasn't enough wind left in me to fatten a small sized bubble.

"There he is again!" she cried in a petulant voice as I once more appeared. "Why doesn't he go away?"

"He's just about to—for good!" said the other lady. With a pitiful yap I struck out feebly in the general direction of the shore. It wouldn't work. My arms refused to move. Then quite suddenly and deliriously I felt two soft, cool arms enfold me, and my head sank back on a delicately unholstered shoulder. Somehow it reminded me of the old days.



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"Home, James," I murmured, as I was slowly towed to shore. Just before closing my eyes I caught a fleeting glimpse of a young lady clad in one of the one-piece bathing suits I had ever seen. She was bending over me sympathetically.

"Private property!" cried my tormentor, shaking a finger at me. "What a pity!" I thought as I closed my eyes and drifted off into sweet dreams in which Mr. Fogerty, my beautiful rescuer, and myself were dancing hand-and-hand on the parade ground to the music of the massed band, much to the edification of the entire station assembled in review formation.

Presently I awoke to the hateful strains of this old hard-shell's voice:

"See what you've done!" she was saying to the young girl. "You've brought in a half naked man, and now that he has seen you in a much worse condition than he is, we'll have ten thousand sailors swimming out to this island in one continuous swarm."

"Oh, won't that be fun!" cried the girl. And from that time on, in spite of the objections of her mother, we were fast friends.

When I returned to shore it was in a rowboat with this fair young creature. The faithful Fogerty was waiting on the beach for me, where, it later developed, he had been sleeping quite comfortably on an unknown woman's high powered sport hat, as is only reasonable.

July 2nd. Mother got in again. There seems to be no practical way of keeping her out. This time she came breezing in with a friend from East Aurora, a large, elderly woman of about one hundred and ten summers and an equal number of very hard winters. The first thing mother said was to the effect that she was going to see what she could do about getting me a rating. She did. The very first officer she saw she sailed up to and buttonholed much to my horror.

"Why can't my boy Oswald have a pretty little eagle on his arm, such as I see so many of the young men up here wearing about the camp?"

The abruptness of this question left the officer momentarily stunned, but I will say for him that he rallied quickly and returned a remarkably diplomatic reply to the effect that the pretty little eagle, although pleasing to gaze upon, was not primarily intended to be so much of a decoration as means of identification, and that certain small qualifications were required, as a rule, before one was permitted to wear one of the emblems in question; qualifications, he hastened to add, which he had not the slightest doubt that I failed to possess if I was the true son of my mother, but which, owing to fate and circumstances, I had probably been unable to exercise. Whereupon he bid her a very courteous good-day, returned my salute, and passed on, but not before the very old lady accompanying my mother saluted also, raising her hand to her funny bit of a

bonnet with unnecessary snappiness and snickering in a senile manner. This last episode upset me completely, but the old lady was irrepressible.

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From that time on she punctuated her progress through the camp with exaggerated salutes to all the officers she encountered on the way. This, of course, was quite a startling and undignified performance for one of her years, very embarrassing to me, as well as mystifying to the officers, who hardly knew whether to hurl me into the brig as vicarious atonement or to rebuke the flighty old creature, on the grounds of undue levity. Most of them passed by, however, with averted eyes and a discountenanced expression, feeling, I am sure, that I had put her up to it. Mother thought it quite amusing, and enjoyed my discomfiture hugely. Then for no particular reason she began to garnish her conversation with inappropriate seagoing expressions, such as “Pipe down,” “Hit the deck,” “Avast,” and “Hello, Buddy!” Where she ever picked up all this nonsense I am at a loss to discover, but she continued to pull it to the bitter end.

“Hello, Buddy!” was the way she greeted the Jimmy-legs of my barracks after I had introduced her to him with much elaboration. This completely floored the poor lad, and rendered him inarticulate. He thinks now that I come from either a family of thugs or maniacs, probably the latter. I succeeded in shaking the old thing for a while, and when I next found her she was demonstrating the proper method of washing whites to a group of sailors assembled in the wash room of one of our most popular latrines. She was heading in the direction of the shower baths when I finally rounded her up. She was a game old lady. I’ll have to hand her that. Her wildest escapade was reserved for the end of her visit, when I took her over to the K. of C. hut, and she challenged any sailor present to a game of pool for a quarter a ball. When we told her that the sailors in the Navy never gambled she said that she was completely off the service, and that she thought it was high time that we learned to do something useful instead of singing sentimental songs and weaving ourselves into intricate figures. This remark forced us to it, and much against our wills we proceeded to show the old lady up at pool. She had been bluffing all along, and when it came to a showdown we found that she couldn’t shoot for shucks. When the news spread around the hut the sailors crowded about her thick as thieves, challenging her to play. She was a wild, unregenerated old lady, but she was by no means an easy mark, as it later developed when she matched them for the winnings, got it all back, and I am told by some sailors that she even left the hut a little ahead of the game. I don’t object to notoriety, but there are numerous ways of winning it that are objectionable, and this old lady was one. Mother must have been giddier in her youth than I ever imagined.



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July 3d. Yesterday I lost my dog Fogerty and didn't find him until late in the afternoon. He was up in front of the First Regiment, mustered in with the liberty party. When he discovered my presence he looked coldly at me, as if he had never seen me before, so I knew that he had a date. He just sat there and shook his bangs over his eyes and tried to appear as if he were somewhere else. When the order come to shove off he joined the party and trotted off without even looking back, and that was the last I saw of him until this morning, when he came drifting in, rather unsteadily, and regarded me with a shifty but insulting eye. I am rapidly discovering hitherto unsuspected depths of depravity in Mr. Fogerty, which leads me to believe that he is almost human.

July 4th. This has been the doggonest Fourth of July I ever spent, and as a result I am in much trouble. All day long I have been grooming myself to look spic and span at the review held in honor of the Secretary when he opened the new wing to the camp. I missed it. I lost completely something in the neighborhood of ten thousand men. It seems hard to do, but the fact, the ghastly fact, remains that I did it. When I dashed out of the barracks with my newly washed, splendidly seagoing, still damp white hat in my hand my company was gone, and the whole camp seemed deserted. Far in the distance I heard the music of the band. Fogerty looked inquiringly at me and I fled. He fled after me.

[Illustration: "I LOST COMPLETELY SOMETHING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 10,000 MEN"]

"Fogerty," I gasped, "this is a trick I have to pull off alone. You're not in on this review, and for God's sake act reasonable."

I couldn't bear the thought of chasing across the parade ground with that simple-looking dog bounding along at my heels. My remark had no effect. Fogerty merely threw himself into high, and together we sped in the direction of the music. It was too late. Thousands of men were swinging past in review, and in all that mass of humanity there was one small vacant place that I was supposed to fill. I crouched down behind a tree and observed the scene through stricken eyes. How could I possibly have managed to lose nearly ten thousand men? It seemed incredible, and I realized then that I alone could have accomplished such a feat. And I had been so nice and clean, too, and I had worked so hard to be all of those things. I bowed my head in misery, and Mr. Fogerty, God bless his dissolute soul, crept up to me and tried to tell me it was all right, and didn't matter much anyway. I looked down, and discovered that my snow white hat was all muddy. Fogerty sat on it.

July 8th. As a result of my being scratched out of the Independence day review I have been tried out as punishment in all sorts of disagreeable positions, all of which I have filled with an inefficiency only equaled by the bad temper of my over-lords. Some of these tasks, one in particular was of such a ridiculous nature that I refuse to enter it into my diary for an unfeeling posterity to jeer at. I am willing to state, however, that the

accomplishments of Hercules, that redoubtable handy man of mythology, were trifling in comparison with mine.



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To begin with, the coal pile is altogether too large and my back is altogether too refined. There should be individual coal piles provided for temperamental sailors. Small, colorful, appetizingly shaped mounds of nice, clean, glistening chunks of coal they should be, and the coal itself could easily be made much lighter, approaching if possible the weight of feathers. This would be a task any reasonably inclined sailor would attack with relish, particularly if his efforts were attended by the strains of some good, snappy jazz. However, reality wears a graver face and a sootier one. Long did I labor and valiantly but to little effect. More coal fell off of my shovel than remained on it. This was due to the unfortunate fact that coal dust seems to affect me most unpleasantly, much in the same manner as daisies or golden rod affect hay fever sufferers. The result was that every time I had my shovel poised in readiness to hurl its burden into space a monolithic sneeze overpowered me, shook me to the keel, and all the coal that I had trapped with so much patience and cunning fell miserably around my feet, from whence it had lately risen. Little things like this become most discouraging when strung out for a great period of time. In this manner I sneezed and sweated throughout the course of a sweltering afternoon, and just as I was about to call it a day along comes an evilly inclined coal wagon and dumps practically in my lap one hundred times more coal than I had disturbed in the entire course of my labors. On top of this Fogerty, who had been loafing around all day with his tongue out disporting himself on the coal pile like a dog in the first snow, started a landslide somewhere above and came bearing down on me in a cloud of dust. I found myself buried beneath the delighted Fogerty and a couple of tons of coal, from which I emerged unbeamingly, but not before Mr. Fogerty had addressed his tongue to my blackened face as an expression of high good humor.

[Illustration: "FOGERTY CAME BEARING DOWN ON ME IN A CLOUD OF DUST"]

"Take me to the brig," I said, walking over to the P.O., "I'm through. You can put a service flag on that coal pile for me."

"What's consuming you, buddy?" asked the P.O. in not an unkindly voice.

"Take me to the brig," I repeated, "it's too much. Here I've been working diligently all day to reduce the size of this huge mass, when up comes that old wagon and humps its back and belches forth its horrid contents all over the place. It's ridiculous. I surrender my shovel."

"Gord," breathed the P.O., looking at me pityingly, "we don't want to go and reduce that coal pile, we want to enlarge it."

"Oh!" I replied, stunned, "I didn't quite understand. I thought you wanted to make it smaller, so I've been trying to shovel it away all afternoon."

"You shouldn't oughter have done that," replied the P.O. as if he were talking to an idiot, "I suppose you've been shoveling her down hill all day?"



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I admitted that I had.

“You see,” I added engagingly, “I began with trying to shovel her up hill, but the old stuff kept on rolling down on me, so I drew the natural conclusion that I’d better shovel her down hill. It seemed more reasonable and—”

“Easier,” suggested the P.O.

“Yes,” I agreed.

There was a faraway expression in his eyes when he next spoke. “I’d recommend you for an ineptitude discharge,” he said, “if it wasn’t for the fact that I have more consideration for the civilian population. I’d gladly put you in the brig for life if I could feel sure you wouldn’t injure it in some way. The only thing left for me to do is to make you promise that you’ll keep away from our coal pile and swear never to lay violent hands on it again. You’ll spoil it.”

I gazed up at the monumental mass of coal rearing itself like a dark-town Matterhorn above my head and swore fervently never to molest it again.

“Go back to your outfit and get washed and tell your P.O. for me that you can’t come here no more, and,” he added, as I was about to depart, “take that unusual looking bit of animal life with you—it’s all wrong. Police his body or he’ll ruin some of your pals’ white pants and they wouldn’t like that at all.”

I feared they wouldn’t.

“Yes, sir,” I replied in a crumpled voice, “Much obliged, sir.”

“Please go away now,” he said quietly, “or I think I might do you an injury.” He was fingering the shovel nervously as he spoke. Thus Fogerty and I departed, banished even from our dusky St. Helena.

July 9th. Working on the theory of opposites, I was next placed as a waiter in the Chief Petty Officer’s Mess over in the First Regiment. I wasn’t so good here, it seems. There was something wrong with my technique. The coal pile had ruined me for delicate work. I continually kept mistaking the plate in my hand for a shovel, a mistake which led to disastrous results. I will say this for the chiefs, however—they were as clean-cut, hard-eating a body of men as I have ever met. It was a pleasure to feed them, particularly so in the case of one chief, a venerable gentleman, who seemed both by his bearing and the number of stripes on his sleeve to be the dean of the mess. He ate quietly, composedly and to the point, and after I had spilled a couple of plates of rations on several of the other chiefs’ laps he suggested that I call it a day and be withdrawn in favor of one whose services to his country were not so invaluable as mine. Appreciating his delicacy I withdrew, but only to be sent out on another job that defies description.

Even here I quickly demonstrated my unfitness and have consequently been incorporated once more into the body of my regiment.



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July 10th. I had the most terrible experience in mess to-day when a guy having eaten more rapidly than I attempted to take my ration. When I told him he shouldn't do it he merely laughed brutally and kicked me an awful whack on the shin. This injury, together with the sight of witnessing my food about to be crammed down his predatory maw, succeeded in bringing all my latent patriotism to the fore and I fell upon him with a desperation bred of hunger. We proceeded to mill it up in a rather futile, childish manner until the Master-at-arms suggested in a certain way he has that we go away to somewhere else. Hereafter if any one asks if I did any actual fighting in this war I am going to say, "Yes, I fought like hell many hard and long battles in camp for my ration," which will be true.

"Say, buddy," said my opponent, after we had landed quite violently on the exterior of the Mess Hall, "you didn't git no food at all, did yer?"

"No," I replied bitterly; "at all is right."

He looked at me for a moment in a strange, studying manner, then began laughing softly to himself.

"I don't know what made me do it," he said more to himself than to me. "I wasn't hungry no more. I didn't *really* want it. I wonder what makes a guy brutal? Guess he sort of has a feelin' to experiment with himself and other folks."

"I wish you'd tried that experiment on some one else," I replied, thinking tenderly of my shin.

"Sometimes I feel so doggon strong and mean," he continued, "I just can't keep from doing things I don't naturally feel like doing. I guess I'm sort of an animal."

"Say," I asked him in surprise, "if you keep talking about yourself that way I won't be able to call you all the names I am carefully preparing at this moment."

He peered earnestly down on me for a space.

"Does my face make you talk that way?" I asked, feeling dimly and uncomfortably that it did.

"Yes," he replied, "it's your face, your foolish looking face. I can't help feeling sorry for it and your funny empty little belly."

"You're breaking me down," I answered; "I can't stand kindness."

"I ain't no bully," he said fiercely, as if he was about to strike me. "I ain't no bully," he repeated, "I'll tell you that."



“No, sir,” I replied soothingly, keeping on the alert, “you ain’t no bully.”

Here he took me by the arm and dragged me along with him.

“Come on, buddy,” he said, “I’m going to take you to the canteen and feed you. I’m going to do it, I swear to God.”

So he fed me. Stacks and stacks of stuff he forced on me until the flesh rebelled, after which he put things in my pockets, repeating every little while, “I ain’t no bully, I’ll tell you that, I ain’t no bully.” He spent most of his money, I reckon, but I did not try to stop him. He wanted to do it and I guess it made him feel better. After the orgy I took him around and let him pat Mr. Fogerty. He seemed to like this. Fogerty took it in good part.

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July 11th. There's something about Wednesday afternoons that doesn't appeal to me. First they make you go away and dress yourself up nice and clean and then they look you over and make you feel nearly as childish as you look. Then they put a gun into your hand that is much too heavy for comfort and make you do all sorts of ridiculous things with this gun, after which you fall in with numerous thousands of other men who have been subjected to the same treatment, and together we all go trotting past any number of officers, who look you over with uncanny earnestness through eyes that seem to perceive the remotest defect with fiendish accuracy. Then we all trot home again and call it a review.

This is all very well for some people, but not for me. I'm a little too self-conscious. I have always the feeling that I am the review, that it has been staged particularly for my discomfort, and that every officer in camp is on the lookout for any slight irregularity in my clothes or conduct. In this they have little difficulty. I assist them greatly myself. To-day, for instance:

Item one: Dropped my gun.

Item two: Talked in ranks. I asked the guy next to me how he would like to go to a place and he said that he'd see me there first.

Item three: Failed to follow the guide.

Item four: Didn't mark time correctly.

Item five: Was in step once.

Now all of these things are trifling in themselves, but taken en mass, as it were, it leads up to a sizable display; at least, so I was told in words that denied any other interpretation by my P.O. and several pals of his. After the review our regimental commander lined us up and addressed us as follows:

"About that review to-day," he began, "it was terrible" (long, dramatic pause). "It was probably the worst review I have ever seen (several P.O.'s glanced at me reproachfully), not only that," he continued, "but it was the worst review that anybody has ever seen. Anybody! (shouted) without exception! (shouted) awful review! (pause) Terrible!"

We steadied in the ranks and waited for our doom.

"It will never be so again," he continued, "I'll see to that. I'll drill ye myself. If you have to get up at four o'clock in the morning to drill in order to meet your classes, I'll see that ye do it. Dropping guns! (pause). Talking in ranks! (pause). Out-o-step (terrible pause). Marking time wrong. Everything wrong! Company commanders, take 'em away."



We were took.

“All of those things,” said my P.O. in a trembling voice, “you did. All of 'em. Now the old man's sore on us and he's going to give us hell, and I'm going to do the same by you.”

“Shoot, dearie,” says I, with the desperate indifference of a man who has nothing left to lose, “I wouldn't feel natural if you didn't.”

And in my hammock that night I thought of another thing I might have said if it had occurred to me in time. I might have said, “Hell is the only thing you know how to give and you're generous with that because it's free.”

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But I guess after all it's just as well I didn't.

August 1st. Mr. Fogerty has returned aboard. My worst fears are realized. For a long time he has been irritable and uncommunicative with me and has indulged in sly, furtive little tricks unbecoming to a dog of the service. I have suspected that he was concealing a love affair from me. This it appears he has been doing and his guilt is heavy upon him. I realize now for the first time and not without a sharp maternal pang that he has reached an age at which he must make decisions for himself. I can no longer follow him out into the world upon his nocturnal exploits. His entire confidence is not mine. I must be content to share a part of his heart instead of the whole of it. Like father like son, I suppose. However, I see no reason for him to put on such airs. On his return from City Island this time he had somehow contrived to get himself completely shaved up to the shoulders. The result is startling. Fogerty looks extremely aristocratic but a trifle foppish. However, he seems to consider himself the only real four-footed dog in camp. This is a trifle boring from a dog who has never hesitated to steal from the galley anything that wasn't a permanent fixture. I can't help but feel sorry for him though when I see that far-away look in his eyes. Sad days I fear are in store for him. Ah, well, we're only young once.

August 3d. "Well, now, son," he was saying, "mind me when I tell yer that I'm not claiming as to ever have seen a mermaid, but what I am saying is this and that is if anybody has ever seen one of them things I'm that man. I'm not making no false claims, however, none whatsoever."

I carefully placed my shovel against the wheelbarrow and seating myself upon a stump prepared to listen to my companion. He was a chief of many cruises and for some unaccountable reason had fixed on me as being a suitable recipient for his discourse. One more hash mark on his arm would have made him look like a convict. I listened and in the meanwhile many mounds of sand urgently in need of shoveling remained undisturbed. Upon this sand I occasionally cast a reflective and apprehensive eye. The chief, noticing this, nudged me in the ribs with an angular elbow.

"Don't mind that, sonny," he said, "I'll pump the fear-o'-God into the heart of any P.O. what endeavors to disturb you. Trust me."

I did.

"Now getting back to this mermaid," he began in a confidential voice, "what I say as I didn't claim to have saw. It happened this way and what I'm telling you, sonny, is the plain, unvarnished facts of the case, take 'em or leave 'em as you will. They happened and I'm here to tell the whole world so."

"I have every confidence in you, chief," I replied mildly.



“It is well you have,” he growled, scanning my face suspiciously. “It’s well you have, you louse.”

“Why, chief,” I exclaimed in an aggrieved voice, “isn’t that rather an unappetizing word to apply to a fellow creature?”



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“Mayhap, young feller,” he replied, “mayhap. I ain’t no deep sea dictionary diver, I ain’t, but all this has got nothing to do with what I was about to tell you. It all happened after this manner, neither no more nor no less.”

He cleared his throat and gazed with undisguised hostility across the parade ground. Thus he began:

“It was during the summer of 1888, some thirty odd years ago,” quoth he. “I was a bit young then, but never such a whey face as you, certainly not.”

“Positively,” said I, in hearty agreement.

“At that time,” he continued, not noticing my remark, “I was resting easy on a soft job between cruises as night watchman on one of them P.O. docks at Dover. The work warn’t hard, but it was hard enough. I would never have taken it had it not been for the unpleasant fact that owing to some little trouble I had gotten into at one of the pubs my wife was in one of her nasty, brow-beating moods. At these times the solitude and the stars together with the grateful companionship of a couple of buckets of beer was greatly to be preferred to my little old home. So I took the job and accordingly spent my nights sitting with my back to a pile, my legs comfortably stretched out along the rim of the dock and a bucket of beer within easy reach.”

“Could anything be fairer than that?” said I.

“Nothing,” said he, and continued. “Well, one night as I was sitting there looking down in the water as a man does when his mind is empty and his body well disposed, I found myself gazing down into two glowing pools that weren’t the reflections of stars. Above these two flecks of light was perched a battered old leghorn hat after the style affected in the music halls of those days. Floating out back of this hat on the water was a long wavy coil of filmy hair, the face was shaded, but two long slim arms were thrust out of the water toward me, and following these arms down a bit I was shocked and surprised to find that further than the hat the young lady below me was apparently innocent of garments. Now I believe in going out with the boys when the occasion demands and making a bit of a time of it, but my folks have always been good, honest church people and believers in good, strong, modest clothing and plenty of ’em. I have always followed their example.”

“Reluctantly and at a great distance,” said I.

“Not at all,” said he and continued. “So when I sees the condition the young lady was in I was naturally very much put out and I didn’t hesitate telling her so.

“‘Go home,’ says I, ‘and put your clothes on. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—a great big girl like you.’



“Aw, pipe down, old grizzle face,’ says she; ‘wot have you got in the bucket?’ And if you will believe me she began raising herself out of the water. ‘Give me some,’ says she.

“Stop,’ I cries out exasperated; ‘stop where you are; you’ve gone far enough. For shame.’



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“I’ll come all the way out,’ says she, laughing, ‘unless you give me some of wot you got in that bucket.’

“‘Shame,’ I repeated, ‘ain’t you got no sense of decency?’

“‘None wot so ever,’ she replied, ‘but I’m awfully thirsty. Gimme a drink or out I’ll come.’

“Now you can see for yourself that I couldn’t afford to have a woman in her get-up sitting around with me on the end of a dock, being married as I was and my folks all good honest church folks, and bright moon shining in the sky to boot, so I was just naturally forced to give in to the brazen thing and reach her down the bucket, a full one at that. It came back empty and she was forwarder than ever.

“‘Say,’ she cries out, swimming around most exasperatingly, ‘you’re a nice old party. What do your folks know you by?’

“I told her my name was none of her business and that I was a married man and that I wished she’d go away and let me go on with my night watching.

“‘I’m married too,’ says she, in a conversational tone, ‘to an awful mess. You’re pretty fuzzy, but I’d swap him for you any day. Come on into the sea with me and we’ll swim down to Gold Fish Arms and stick around until we get a drink. I know lots of the boys down there. There ain’t no liquor dealers where I come from,’ and with this if you will believe me she flips a bucket full of water into my lap with the neatest little scale spangled tail you ever seen.

“‘No,’ says I, ‘my mind’s made up. I ain’t agoing to go swimming around with no semi-stewed, altogether nude mermaid. It ain’t right. It ain’t Christian.’

“‘I got a hat,’ says she reflectively, ‘and I ain’t so stewed but wot I can’t swim. Wot do you think of that hat? One of the boys stole it from his old woman and gave it to me. Come on, let’s take a swim.’

“‘No,’ says I, ‘I ain’t agoing.’

“‘Just ‘cause I ain’t all dolled up in a lot of clothes?’ says she.

“‘Partly,’ says I, ‘and partly because you are a mermaid. I ain’t agoing messing around through the water with no mermaid. I ain’t never done it and I ain’t agoing to begin it now.’

“‘If I get some clothes on and dress all up pretty, will you go swimming with me then?’ she asks pleadingly.

“‘Well that’s another thing,’ says I, noncommittal like.



“All right,’ says she, ‘gimme something out of that other bucket and I’ll go away. Come on, old sweetheart,’ and she held up her arms to me.

“Well, I gave her the bucket and true to form she emptied it. Then she began to argue and plead with me until I nearly lost an ear.

“No,’ I yells at her, ‘I ain’t agoing to spend the night arguing with a drunken mermaid. Go away, now; you said you would.’

“All right, old love,’ she replies good-naturedly, ‘but I’ll see you again some time. I ain’t ever going home again. I hate it down there.’ And off she swims in an unsteady manner in the direction of the Gold Fish Arms. She was singing and shouting something terrible.



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“Oh, bury me not on the lonesome prairie
Where the wild coyotes howl o'er me,'

was the song she sang and I wondered where she had ever picked it up.

“Well,” continued the chief, “to cast a sheep shank in a long line, these visits kept up every evening until I was pretty near drove distracted. Along she'd come about sun-down and stick around devilin' me and drinking up all my grog. After a while she began calling for gin and kept threatening me until I just had to satisfy her. She also made me buy her a brush and comb, a mouth organ and a pair of spectacles, together with a lot of other stuff on the strength of the fact that if I refused she would make a scene. In this way that doggon mermaid continually kept me broke, for my wage warn't enough to make me heavy and I had my home to support.

“Don't you ever go home?’ I asked her one night.

“No,’ she replied, ‘I ain't ever going back home. I don't like it down there. There ain't no liquor dealers.’

“But your husband,’ exclaims I. ‘What of him?’

“I know,’ says she, ‘but I don't like him and I'm off my baby, too. It squints,’ says she.

“But all babies squint,’ says I.

“Mine shouldn't,’ says she. ‘It ain't right.’

“Then one night an awful thing happened. My wife came down to the dock to find out how I spent all my money. It was a bright moon-lit night and this lost soul of a mermaid was hanging around, particularly jilled and entreating. I was just in the act of passing her down the gin flask and she was saying to me, ‘Come on down, old love; you know you're crazy about me,’ when all of a sudden I heard an infuriated shriek behind me and saw my wife leaning over the dock shaking an umbrella at this huzzy of a mermaid. Oh, son,” broke off the Chief, “if you only knew the uncontrolled violence and fury of two contending women. Nothing you meet on shipboard will ever equal it. I was speechless, rocked in the surf of a tumult of words. And in the midst of it all what should happen but the husband of the mermaid pops out of the water with a funny little bit of a merbaby in his arms.

“Go home at once, sir,’ screams my wife, ‘and put on your clothes.’

“I will,’ he shouts back, ‘if my wife will come along with me.’

“He was a weazened up little old man with a crooked back. Not very prepossessing. I could hardly blame his wife.



“So that bit of stuff is your wife, is it?’ cries out my old lady, and with that she began telling him her past.

“I know it,’ says the little old merman at last, almost crying; ‘I know it, but I ain’t got no control over her whatsoever. I’ve been trying to get her to come home for the last fortnight, but she just won’t leave off going around with the sailors. The whole beach is ashamed of her. It’s general talk down below. What can I do? The little old coral house is going to wrack and ruin and the baby ain’t been properly took care of since she left. What am I going to do, madam? What am I going to do? I’m well nigh distracted.’



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“But his wife was too taken up with the gin bottle to pay much heed to his pitiful words. She just kept flirting around in the water and singing snatches of bad sailor songs she’d picked up around the docks.

“Take her home,’ said my wife, ‘take her home, you weakling, by force.’

“But I can’t when she’s in this condition. I got a child in my arms.’

“Give me the baby,’ said my wife, with sudden determination. ‘I’ll take care of it until tomorrow night when you can come back here and get it.’

“He handed the flopping little thing up to my wife and turned to the mermaid.

“Lil,’ he says to her, holding out his arms to her, ‘Lil, will you come home?’

“Lil swims up to him then and takes him by the arm and looks at him for a long time.

“Kiss me, Archie,’ she says suddenly, ‘I don’t mind if I do,’ and flipping a couple of pounds of water upon the both of us on the pier, she pulls him under the water laughing and that’s the last I saw of either of them. Now I ain’t asaying as I have ever seen a mermaid mind you,” continued the chief, “but what I do say is that if any man has ever seen one I’m the man.”

“I understand perfectly,” said I, “and what, chief, became of the baby?”

“Oh, the baby,” said the chief, thoughtful like; “the baby—well, you see, about that baby —” he gazed searchingly around the landscape for a moment before replying.

“Oh, the baby,” he said suddenly, as if greatly relieved, “well, my wife took the baby home and kept it in the bathtub for a couple of days after which she returned it in person to its father. She made me give up my job. It did squint, though,” said the chief, as he got up to go, “ever so little.”

I turned to my shovel.

“But I ain’t saying as I have ever seen a mermaid,” he said, turning back in his tracks, “all I’m saying is that—”

“I know, Chief,” I said wearily, “I fully appreciate your delicacy and fairness. You’re not the man to make any false claims.”

“No, sir, not I,” he replied, as he walked slowly away.

August 5th. In order to distract Mr. Fogerty’s attention from his love affair and in a sort of desperate endeavor to win him back to me I took him away on my last liberty with me.



Fogerty doesn't come under the heading of a lap dog, but through some technical quibble I managed to smuggle him into the subway. All he did there was to knock over one elderly lady and lick her face effusively when he had gotten her down. This resulted in a small but complete panic. For the most part, however, he sat quietly on my lap and sniffed at those around him. At last we reached Washington Square, whereupon I proceeded to take Mr. Fogerty around and show him off to my friends. He was well received, but his heart wasn't with us. It was far away in City Island.

[Illustration: "FOR THE MOST PART, HOWEVER, HE SAT QUIETLY ON MY LAP AND SNIFFED"]



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At one restaurant we ran into a female whose hair was nearly as short as Fogerty's. She was holding forth on the Silence of the Soul vs. the Love Impulse, the cabbage or some other plant. Fogerty listened to her for a while and then bit her. He did it quietly, but I thought it best to take him away.

After supper we went up to another place for coffee, a fine little place for sailormen, situated on the south side of the square. Here we were received with winning cordiality and Fogerty was given a fried egg, a dish of which he is passionately fond. But even here he got into trouble by putting one of his great feet through a Ukulele, which isn't such a terrible thing to do, except in certain places.

Getting back to the station was a crisp little affair. Fogerty and myself rose at five and went forth to the shuttle. The subway was a madhouse. We shuttled ourselves to death. At 5.30 we were at the Times Square end of the shuttle, at 5.45 we were at Williams, at 6 o'clock we had somehow managed to get ourselves on the east side end of the shuttle, five minutes later we were back at Times Square, ten minutes later we were over on the east side once more. At 6.15 I lost Fogerty. At 6.25 I was back at Times Square. "Hello, buddy," said the guard, "you back again? Here's your dog."

At 7 o'clock we were at Van Cortlandt Park, at 8 we were at Ninety-sixth Street, 9 o'clock found us laboring up to the gate of the camp, with a written list of excuses that looked like the schedule of a flourishing railroad. It was accepted, much to our surprise.

Aug. 7th. I have a perfectly splendid idea. Of course, like the rest of my ideas it won't work, but it is a perfectly splendid idea for all that. I got it while traveling on the ferry boat from New York to Staten Island—the longest sea voyage I have had since I joined the Navy. On this trip, strangely thrilling to a sailor in my situation, but which was suffered with bored indifference by the amphibious commuters that infest this Island in those waters, I saw a number of ships so gaudily and at the same time so carelessly painted that any God-fearing skipper of the Spanish Main would positively have refused to command. Captain Kidd himself would have blushed at the very sight of this ribald fleet and turned away with a devout imprecation.

This was my first experience with camouflage, and it impressed me most unfavorably. An ordinary ship on a grumbling ocean is difficult enough as it is to establish friendly relations with, but when trigged out in this manner—why serve meals at all, say I. Nevertheless it occurred to me that it would not be a bad idea at all to camouflage one's hammock in such a manner that it took upon itself the texture and appearance of the bulkhead of the barracks in which it was swung. In this manner a sailor could sleep undisturbed for three weeks if he so desired (and he does), without ever being technically considered a deserter.

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One could elaborate this idea still further and make one's sea bag look like a clump of poison ivy, so that no inspecting officer would ever care to become intimate with its numerous defects in cleanliness. One might even go so far as to camouflage oneself into a writing desk so that when visiting the "Y" or the "K-C" and unexpectedly required to sing one would not be forced to rise and scream impatiently and threateningly "Dear Mother Mine" or "Break the News to Mother." Not that these songs are not things of rare beauty in themselves, but after a day on the coal pile one's lungs have been sufficiently exercised to warrant relief. This is merely an idea of mine, and now that everybody knows about it I guess there isn't much use in going ahead with it.

Aug. 8th. "This guide i-s l-e-f-t!" shouted the P.O., and naturally I looked around to see what had become of the poor fellow.

"Keep your head straight. Eyes to the front! Don't move! Whatcha lookin' at?"

"I was looking for the guide that was left," says I timidly. "It seems to me that he is always being left."

"Company dismissed," said the P.O. promptly, showing a wonderful command of the situation under rather trying circumstances, for the boo-hoo that went up from the men after my remark defied all restraints of discipline.

"Say, Biltmore," says the P.O. to me a moment later, "I'm going to see if I can't get you shipped to Siberia if you pull one of them bum jokes again. You understand?"

"But I wasn't joking," I replied innocently.

"Aw go on, you sly dog," said he, nudging me in the ribs, and for some strange reason he departed in high good humor, leaving me in a greatly mystified frame of mind.

Speaking of getting shipped, I have just written a very sad song in the style of the old sentimental ballads of the Spanish war days. It's called "The Sailor's Farewell," and I think Polly will like it. I haven't polished it up yet, but here it is as it is:

A sailor to his mother came and said, "Oh, mother dear,
I got to go away and fight the war.
So, mother, don't you cry too hard, and don't you have no fear
When you find that I'm not sticking 'round no more."

"My boy," the sweet old lady said, "I hate to see you go.
I've knowed you since when you was but a kid,
But if the question you should ask, I'll tell the whole world so—
It's the only decent thing you ever did."



A tear she brushed aside,
And then she sadly cried:

CHORUS

“I’m proud my boy’s a sailor man what sails upon the sea.
I’ve always liked him pretty well although he is so dumb.
For years he’s stuck around the house and disappointed me.
I thought that he was going to be a bum.”

He took her gently by the hand and kissed her on the bean
And said, “When I’m about to fight the Hun
You shouldn’t talk to me that way; I think it’s awfully mean—
I ain’t agoin’ to have a lot of fun.”



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"I know, my child," the mother said. "The parting makes me sad,
But go you must away and fight the war.
At least you will not live to drink as much as did your dad—
So here's your lid, my lad, and there's the door."

Then as he turned away
He heard her softly say:

CHORUS

"The sailors I have ever loved. I'm glad my lad's a gob,
Although it seems to me he's much too dumb.
But after all perhaps he isn't such an awful slob—
I always knew that Kaiser was a bum!"

Aug. 9th. The best way to make a deserter of a man is to give him too much liberty. For the past week I have been getting my dog Fogerty on numerous liberty lists when he shouldn't have been there, but not contented with that he has taken to going around with a couple of yeomen, and the first thing I know he will be getting on a special detail where the liberty is soft. I put nothing past that dog since he lost his head to some flop-eared huzzy with a black and tan reputation.

Aug. 10th. All day long and a little longer I have been carrying sacks of flour. The next time I see a stalk of wheat I am going to snarl at it. This new occupation is a sort of special penance for not having my hammock lashed in time. It seems that I have been in the service long enough to know how to do the thing right by now, but the seventh hitch is a sly little devil and always gets me. I need a longer line or a shorter hammock, but the only way out of it that I can see is to get a commission and rate a bed.

[Illustration: "I CARRIED ALL THE FLOUR TO-DAY THAT WAS RAISED LAST YEAR IN THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF THE STATE OF MONTANA"]

I carried all the flour to-day that was raised last year in the southern section of the State of Montana, and I was carrying it well and cheerfully until one of my pet finger nails (the one that the manicure girls in the Biltmore used to rave about) thrust itself through the sack and precipitated its contents upon myself and the floor. A commissary steward when thoroughly aroused is a poisonous member of society. One would have thought that I had sunk the great fleet the way this bird went on about one little sack of flour.

"Here Mr. Hoover works hard night and day all winter," he sobs at me, "and you go spreading it around as if you were Marie Antoinette."



I wondered what new scandal he had about Marie Antoinette, but I held my peace. My horror was so great that the real color of my face made the flour look like a coat of sunburn in comparison.

“There’s enough flour there,” he continued reproachfully, pointing to the huge mound of stuff in which I stood like a lost explorer on a snow-capped mountain peak and wishing heartily that I was one, “there’s enough flour,” he continued, “to keep a chief petty officer in pie for twenty-four hours.”

“Just about,” thought I to myself.



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“Well,” he cried irritably, “pick it up. Be quick. Pick it up—all of it!”

“Pick it up,” I replied through a cloud of mist, “you can’t pick up flour. You can pick up apples and pears and cabbages and cigarette butts for that matter, but you can’t pick up flour.”

The commissary steward suddenly handed me a piece of paper upon which he had been writing frantically.

“Take this to your P.O.,” he said shrilly, “and take yourself along with it.

“A defect in the sack,” I gasped, departing.

“And there’s a defect in you,” he shouted after me, “your brain is exempted.”

“Take this man and kill him if you can find any slight technical excuse for it,” the note ran, “and if you can’t kill him, give him an inaptitude discharge with my compliments, and if you are unable to do either of these two things, at least keep him away from my outfit. We don’t want to see his silly face around here any more at all.”

The P.O. read it to me with great delight.

“I guess we’ll have to send you to Siberia after all,” he said thoughtfully, “only that country is in far too delicate a condition for you to meddle with at present. Go away to somewhere where I can’t see you,” he continued bitterly, “for I feel inclined to do you an injury, something permanent and serious.” I went right away.

Aug. 11th. Mother has just paid one of her belligerent visits to the camp, and as a consequence I am on the point of having a flock of brainstorms. Some misguided person had been telling her about the Officer Training School up here, and she arrived fired with the ambition to enter me into that institution without further delay. True to form, she bounded headlong into the matter without consulting my feelings by accosting the very first commissioned officer she met. He happened to be an Ensign, but he might as well have been a Vice-Admiral for all Mother cared.

“Tell me, young man,” she said to this Ensign, going directly to the point, “do you see any reason why my boy Oswald should not go to that place where they make all the Ensigns?”

“Yes,” said the officer firmly, “I do.”

“Oh, you do,” snapped Mother angrily, “and pray tell me what that reason might be?”

“Your son Oswald,” replied the Ensign laconically.



“What!” exclaimed Mother, “you mean to say that my Oswald is not good enough to go to your silly old school?”

“No,” replied the Ensign, weakening pitifully before the withering fury of an aroused mother, “but you see, my dear madam, he has not a first class rating.”

“Fiddlesticks!” said Mother.

“Crossed anchors,” replied the Ensign.

“I didn’t mean that,” continued Mother, “I think the whole thing is very mysterious and silly, and I’m not going to let it stop here. You can trust me, Oswald,” she went on soothingly. “I am going to see the Commander of the station myself. I am going this very instant.”



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“But, Mother,” I cried in desperation, tossing all consequences to the wind, “the ‘skipper’ isn’t on the station to-day. He got a 43-hour liberty. I saw him check out of the gate myself.”

For a moment the Ensign’s jaw dropped. I watched him anxiously. Then with perfect composure he turned to Mother and came through like a little gentleman.

“Yes, madam,” he stated, “your son is right. I heard his name read out with the liberty party only a moment ago. He has shoved off by now.”

I could have kissed that Ensign.

“Well, I’m sure,” said Mother, “it’s very funny that I can never get to the Captain. I shall write him, however.”

“He must have an interesting collection of your letters already,” I suggested. “They would be interesting to publish in book form.”

“Anyway,” continued Mother, apparently not attending to my remark, “I think you would look just as well as this young man in one of those nice white suits.”

“No doubt, madam,” replied the Ensign propitiatingly, “no doubt.”

“Come, Mother,” said I, “let’s go to the Y.M.C.A. I need something cool to steady my nerves.”

“How about your underwear?” said Mother, coming back to her mania, in a voice that invited all within earshot who were interested in my underwear to draw nigh and attend.

“Here, eat this ice cream,” I put in quickly, almost feeding her. “It’s melting.”

But Mother was not to be decoyed away from her favorite topic.

“I must look it over,” she continued firmly.

It seemed to me that every eye in the room was calmly penetrating my whites and carefully looking over the underwear in which Mother took such an exaggerated interest. “Socks!” suddenly exploded Mother. “How are you off for socks?”

“Splendidly,” I said in a hoarse voice. A girl behind me snickered.

“And have you that liniment to rub on your stomach when you have cramps?” she went on ruggedly.



“Enough to last through the Fall season,” I replied in a moody voice. I didn’t tell her that Tim the barkeep had tried to drink it.

“Polly!” suddenly exclaimed Mother. “Polly! Why, I forgot to tell you that she said that she would be up this afternoon. She must be here now.”

The world swam around me. Polly was my favorite sweetie.

“Oh, Mother!” I cried reproachfully, “how could you have forgotten?”

At that moment I heard a familiar voice issuing from the corner, and turning around, I caught sight of the staff reporter of the camp paper, a notoriously unscrupulous sailor with predatory proclivities. He had gotten Polly in a corner and was chinning the ear off of her. As I drew near I heard him saying:

“Really it’s an awful pity, but I distinctly remember him saying that he was going away on liberty to-day. He mentioned some girl’s name, but it didn’t sound anything at all like yours.”



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Polly looked at him trustfully.

“Are you sure, Mr.——”

“Savanrola,” the lying wretch supplied without turning a hair.

“Are you sure, Mr. Savanrola, that he has left the station?”

“Saw him check out with my own eyes,” he said calmly.

I moved nearer, my hands twitching.

“Now with an honest old seafaring man like myself,” he continued, in a confidential voice, “it’s different. Why, if I should wear all the hash marks I rate I’d look like a zebra. So I just don’t wear any. You know how it is. But when I like a girl I stick to her. Now from the very first moment I laid eyes on you——”

Human endurance could stand no more. I threw myself between them.

“Why, here’s Oswald hisself,” exclaimed the reporter with masterfully feigned surprise. “However did you get back so soon?”

“I have never been away anywhere to get back from, and you know it,” I replied coldly.

“Strange!” he said, “I could have sworn that I saw you checking out. Can I get you some ice cream?” he added smoothly.

“What on?” I replied bitterly, knowing him always to be broke.

“Your mother must have——”

“Come,” said I to Polly, “leave this degraded creature to ply his pernicious trade alone. I have some very important words to say to you.”

“Good-by, Mr. Savanrola,” said Polly.

“Until we meet again,” answered the reporter, with the utmost confidence.

Aug. 12th. It’s all arranged. Those words I had to say to Polly were not spoken in vain. She has promised to be my permanent sweetie. Of course, I have had a number of transit sweeties in the past, but now I’m going to settle down to one steady, day in and day out sweetie. I told Tim, the barkeep, about it last night and all he said was:

“What about all those parties we’d planned to have after we were paid off?”



This sort of set me back for the moment. The spell of Polly's eyes had made me forget all about Tim.

"Well, Tim," I replied, "I'll have to think about that. Come on over to the canteen and I'll feed you some of those honest, upstanding sandwiches they have over there."

"Say," says Tim, the carnal beast, forgetting everything at the prospect of food, "I feel as if I could cover a flock of them without trying."

So together Tim and I had a bachelor's dinner over the sandwiches, which were worthy of that auspicious occasion.

Aug. 17th. We were standing on a street corner of a neighboring town. The party consisted of Tim the barkeep, the "Spider," an individual who modestly acknowledged credit for having brought relief to several over-crowded safes in the good old civilian days; Tony, who delivered ice in my district also in those aforementioned days, and myself. These gentlemen for some time had been allowing me to exist in peace, and I had been showing my gratitude

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by buying them whatever little dainties they desired, but such a comfortable state of affairs could not long continue with that bunch. Suddenly, without any previous consultation, as if drawn together as it were by some fiendish undercurrent, they decided to make me unhappy—me, the only guy that spoke unbroken English in the crowd. This is the way they accomplished their low ends. When the next civilian came along they all of them shouted at me in tones that could be heard by all passers-by:

“Here comes a ‘civilian,’ buddy; he’ll give you a quarter.”

“Do you need some money, my boy?” said the old gentleman to me in a kindly voice.

“No, sir,” I stammered, getting red all over, “thank you very much, but I really don’t need any money.”

Ironical laughter from my friends in the background.

“Oh, no,” cries Tim sarcastically, “he don’t need no money. Just watch him when he sees the color of it.”

“Don’t hesitate, my son,” continued the kind old man, “if you need anything I would be glad to help you out.”

“No, sir,” I replied, turning away to hide my mortification, “everything is all right.”

“Poor but proud,” hisses the “Spider.” The old gentleman passed on, sorely perplexed.

For some time I was a victim of this crude plot. When I tried to move away they followed me around the streets, crying after me:

“Any ‘civilian’ will give you a quarter. Go on an’ ask them.”

Several ladies stopped and asked if they could be of any service to me. I assured them that they couldn’t, but all the time these low sailors whom I had been feeding lavishly kept jeering and intimating that I was fooling and would take any amount of money offered me from a dime up. This shower of conflicting statements always left the kindhearted people in a confused frame of mind and broke me up completely. I had to chase one man all the way down the street and hand him back the quarter he had thrust into my hand. My friends never forgave me for this.

At length, tiring of their sport, they desisted and stood gloomily on the curb as sailors do, looking idly at nothing.



"It don't look like we was ever going to get a hitch," said the "Spider," after we had abandonedly offered ourselves to several automobiles.

At that moment a huge machine rolled heavily by.

"There goes a piece of junk," said Tim. The lady in the machine must have heard him, for the car came to and she motioned for us to get in.

"Going our way?" she asked, smiling at us.

"Thanks, lady," replies Tim, elbowing me aside as he climbed aboard.

"Dust your feet," I whispered to Tony as he was about to climb in.

"Whatta you mean, dusta my feet?" shouted Tony wrathfully, "you go head an' dusta your feet! I look out for my feet all right."

"What did he want yer to do, Tony?" asked Tim in a loud voice.



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"Dusta my feet," answered Tony, greatly injured.

"What yer doin', Oswald?" asks Tim sarcastically, "tryin' to drag us up?"

"I only spoke for the best," I answered, sick at heart.

"Ha! ha!" grated Tim, "guess you think we ain't never rode in one of these wealthy wagons before."

"Arn't you rather young?" asked the lady soothingly of the "Spider," who by virtue of his mechanical experience in civil life had been given a first class rating, "Arn't you rather young to have so many things on your arm?"

"Yes," answered the "Spider" promptly, "but I kin do a lot of tricks."

The conversation languished from this point.

"We always take our boys to dinner, don't we, dear?" said the lady to her husband a little later.

"Yes, dear," he answered meekly, just like that.

Expectant silence from the four of us.

"Have you boys had dinner?" the lady asked.

"Certainly not," we cried, with an earnestness that gave the lie to our statement, "no dinner!"

"None at all," added Tim thoughtfully.

The automobile drew up at a 14k. plate-glass house that fairly made the "Spider" itch.

"Gosh," he whispered to me, looking at the porch, "that wouldn't be hard for me."

During the dinner he kept sort of lifting and weighing the silver and then looking at me and winking in an obvious manner.

"Not many people here to-night," said Tony from behind his plate.

"Why, there is the usual number," said the husband in surprise, "my wife and myself live alone."

"Oh," said Tony, looking around at the tremendous dining hall, "I thought this was a restaurant."



[Illustration: “OH,’ SAID TONY, ‘I THOUGHT THIS WAS A RESTAURANT”]

Tim started laughing then, and he hasn’t stopped yet. He’s so proud he didn’t make the mistake himself.

The “Spider” didn’t open his mouth save for the purpose of eating. He told me he was afraid his teeth would chatter.

Aug. 20th. Got a letter from Polly to-day. She says that her finger is just itching for the ring. I told the “Spider” about it and he said that he had several unset stones he’d let me have for next to nothing. A good burglar is one of the most valuable friends a man can possess.

Sept. 3d. I had such a set-back to-day. Never was I more confounded. This morning I received a notice to report before the examining board for a first class rating. Of course I had been expecting some slight recognition of my real worth for a long time, but when the blow fell I was hardly prepared for it. Hurrying to “My Blue Jacket’s Manual,” I succeeded by the aid of a picture in getting firmly in my mind the port and starboard side of a ship and then I presented myself before the examiners—three doughty and unsmiling officers. There were about twelve of us up for examination. Seating ourselves before the three gentlemen, we gazed upon them with ill-concealed trepidation. One of them called the roll in a languid manner, and then without further preliminaries the battle began, and I received the first shock of the assault. I don’t quite remember the question that man asked me, it was all too ghastly at the time, but I think it was something like this:



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“What would you do if you were at the wheel in a dense fog and you heard three whistles on your port beam, four whistles off the starboard bow, and a prolonged toot dead ahead?”

“I would still remain in a dense fog,” I gasped in a low voice.

“Speak up!” snapped the officer.

“Full speed ahead and jumps,” whispered a guy next to me. It sounded reasonable. I seized upon it eagerly.

“I’d put full steam ahead and jump, sir,” I replied.

“Are you mad?” shouted the amazed officer.

“No, sir,” I hastened to assure him, “only profoundly perplexed. I think, sir, that I would go into a conference, under the circumstances.”

The officer seemed to be on the verge of a breakdown.

“What’s your name?” asked another officer suddenly.

I told him.

“Initials?”

I told him. He looked at the paper for a moment.

“That explains it,” he said with a sigh of relief, “you’re not the man. There has been some mistake. Orderly, take this man away and bring back the right one. Pronto!”

That Spanish stuff sounds awfully sea-going. I was taken away, but the officer had not yet recovered. He regarded me with an expression of profound disgust. Anyway I created a sensation.

[Illustration: “‘I WOULD STILL REMAIN IN A DENSE FOG,’ I GASPED IN A LOW VOICE”]

Sept. 4th. Things have been happening with overwhelming rapidity. On the strength of being properly engaged to Polly, my permanent sweetie, I went to my Regimental commander this morning and applied for a furlough. He regarded me pityingly for a moment and then carefully scanned a list of names on the desk before him.



"I am sorry," he said finally, "but not only am I not able to grant your request, but I have the unpleasant duty to inform you that you are a little less than forty-eight hours from the vicinity of Ambrose light."

"Shipped!" I gasped as the world swam around me.

"Your name is on this list," said the officer not unkindly.

"Shipped!" I repeated in a dazed voice.

"It does seem ridiculous, I'll admit," said the officer, smiling, "but you never can tell what strange things are going to happen in the Navy. If I were in your place I'd take advantage of this head start I have given you and get my clothes and sea-bag in some sort of condition. If I remember rightly, you have never been able successfully to achieve this since you've been in the service."

"Thank you, sir," I gasped, and bolted. In my excitement I ran violently into a flock of ensigns stalking across the parade ground.

"I'm going to be shipped," I cried by way of explanation to one of them as he arose wrathfully.

"You're going to be damned," said he, and I was. Too frantic to write more.

Sept. 5th. All preparations have been made. Tim, Tony and the Spider are going too. I have just been listening to the most disturbing conversation. It all arose from our speculating as to our probable destination and the nature of our services. The Master-at-arms, who had been sleeping on the hammock rack as only a Master-at-arms can, permitted himself to remain awake long enough to join in.



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"I wouldn't be at all surprised," said he, "if you were shipped to one of these new Submarine Provokers."

"What's that?" I asked uneasily.

"Why, it's a sort of a dee-coy," said he, stretching his huge hulk, "a little, unarmed boat that goes messing around in the ocean until it finds a submarine and then it provokes it."

"How's that?" asked Tim.

"Why, you see," continued the jimmy-legs, "it just sort of steams back and forth in front of the submarine, just steams slowly back and forth in front of the submarine until it provokes it."

"Ah!" said I, taking a deep breath.

"Yes," he continues cheerfully, "and the more you provoked the submarine why the harder it shoots at you, so of course it doesn't notice the real Submarine Sinker coming up behind it. See the tactics."

"Oh," says I, "we just provoke the submarine until it loses its temper and the other boat sinks it."

"That's it," says the jimmy-legs, "you just sort of steam back and forth in front of it slowly."

"How slowly?" asks the Spider.

"Very," replied the jimmy-legs.

"No guns at all?" asks Tim.

"None," says he.

"A regular little home," suggests Tony.

"Sure," says the jimmy-legs, "nothing to do at all but steam slowly back—"

"For God's sake don't dwell on that point any more!" I cried. "We understand it perfectly."

"A regular lil' home," muttered Tim as he began to stow his bag.

(Later) I write these lines with horror. Some one has told me that the Navy needs Powder tasters, something I'd never heard of before, and that perhaps—that's what we are going to be used for. All you have to do, this guy says, is to taste the powder to see



if it's damp or dry and if it's damp you take it away and bake it. This sounds worse than the Submarine Provoker.

(Still later) Rumor is rife. The latest report is that we are going to be Mine Openers.

"What's a Mine Opener?" I asked my informant.

"Why, it's a guy," says he, "that picks up the mines floating around his boat, but only the German mines of course, and opens them to see if they are as dangerous as they look. Some are not half as dangerous as they look," he continues easily, "some are not quite so dangerous and of course some are a great deal more so. But they are all dangerous enough."

"My dear chap," I replied, turning away miserably, "a pinwheel is quite dangerous enough for me."

Sept. 6th. This is being written from the gate. My bag and hammock are beside me. Tim lashed them together for me so they wouldn't come undone. We are waiting for the truck. Tony in his excitable way wants to kiss the guard good-by. The guard doesn't want him to. My last moments at Pelham have been hectic. The doctor said I looked one hundred per cent better than when I came in, but that wasn't enough. If you didn't

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look at me very closely you wouldn't know that I was such an awful dub. This is progress at any rate. The telephone wires between mother's house and the camp were dripping wet with tears when I phoned her that I was being shipped. However, she braced up and said she was proud of me and said she hoped I'd tell the captain good-by and thank him for all he has done. I assured her I would do this, or at least leave a note. Polly was a trump. The Spider talked to her and said that he was going to save the best uncut stone for her that he had ever bitten out of a ring. The Spider has been very valuable to us all. He seems to have the uncanny faculty of being able to take the cloth straps off other people's clothes right before their eyes. Consequently we are well supplied. At present he's looking at the handle of the gate in a musing way. I think he would like to have it as a souvenir. Here comes the truck. Pelham is about to lose its most useless recruit. I must tuck these priceless pages in my money belt. Wish I had a picture of Polly. Well, here's to the High Adventure, but there's something about that Submarine Provoker I can't quite get used to. It seems just a trifle one sided. However, that is in the lap of the gods. Instead of a camp I will soon have the vast expanses of the ocean in which to demonstrate my tremendous inability to emulate the example of one John Paul Jones.

"Bear a hand there, buddy," the P.O. has just cried at me.

"Buddy" I came in and "buddy" I go out. We're off! I can dimly distinguish Mr. Fogerty, that unscrupulous dog that abandoned my bed and board for a couple of influential yeomen. Farewell, Fogerty, may your evil ways never bring you to grief. I do wish I had a picture of my Sweetie.

[Illustration: "BUDDY" I CAME IN AND "BUDDY" I GO OUT"]

[Illustration: BILTMORE OSWALD and FOGARTY]

THE END