

I feel safer at night than in the daytime.

It was cold and snowy for two days, then we had a day of mist and sleet and could only see two or three ships, but today is sunny and mild and we can see all around. It seems impossible to think that you are still frozen up.

We have about 400 naval men on board. They are passengers going home to England and some of them have come from as far as India. They have been on the Indian station three years and are going home on leave. They came across in the "Empress of Russia" to Vancouver. We are very fortunate to have them in this ship because they are assisting the crew, and there are 40 at a time on submarine lookout duty and two men all the time at the gun, as well as extra naval signallers on duty on the bridge.

It gives a feeling of security to have so many naval men on board, and if we are attacked and have to lower the boats these men will be very useful. I think there are about 1500 troops on board. We parade at Boat stations every morning at 9.30 a.m. and remain on deck till 11.30, which finishes our parade for the day. The rest of the time we either sleep or walk around, so you see we are having a very lazy time. Fawcett and myself are in one cabin, Hudson and Jameson, Davis and Roberts are in another, and Sammy Hill and Cram are in another.

They are first class cabins, and we have a table to ourselves in the first class saloon. All the Sergeants eat together, we eat before the civilian passengers (there are only about ten of them) and the Officers, but have the same menu, and we also have the use of the first class promenade deck, so we are very lucky. We certainly have got better quarters and food than any of us expected.

Every morning they publish a newspaper. It is very small and contains a few "marconigrams" and a little war news.

Thursday, Feb. 14th.

It looks as if we shall be at the end of our journey very soon, so am writing a few lines. Last Sunday we had a beautiful day, and I sat out on deck and tried to imagine what you were doing back there in the snow and ice.

In the afternoon they had a funeral on one of the ships, but we did not stop. All the ships flew flags at half mast and we could see the platform on the other ship ready for dropping the body overboard.

Sunday evening the auxiliary

cruiser, and one of the freighters left us. Monday was very windy, rough in the morning, and everybody was glad to see it, as the submarine cannot come up in a rough sea. However it did not last long and on Monday afternoon it rained and the sea went down. Since then it has been calm, mild and sunny.

On Tuesday (one week from Canada) the cruiser returned, without the other ship; so I suppose she has gone to another port than we are going to.

We got into the Danger Zone on Tuesday night and the extra naval men were put on lookout for submarines. The American battleship left early on Tuesday. It was an anxious time all yesterday. Early yesterday (Wednesday) the boats were lowered to the rail, ready for immediate action, and armed sentries (Engineers) were put on at each post to shoot anyone that started a panic if we had to leave the ship. I am in charge of the soldiers in our boat and there are 5 or 6 naval men and one old lady. There are also some of the ships company but I don't know how many. The sergeants in charge of the boats have got orders to take the rifle and ammunition from the sentries in case of emergency, and look after that part themselves.

There was another funeral on one of the ships yesterday. About 3 p.m. yesterday the destroyers picked us up, and everybody was very relieved to see them. No one said very much but everybody came out on deck and began to chatter and smile again, so it looks as if I were not the only one who had been feeling anxious. There are eight destroyers and they are all over the place at once. They go very quickly, and I don't think any submarine will show up. It is very dark at night as there are no lights showing except one small light at the stern, near the water, so that the boat behind can follow. Last night we had a port hole showing and the nearest destroyer signalled across and gave us a good bawling out for it. They evidently mean business. I shall like to see a copy of "Knots and Lashings", perhaps they might like to print some of this letter.

No one knows what port we are going to, but it looks as if we are going to either Avonmouth or Plymouth. It is wonderful to think such a large fleet as this should come through in spite of the threats of the Germans.

My respect for the British navy has gone up since the destroyers came along yesterday.

George H. Saunders.

Office Tel. 385.

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P. O. Box 477.

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