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Secrets of the British Navy

Gladstone the Great once said, speaking of Britain's naval and military strength, that we were so powerful we might, as it were, war against heaven itself, says the Scotsman. We believed those words, and hugged ourselves in the happy belief that no foe could touch us by land or sea. But, as it turned out, the words were an empty rhetorical flourish. First the Egyptian and Sudan wars and then the South African war proved to us that we were indifferently organized and equipped in the modern military sense. And as for our Navy, it has only lately been made plain to us that it also was not above criticism. Quite a remarkable book of reminiscences, entitled "The Inner Life of the Navy," by Mr. Lionel Xexley, has lately been published, which discloses with a vividness never before attained the weak- nesses of the old regime in the British Navy; and the reader must bear in mind this disquiet- ing fact, that the writer maintains that these conditions did not entirely disappear till after the great naval reforms of 1904.

Mr. Lionel Xexley enlisted in the Navy at an early age, and after a period of training was drafted to a gunboat, a typical small warship of those times.

"The guns consisted of two 64-pounders and one light 7 inch muzzle-loader. The after 64-pounder was in the captain's cabin, and could not be used unless the same was pulled to pieces, so the earliest opportunity was taken to give it several coats of white enamel, and there it rested safe and untroubled as long as it remained in the ship; that it was exceed- ingly dangerous to cast the other guns loose, ex- cept in the finest of fine weather, we had un- pleasant experience before we were much older.

"This type of vessel was very common at the time, our foreign squadrons being mainly composed of such, carrying out the duty of what we now term "showing the flag," in fact, some of them were to be found in the Navy List up to the beginning of the present cen- tury."

Farical Gunnery Practice

The gunnery practice in his early years in the Navy was a farce.

"Every quarter we would go outside to ex- pend the ammunition allowed by the regula- tions for quarterly heavy gun practice. Some- times we would drop a rum cask with a flag attached as a target, though as a general rule, our only target was the sky-line, as this saved the trouble of getting a wet barrel on board at the end of the firing.

"This quarterly expenditure of ammunition was a very peculiar feature of service life. The purpose for which it was allowed by the Gov- ernment was, of course, to teach the men how to shoot with heavy guns.

"There were so many rounds of ammunition allowed to each gun for expenditure each quar- ter, and they had to be got rid of. Some ships conscientiously put them into the sea— through the guns—others put them into the sea without troubling to use the guns for the purpose, and one method was just as good as another as far as results were concerned, be- cause in both cases the object was to get the beastly things into the water as quickly as possible with or without mess. . . . The whole of the ammunition was thrown away, whether it went through the guns or not. And no one saw anything wrong in the practice."

Killing Time in the Dockyards

In every department of naval administra- tion red tape ruled supreme. So long as cer- tain outward forms were observed, it did not seem to matter how much or how little real work was done. It was the practice in Mr. Xexley's time to send "working parties" from the ships to the dockyard daily, and this is how these "working" parties spent their day.

"The dockyard party landed at 9:30 a.m., returning on board at 11:30; landed again at 1:30, and came on board at 3:30, which finished the day's work. The supposed object in land- ing the men was to carry out work on ships re- fitting or lying in the basin, drawing stores, etc., but during my short experience it became apparent that a great many more men were landed than could be profitably employed, and only those worked who liked to work.

"One gang would get hold of a dockyard handcart, and simply wheel it round the dock- yard at a crawling pace; others would disap- pear in sail-lofts or store-rooms, and pick up a quiet corner where they could sleep till seven bells; the whole object of coming on shore was so obviously to kill time that so long as those in charge—a warrant officer and several petty officers—could get sufficient men to do any work that actually required doing, they seemed only too glad that the residue should make themselves scarce till it was time to go back on board. To employ men at drill or any kind of useful instruction on board was not thought of."

Mobilization Chaos

"Mobilizing" in the days before nucleus days was, according to our author, a fearful and wonderful thing. Ordered to join the Gal- atea, then lying in the dockyard basin, for summer manoeuvres and a Royal review, Mr. Xexley thus describes his experiences:

"The Galatea, though a recently completed cruiser, was by no means ready for sea. She carried two 9.2 inch guns, one forward and one aft, with a battery of 6 inch guns in the upper deck on each side. These guns had been hastily got on board, but could not be used, owing to the unfinished state of the mount- ings, and the same could be said of other of the ship's armament. Still, the order had evi- dently gone forth that everything that could

float was either to steam or be towed to Spit- head, to take part in the review, so we pro- ceeded out of harbor, and picked up our pos- ition somewhere off Cowes.

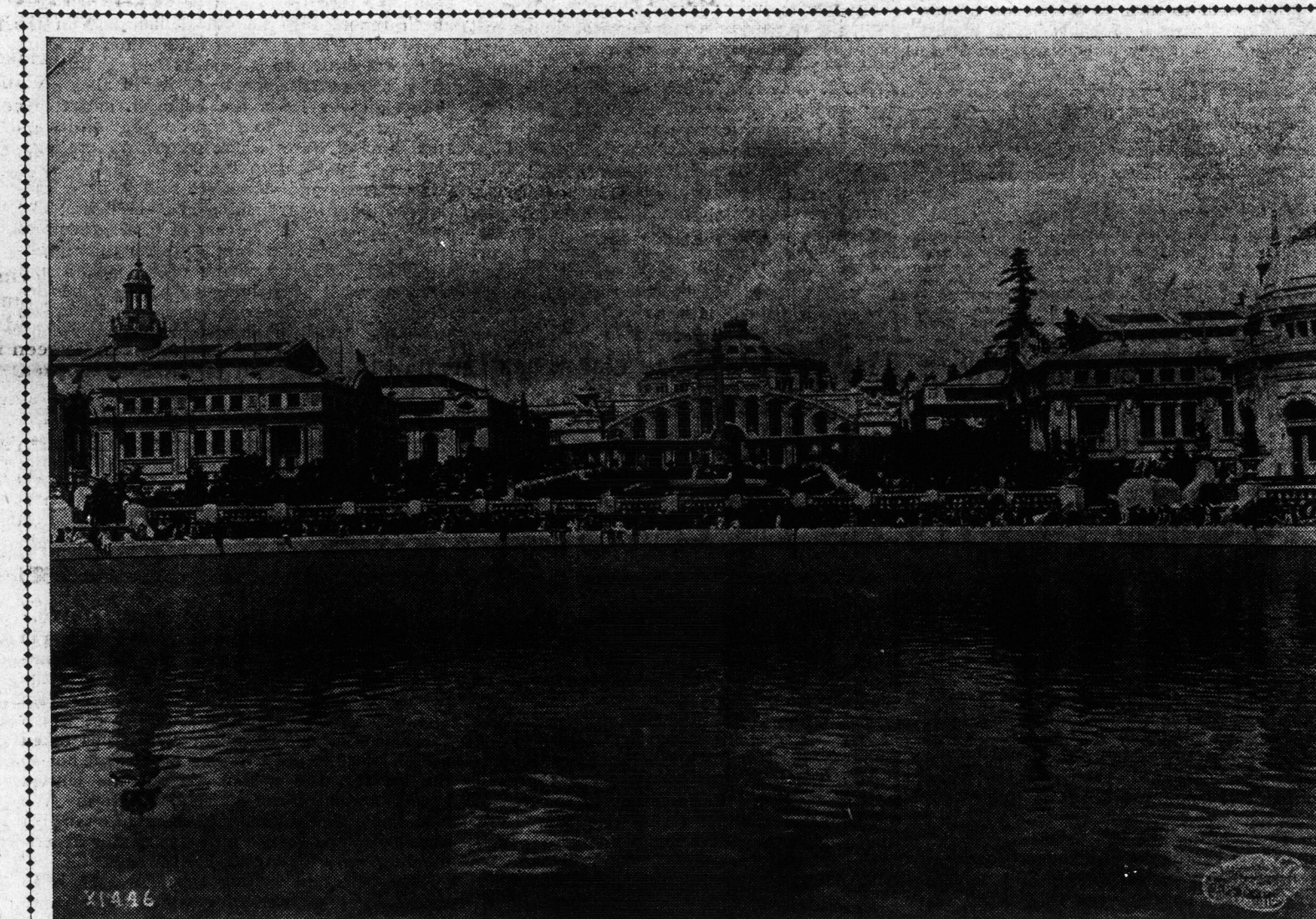
"Never did I experience such a time as the next few weeks provided. Some of the officers had been called up from half-pay, and had no experience of a modern ship, while the crew had been gathered together from all quarters, the bulk of them just returned from foreign service, with a sprinkling of coastguards.

Men Helpless as Babes

"Being a torpedo man, I was placed in charge of the after submerged torpedo tube, but as I had never seen a submerged torpedo tube before in my life, nor the class of torpedo with which the Galatea was supplied, I was as helpless as the proverbial babe. The torpedo instructor and the leading torpedo man were in a like plight.

"I also found myself coxswain of the steam cutter, in which job I flattered myself I should be quite at home, having a pretty fair knowl- edge of the handling of steamboats. Not so my leading stoker, who found himself in the same position with the boat's engines as I was with my torpedo tube—he had never been in a steamboat before. Unfortunately for him, he could not do with his engine which I did with my tube—leave it alone, as the boat had to do all boat duty for the ship, and from the first trip at Spithead till the last one, when her nose was smashed in by coming too violently in collision with the ship's side, we lived a life of excitement and explosions."

On one occasion the cutter was ordered to go alongside the after-gangway, so the cox- swain made a wide circle round the stern of the Galatea.



Looking up Court of Honor towards main Government Building.

"Stop her!" But the engines went merrily on. We just grazed the gangway; there was not time to steer her outside the starboard boom, so under it we went, the funnel just clearing by about an inch.

"Then from the bridge: 'Steam cutter! Come alongside, you fool; what are you do- ing?' 'Can't, sir; the leading stoker can't stop the engines.'"

Vessels Not Even Fit for Sea

The cause of this hopeless incapacity and disorder lay with the organization. The un- manned men-of-war were taken direct from the dockyard basins, many of them in a sad state of disrepair. "Their crews were thrown indiscriminately together from all sources, and they were sent to sea as ready for war." Dur- ing the time the cruise lasted their crews would be busily employed holystoning decks, clean- ing paint, and polishing bright work, and when the cruise was over the ships would be returned to the dockyard basin to rust for an- other year.

"This is no overdrawn picture, as it is safe to say that quite 75 per cent of the old reserve fleet were not only not fit for war, but not fit for sea. The whole thing was a mockery and make-believe, and was not discontinued until the nucleus-crew system was introduced in 1904."

There were so many ships sailing the seas in all quarters of the globe doing nothing but "showing the flag," practically dummy ships, that there were not sufficient trained men to man the real fighting ships.

"The Channel Fleet, which was the main British Fleet outside the Mediterranean, was in a similar plight as regards the crews of the vessels. These were composed mainly of boys

and young ordinary seamen; the prime seamen of the Navy—the real fighting material—were distributed all over the world in wretched gun- boats.

"The ships of the Channel Fleet were not even properly commissioned, and so had no standing crews, but at the end of every few months would return to their home ports and discharge a portion of their crews for more boys. There was not, in fact, a single efficient fleet in the British Navy outside the Mediter- ranean, and the fighting efficiency of that must be judged from the description I have given of it."

Beginning of a New Era

It must be a mighty relief to all to read that a great change has come over the Navy in the last six years, from the first reform instituted by Lord Selborne. "The Navy has been flood- ed with a series of reforms and reorganizations until it may be said to have been reduced to a state of flux, from which it is gradually emerg- ing to a state of efficiency for war.

"For nearly a hundred years previous to this, it had enjoyed a state of quiescence, till officers and men had practically lost sight of the fact that its primary function was war; and, though during the closing years of the last century there had been mutterings of re- form, Lord Selborne's memorandum was the first rude awakening it received.

"Once the besom of reform was set in mo- tion, a clean sweep was evidently decided on, and an affrighted service found itself being hustled out of the lethargy of a prolonged peace routine into a strenuous preparation for war.

"If the hand of the reformer is heavy on the Navy today," Mr. Xexley concludes, "it is, I feel certain, through no desire simply to upset an 'established and time-honored system,' but to save the nation from the horrors and degre- dation of Tsushima."

A NEW KITCHENER STORY

Apropos the disposition of Kitchener of Khartoum to go straight to the point in any

Emma Eames' Valedictory

"Before I go I wish to say good-by and thank-you to the public that has loved and en- couraged me so long, and which has made my career possible," says Emma Eames in her valedictory to the opera-going public, through the medium of Putnam's Magazine of the cur- rent month.

"I have always been obliged," she continues, "to drive myself on the stage. As I went on as Juliet for the first time I did so with illusion and forgetting even my own personality. When applause came it terrified instead of elating me. For years to sing in concert was an impossi- bility. I could only face the public in some one else's personality.

"I am terribly sensitive to atmospheres, and in order to do my work had to surround my- self with an impenetrable wall—an armor of apparent indifference. Jealousy, instead of flat- tering, has always pained me. I did not care to give my enemies the present of bad singing and a breakdown, which the consciousness of ill feeling in others toward me would have inevitably caused.

"I therefore have held myself aloof. I have never allowed any one to repeat to me the gos- sip of the theatre, nor have I ever been willing to read articles in which my name was men- tioned, or even notices of the opera.

"I went rarely to the opera myself, as the feeling that I was exposed to the public gaze in the same way unfitted me for singing in my turn. To do my work at all I had to detach my thought from the business and routine of opera, and think only of the realization and accom- plishment of the impossible ideal I had set be- fore me. I have lived in a world of thoughts and ideals in which facts have played so small

"The public has shown amazement at my desire to retire from public life at the very height of my powers and accomplishments. In America my public has been my beloved and loving friend, and I wish it to understand me at last, and my reason for leaving it.

"A word about my ideals: My voice and my body have seemed to me instruments with which I was to accomplish my work. There is the keynote of my endeavor. To be a real singing, acting interpreter. To be sufficiently mistress of the technic and expression in both arts to be independent of them. Then to let my cur- rent of thought go on uninterruptedly to the public. The more my work ripened, the more clearly I saw that the thought wave could carry further than voice or theatrical gesture.

"It is a truism to add that the theatrical and the dramatic are as different in meaning as the words mind and body. For dramatic thought to carry one has to learn to be theatri- cal, as a painter has to learn to draw.

"The exhaustion of being some one else all the evening is incomparably greater than even appearing as some one else, and in that lies for me the difference between the theatrical and the dramatic. The latter word is so misused that one pities it; in the mouths of many people, it seems to mean explosiveness and effort only."

SOUTHERN NIGERIA

Details have been received by Reuter's Agency of the expedition lately concluded by the Southern Nigerian Government, as the re- sult of which some 5,000 square miles of hith- erto unknown and unadministered country in the north and on the borders of Northern Nigeria have been opened up and brought un- der effective control. These operations, which were carried out often under extremely diffi- cult circumstances and among tribes which for the most part had never previously seen a white man, were entirely successful and were so managed that there was practically no seri- ous fighting with the tribes.

The operations commenced early in No- vember last and concluded in the middle of April. The British force consisted of 700 men of the Southern Nigeria Regiment under the command of Colonel Trenchard, who had with him 30 officers, two guns, six maxims, and 700 carriers. There were a few encounters in which isolated parties were attacked by the natives, but in no case was there any orga- nized resistance or any serious attempt to hin- der the advance of the British. The Yala peo- ple, in whose country the columns remained for a month, gave a good deal of trouble. On their villages being entered they were found to be deserted, the women and live stock having been removed. The men meanwhile had formed bush camps in the open yam fields, where they had also concealed in the branches of trees scouts whose duty it was to fire sig- nal guns. The people then took to their heels and encamped elsewhere, but fired on the column when they were in what they regarded as a tight corner. This tribe, like most of those encountered, was armed with flint locks and carried poisoned arrows, but, fortunately, the country was fairly open, and the aim not very accurate. After some weeks of this kind of thing the Yala came in, but declined to give up their arms.

In places the natives, hearing of the ap- proach of a large force, dug pits and planted stakes to prevent their progress. What little hostility there was occurred during the earlier part of the operations in the Okpoto country and among the Northern Ibo tribes, Colonel Trenchard's force started in two columns, one from the Niger and one from the Cross River, with instructions to make for an unknown spot marked X, the two afterwards joining at Ikem, where the first base camp was formed. From this base small columns were sent out in various directions, each being responsible for a de- finite district, which was to be mapped, and where the officers' duty was to get into touch with the natives, and to show them how to make good roads. In each case the commanding officer of the column summoned the local chief and explained the Government terms, em- phasizing the fact that all human sacrifices must stop, that good roads must be made, and that a British Commissioner would be appointed who would settle all disputes. On these oc- casions there were impressive gatherings of thou- sands of natives, in many cases cannibals, and for the most part naked, or practically so. They did not show undue delight at the advent of the British and as a rule silently listened to the recital of the Government terms and then slowly dispersed. The various columns report that they found far less human sacrifice and "juju" rites in the hitherto unknown North than among the tribes on the Delta and that, on the whole, the people were of a better physical type. Several "juju" places were seen and a big centre was destroyed. It was impossible to discover the nature of the "juju" rites practised but in the vicinity of one big "juju" house discovered in a bush-clearing there was found a good deal of blood—whether human or not was not as- certained. The heat was terrific and the long marches, sometimes in waterless districts, were very trying, even to the native troops. Almost all the officers were on foot and in many cases they had done over eleven hundred miles of walking. No white man was wounded during the whole operations, and there were only a few native casualties, but the nature of the work, combined with the great heat and the waterless stretches, proved extremely trying. Despite this fact there was not much illness except dur- ing the Harmattan, when pneumonia occurred among the carriers. Five doctors accompanied the force.