Naval Manoeuvres in Time of Peace

(By C. E. Williams in Christian Guardian.)

Somewhere about July in each year we read in "home" papers of naval manoeuvres—ships gathering and carrying out special work—but very few have the faintest idea of what that work really is. Now the naval manoeuvres are specially designed to give, not only to the officers in command, but also unto the men, some idea of the nature of the work they will have to carry out in time of war. All things are done and everyone lives under real war conditions. Night after night the deadly destroyers are searching for the foe. By day the uncanny submarine lies in the narrow waterways and at the mouths of harbors to repel attack. On shipboard men sleep by their guns, and all the time a nerve-racking watch is kept to guard against any possible surprise.

The navy during manoeuvres is separated into different fleets, called "Red" and "Blue." They put to sea under sealed orders. To one is given the task of defending a part or the whole of the British shores; to the other theirs it is to break through the other's guard and effect a landing of a hostile force upon Britain's soil. For this work every available ship is brought up to her full complement. In the dockyards there are always ships, obsolete, yet of great use against commerce. Naval reserves, coast-guards, etc., are drafted to them. Marines from Chatham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Deal and Gosport are called on. Coaling takes place, food supplies taken on, and soon the fleets are mobilized and reported "ready to sail." Down comes the signal, and the navy is at war, and if ever men worked hard, the "boys in blue" do then. Battles are fought, submarines attack, wicked destroyers rush, and the umpires are busy judging results. The manoeuvres last until the work set is carried out. Then the fleets gather, umpires meet, and on the flag-ship admirals and Captains are told the result. Mistakes are pointed out, the victory awarded, and valuable lessons have been learnt.

Absolutely there is no question as to the value of naval manoeuvres to both officers and men, and although the cost has been heavy, and thousands of tons of coal and enormous quantities of oil have been used, also wear and tear of ships—yes, all these heavy items considered, still it is a fact that lessons learned have justified the heavy expenditure. Now let no one imagine that it is a lot of fun and no danger. Always there is risk, and many a brave man has gone to an early grave and is as true a hero as the man who falls in the heat of battle. Take the case of H. M. S. Victoria, rammed off Tripoli, in the Mediterranean Sea, by H. M. S. Camperdown, through some mistake in turning in of the lines. In a moment the Camperdown, with her ram at the bow, tore through the eighteen inches of armor on the Victoria. Over like some huge sea monster she went, bottom up, twin screws revolving in the air, guns breaking loose; death reigned, the toll being three hundred and sixty officers and men. Yes, there is danger, and many a fatal accident happens the world knows nothing of.

During this war some imagine that the press ought to be represented more than it is. Years ago they were allowed on the battleships during naval manoeuvres, and they made the public realize (what is true) the efficiency of our fleets. But publicity does not pay. It is a well-known fact that many curious things are learned at such times. Then are tested new inventions under war conditions.

Manoeuvres first showed how useful was the "wireless;" the advisability of concentrating our fleet in the North Sea (so clearly shown today.) Manoeuvres showed also the vital forces of the sub-marine.

Imagine for a moment you are on a man-of-war, and the signal is flashed by wireless, as was flashed out so lately over the North Sea, "War is declared; sink or capture the enemy." All eyes are strained to aching point upon the grim and great flagship. She is speaking, and the hour is almost midnight (as it was when King George sent his soul-stirring call to the men of the navy.) Flash after flash is taken by the officer of the watch some such as this: "Flag-General. Fleet steam without lights. Clear for action." The officer calmly turns to one of the bos'n's mates: "Pipe out navigation lights; close all scuttles and deadlights." "Aye, aye, sir." Out go all lights except the port and starboard, green and red lights, and mast head lights. Another signal, and as if switched by one hand, all lights in the huge fleet are gone. Yet astern of each ship, if you look steadily ahead, you will see a speck of white light, which is all the guide the fleet now has to keep its station. The night is inky dark, yet on steams England's mighty leviathans, guided by a far-flung line of scouts, cruisers and destroyers. "Clear for action." Bugles ring out; the wild rush of feet is heard. Boats are swung inboard and made snug on deck. Overboard all top-hamper; derricks, rails, etc., stowed away, and in ten minutes the monster plunging ahead is stripped for the battle. "Exercise action" sounds next. Guns run out, circuits tested, ammunition sent up from magazines, shells from shell room. "All correct, sir," is reported to the captain.

Now the regular routine of warfare commences. Watch and watch, half the ship's company on deck, the other half resting below. Day and night it goes on. Cleaning ship, gun drill, out collision mats. By night men sleep at the guns or searchlights, one man awake at each spot, to give the alarm and arouse. Oh, that never-ending, ceaseless watch by those huge monsters that are to give tongue and bay defiance to the enemies of the Empire. Ninety-six tons in weight is the 15-inch gun; shell, 1950 lbs., muzzle velocity, 2,655 feet a second; shot penetrating six feet of wrought iron at muzzle, two feet toughened steel at a range of two miles. To fight a battleship of the Majestic type an hour would be approximately: Four 12-inch guns, £38,000; pounders, £38,000; twelve three-pounders, £21,000; eight Maxims, £1,700. Think of it all. Roughly, £180,000 an hour, or £3,000 a minute; in other words, $15,000 a minute, $900,000 an hour. Multiply this by the sum total of the fleet, and soon you will agree that war is a costly thing.

Take again the daily life of the men at sea during naval manoeuvres or warfare. Midnight (eight bells): Starboard watch take on at the guns. 4 a. m. (eight bells): Port watch relieves, scrub decks, down searchlights. 8 a. m.: Breakfast. 9 a. m. (two bells): Divisions. 9.15 to 11.45 a. m.: Fire control practice, exercise action, gun drill, etc. 12 noon: Dinner. 1.10 to 3.45 p. m.: Stand easy. 3.45 p. m.: Clear up decks. 4 p. m.: Quarters, fire stations, collision stations, etc. 7 p. m.: Supper. 8 p. m.: Starboard watch man and arm ship, i. e., man searchlights and lights, guns. Midnight (eight bells): Post watch relieve. So on, day and night, and should there be any scares, the cry is "all hands." Thus many a night there is little or no "down" at all, for all hands must be on duty when the ship is in peril.

A word about the Whitehead torpedo, a deadly weapon of warfare. It is said the latest ones can travel at a speed of nearly sixty knots an hour and have an effective range of five miles. A battleship would be almost helpless were it not for the fact that gunnery is great today, and range fire is increasing, and it is almost certain that they will play an important part in the present war. Very few people know anything (they are not allowed to) of the secrets of the torpedo. All one can say is, in the nose of the torpedo is 300 lbs. of gun cotton, and if the torpedo gets home she will blow such a hole that will sink the ship in a few moments. The torpedo can be kept at any depth required, and will stay at that depth until it strikes the enemy. It is fired by compressed air. It drives itself, for in the torpedo there is a chamber full of compressed air; this air, being released when the torpedo leaves its tube, drives its propeller at a high rate, and sends the torpedo on its deadly mission at the above-mentioned speed. It is not necessary to dwell longer on this subject. We feel we have a righteous cause, and that the Empire's sword has been drawn with honor. Germany is a valiant foe. England and the Empire, however, trust the navy.

"War clouds gather over every land,
our flag is threatened east and west;
Nations that we've taken by the hand, our bold resources try to test;
They thought they'd find us wanting, find us unprepared,
Because we have our party wars;
But Empire men unite, when they're called to fight
The battle of their Empire's common cause."

Thus goes the war song. Our eyes turn to the North Sea. Mystery, silence; but let us possess our souls in patience. Trust that fleet, whose work has been thus briefly outlined. Time and space permit not to speak of the captain in the confining tower, how the stokers work; the big guns are loaded; the sick bay, etc.

How We Came to Have Printed Papers and Books

(Pleasant Hours.)

Suppose there were no Pleasant Hours, no magazines, no newspapers, or books, nothing but musty parchments covered with old Norman-French or Latin, what a dismal world this would be! There would be no stories to enliven our leisure hours, no Summer holidays away from home, for without books there would have been no steam railway. Stephenson could not have invented his engine unless he had been able to read what men had already done with steam. Oh, there are so many things we would have to do without that we cannot count them.

Only four hundred and fifty years ago a printed book was unknown in England, while newspapers and magazines had never been thought of. The only books there were were those written with a pen on long rolls of parchment, and as it took a very long time to write a book or copy it in this way, you can imagine that books were very scarce and very precious. They were not left lying here and there around a room. If writings were taken from one place to another they were accompanied by powerful guards, and the whole proceeding was done as secretly as possible. One copy of the Bible had to be used by several monasteries, which were the places where most of the reading and writing was done in those days. Borrowing a book from a library was not the simple thing it is today, when public libraries abound. When the King of France wanted to borrow a book from the library of the doctors of Paris he had to give some gold plate as security, and both he and one of his nobles had to sign a bond promising to return it safely. One could not walk into a store and buy a very good book for a dollar, or for fifty cents, or for a quarter. The Countess of Anjou, who lived in the fifteenth century, gave two hundred sheep, forty bushels of wheat, forty bushels of barley and forty bushels of millet for a single book. A Bible was sold for about $1,250. A man in the field—and most of the men in England worked in the field at that time—would have had to save every cent of his wages for fifteen years to buy one book.

So, you see, the people had very little chance to know much about anything except the things they saw around them. The man who started to change all this by introducing the art of printing into England was William Caxton. He was born in the wild forest part of Kent in 1422, and though the schools and the teaching were not good, he did very well at his studies. When he was sixteen he started to work for a mercer, or a merchant who dealt in many different things. His master thought a great deal of him. Perhaps one reason for this was that he could write, which was something that few people besides the priests could do. When he died he left Caxton some money. With this little fortune Caxton went to Flanders and settled among the English merchants at Bruges, where he was afterward appointed governor by Edward IV. of England, who was a very good friend of his.

On account of his business Caxton used to travel around a great deal, and he became a splendid scholar and learned a number of languages. During some of his journeys he heard about printing. People do not agree as to the story of who did the first printing, but it is generally thought that the first printer was John Gutenberg, of Mainz, a city in Germany, who in 1455 printed a Latin copy of the Bible. At any rate about that time movable type was invented, and moulds were made from which type could be formed, and instead of taking months or years to copy a book in writing, many copies could be made in several weeks.

Not long afterwards Mainz was sacked and the printers fled to different cities in Europe, where they carried the knowledge of their new trade. No one heard about it in England, though, for the people there were too busy with their wars to bother themselves about this quick way of making books. Something else happened about this time that helped the art of printing to grow. In Constantinople there had been for centuries many wise men. Just two years before printing was invented the Turks captured the place that is now their capital city, and the scholars with their manuscripts were scattered over the continent as the printers were. The printers would have had hardly anything to print if these men hadn't been found here and there and all over Europe, but they were used to writing themselves and they taught others to write.

When Caxton was about fifty years old he grew tired of his commercial life, so he went to live in the household of a sister of Edward IV., who had married a prince of the Low Countries. As he had plenty of time, he began to translate into English a book called the "History of Troy." It was a long task that he had set himself and he became very tired of it. Some stories tell us that he became so weary and his eyes were so dimmed from writing on the white paper that he decided to use the wonderful art he had heard about during his travels and print it. Another account is that he finally finished the translation, and because so many people wanted to read it he made up his mind to print it. At any rate it was published in 1474, and it was the first book printed in the English language.

He then printed another book, and shortly after, having lived abroad for thirty years, he returned to England taking with him his printing press and printer, who was one of those who had escaped from Mainz when it was sacked. In a building close to Westminster Abbey he carried on his work. In fact, the house may have been a part of the Abbey at that time, though no one is sure about that.

Caxton printed eighty books, and that meant a great deal of hard work for him. Twenty-one of these he himself translated from other languages. This was not easy, for at that time English had no fixed form. People in one country talked differently from their neighbors in the next country, so he hardly knew what words to use. Of course, he could not expect to write so that everyone would understand it, but he did his best, and he gave the nation its first form of speech. Most of the other books he printed were translations, too, for the English did little writing. However, he printed Chaucer's poems, which he admired very much.

Besides preparing material, Caxton did a great part of the actual printing; also what we now call proof-reading and putting in the corrections. He had a few assistants, and he worked on a book the last day that he lived.

Try to imagine for a minute what the world would be like if all printed matter were suddenly swept into the sea and everyone forgot the things that they had learned through reading. It will show you what a place printing has in the world and what we owe to the people who helped to make it possible, the foremost among whom was William Caxton.

Constitutional Mexico

(Montreal Witness.)

Mexico since she has ceased to be the centre of attention, has made rapid progress. Carranza has been installed as temporary president, and is having a comparatively peaceful term of office, though the irreconcilable Zapata persists in leading a revolution in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and though one of Huerta's generals has placed himself at the head of a small portion of the old Federal army in Puebla, just east of the city of Mexico. The most encouraging feature of the situation is that Villa, who during the war of the Constitutionalists against the Federalists graduated from the position of outlaw bandit to leader of a command, and then to chief general of an organized army, has, with the cessation of war, become a peaceful citizen, and shows every prospect of turning into a leading statesman. In the new role, he has mapped out the following plan for a general election in Mexico:—A convention of delegates of the Constitutionalist army to be called to arrange the date of election to Congress for president and vice-president. No military man to be a candidate for president or vice-president, or for governor of any state. A civilian to take charge of the provisional government which conducts the elections. A general amnesty to be declared, except to those who committed crime or participated in the assasination of Madero and Suarez. The officials of the old Federal army who can show clean records to be taken into the new international army. All reforms to be put through in an energetic manner, but on a legal and constitutional basis.

To this plan General Carranza has agreed, and has called a convention, in conformity with the first proposal of it, to take place on October 1st. That convention will name a provisional president, who must be a civilian, and who according to the constitution of Mexico cannot be a candidate for president in the elections conducted under his administration. There is a possibility of trouble resulting from the clause which says that no military man can be a candidate for president, for it is a little hard to say who is and who is not a military man. Carranza has the title of general; he acted as head of the army during the revolution, sending one general here and another there. Yet his friends claim that he is not a military man, and is eligible for election on Villa's self-denying ordinance—self-denying not only for himself but for all the constitutional patriots who fought for the cause. Already the Mexican Government is working over the greatest problem that it has before it, and looks to be reaching a feasible solution. The revolution was largely occasioned by the way in which the Mexican Government under Diaz had let the ownership of the land drift into the possession of a few families of great wealth. These holdings must, in some way, be broken up without resorting to confiscation, as done by Villa in the early days of the war, and they must be made available in small parcels to such men as will make good use of them. To achieve this, the government now proposes a graduated land tax, a tax that will increase with the size of the holding, and a tax that will also increase with the percentage if the holding that lies uncultivated, except in arid districts, where the land can only be used for grazing purposes. These are much the methods which British Columbia used to achieve the same purpose, and as they worked well there, there is every prospect that they will also work well in Mexico. Such taxes will fall on men well able to pay them. Those whom they will hurt most will be the American speculators who have been procuring grants from the government by graft.