AT SEA WITH JOSEPH CONRAD

Twelve hundred and fifty copies only of this book have been printed for the United States and England. It will not be reprinted in this or in any other form.


cruise to
from Joseph Conrad.
1919.

AT SEA WITH JOSEPH CONRAD

BY

J. G. SUTHERLAND

CAPTAIN, R.N.R.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

JOSEPH CONRAD

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DEDICATED TO

MY SON

BRIAN O'HALLORAN DEVEREUX SUTHERLAND

LIST OF PLATES

FOREWORD

Dear Captain Sutherland,

When you first told me of your intention to publish a little book about the cruise of the "Ready" in October-November 1916, *and asked me if I had any objection, I told you that it was not in my power to raise an effective objection, but that in any case the recollection of your kindness during those days when we were shipmates in the North Sea would have prevented me from putting as much as a formal protest in your way. Having taken that attitude, and the book being now ready for publication, I am glad of this opportunity of testifying to my regard for you, for Lieutenant Osborne, R.N.R., and for the naval and civilian crews of H.M. Brigantine "Ready," not forgetting Mr Moodie, the sailing master, whose sterling worth we all appreciated so much both as a seaman and as a shipmate.*

I have no doubt that your memories are accurate, but as these are exclusively concerned with my person I am at liberty, without giving offence, to

confess that I don't think they were worth preserving in print. But that is your affair. What this experience meant to me in its outward sensations and deeper feelings must remain my private possession. I talked to very few persons about it. I certainly never imagined that any account of that cruise would come before the public.

When the proofs of the little book, which you were good enough to send me, arrived here, I was laid up and not in a condition to read anything. Afterwards I refrained on purpose. After all, these are your own recollections, in which you have insisted on giving me a prominent position, and the fitness of them had to be left to your own judgment and to your own expression.

JOSEPH CONRAD.

Oswalds, Bishopsbourne.

CHAPTER I

"The Brotherhood of the Sea is no mere empty phrase."

In these words Mr Joseph Conrad ended a letter which he sent to me on his arrival home after what was, without doubt, the most memorable and exciting experience of his seafaring career.

It was in the winter of 1916, when the Kaiser decided to redouble his submarine warfare, that my story begins.

Ships were being sunk right and left, the German submarine commanders taking advantage of every kind of frightfulness, even the sinking at sight of neutral sailing craft which were engaged only in their ordinary commercial pursuits and which had no other end in view than the carriage of their products and manufactures to the markets of other countries. The neutrals flew their colours at their mastheads or from their gaffs, and on their sides had painted large ensigns from deck to waterline, leaving no loophole for the non-observance of International law.

It was in such a small sailing vessel, during the height of a particularly severe winter, that Conrad set sail across the North Sea to work on the trade routes between Scotland, Norway and Denmark, where at the time the enemy was most active, on what he described as his "joyful experience of U-boat hunting."

I met Conrad in peculiarly fortunate circumstances. It was at Granton, a small port within easy reach of Edinburgh, where I was employed as Commander of Minesweeping Trawlers. Curiously enough, it was on the same day that, tired of the dull monotony of minesweeping, I applied for and was appointed to the command of H.M.S. brigantine *Ready*, the first sailing ship to be commissioned for active service in the Great War. During the afternoon I had been visualising the possibilities of a fight under sail against a war vessel which depended not on wind power for manœuvring in action, but worked under the most modern and scientific conditions both on the surface and under water. I knew full well that the odds were all against the brigantine, but the sheer joy of being in action with an enemy vessel appealed to me above all other things. I had scarcely arrived at

this conclusion when I was sent for by the Commodore, and on entering his office found him chatting on things in general, and the work of the Base in particular, with a stranger whose appearance struck me as being very much out of the ordinary. He was seated close to the window, with legs crossed, listening intently to the Commodore and, as I thought, making mental notes of his conversation. I waited cap in hand, standing very much at attention, to hear my senior officer's wishes, during which time I had ample opportunity of studying his visitor.

My first impression was of a man of about middle age, extremely well groomed, with dark hair of which he had a plentiful supply, closely cropped beard and moustache with the slightest tinge of greyness, a manner courtly in the extreme, a fine, clever, sun-tanned face which betokened an outdoor life, with that very kindly smile which one associates with a person thoroughly interested in the world and its doings, and seeing only the bright side of things. He wore a monocle, which added to an appearance already distinguished, and during every lull in the conversation he turned to me with a look significant of

apology for the delay which I was being subjected to. I felt this and by looks tried to reassure him, so that I should have longer time to make up my mind as to who and what he was. He appeared to be familiar with expressions used by seamen, and used them himself in his questions and replies to the Commodore. This led me to conclude that he was a high naval personage of an Allied Power: high, because he conversed with the Commodore on an equality—the latter being Admiral Sir James Startin, K.C.B., one of those fine old types of naval officers who resigned their commissions in the Royal Navy to accept commissions in the junior ranks of the Royal Naval Reserve, so that his age would not preclude him from serving his country; Allied, because he spoke with the slightest trace of a foreign accent. He did not speak like a Frenchman and certainly did not look Italian. While I was still wondering, the Commodore rose from his seat and introduced me to none other than Conrad himself, whose books I had read and re-read, whose characters I, from my wanderings as a seaman, seemed to have met without acquiring that insight into their characters, lovable

and otherwise, which he, with his extraordinary faculty of understanding the greatness and smallness of their natures, portrayed with such wonderful exactness in his books. I was intensely proud to meet him, and said so; indeed I expressed my admiration in a manner which seemed to cause him no little embarrassment, but which he was good enough to say he appreciated, in a manner indicative of the modesty which (I was to learn later) was characteristic of the man.

The Commodore instructed me to show Mr Conrad everything there was to be seen —ships, guns, torpedoes, devices for disguise and indicator nets for trapping enemy submarines whose commanders might be daring and foolish enough to attempt to enter our harbours. The latter, in both construction and working, were very ingenious and complicated, necessitating quite a lengthy explanation to the average seaman and even to fishermen, who as a rule know everything there is to know about nets of every description. Conrad could not have seen this contrivance before, but his quick brain grasped the whole situation at once, all his surmises being absolutely correct in every detail. The drift nets, which,

as their name indicates, are towed by drifters and fitted with explosive mines, were next shown to him, and with his seaman-like intuition he had the whole working of them at his finger-ends before I had time to explain the methods of their use. Indeed, trained as he was in the old sailing clippers, Conrad had almost uncanny powers for instantly gripping everything connected with wires, ropes, rigging and the innumerable different uses to which material necessary to the working of ships by shipmen could be put.

Having carried out my Commodore's wishes to the letter, we adjourned to my cabin, where Conrad, having seated himself, was silent for some minutes, due possibly to turning over in his mind the numerous and well thought-out traps which to the seaman side of his nature were a revelation. The arrival of my steward with refreshments awoke him from his reverie, and it was then that I casually mentioned my appointment as commander of the brigantine. The effect of my remark was electrical: Conrad was a changed man; his whole face lit up; he was not now listening to parrot-like explanations of war measures, but to something that interested him more than anything he

had seen or heard. "A brigantine at war!" Had he heard aright? A brigantine, in days of super-dreadnoughts, battle cruisers, light cruisers and forty-knot destroyers, any one of which could have destroyed the whole of Nelson's squadrons at Trafalgar! I assured him that such was actually the case, and he begged that he might be allowed to accompany me, to which I, as far as it lay in my power, joyously agreed. He asked more about the vessel, and I felt it my duty to tell him that the craft was seventy years old, falling to pieces, leaking like a sieve, and was at the time being patched up in a dry dock at Dundee. Having given him this information, I feared the pleasure of his company might be denied me; but I had mistaken my man. The call of the sea, the spice of adventure, the thought of living as one of the characters created by his wonderful and imaginative brain, of again pacing the deck of a ship, sailing with every stitch of canvas set, or lying hove-to under a reefed fore-topsail, and main-staysail was too much to miss, and there and then we proceeded to the Commodore as a first step to gain his sanction to approach the Admiralty. At the outset he was all against such a proposition.

Indeed he painted the *Ready* even worse than she was, which was saying something, and as an alternative he offered Conrad a cruise on any other vessel under his command, including mystery steam vessels, steam yachts, mine-sweepers, patrol vessels or motor launches. But Conrad held out. He wanted the sailing vessel — nothing else would do. And after much persuasion the Commodore went as far as to say that he personally had no objection, though of course Admiralty approval would first have to be obtained.

I am unable to say whether or not the Commodore addressed, or rather submitted, the usual type of letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, from whose office it would circulate until it finally reached the department concerned, or whether Conrad had a "friend at Court" at the Admiralty! All I know was that approval was received, and in my anxiety to have Conrad with me I didn't much care how it was arranged, and never discussed it with him.

Two years later, in reading Rear-Admiral Sir Douglas Brownrigg's delightful articles published in *The Daily Telegraph* under the

heading of "Indiscretions of the Naval Censor," I came across the following :—

"I can honestly say now the war is over that no man has seen as much as Mr Conrad saw in those few months when he was going round observing all the various sorts of work the Mercantile Marine was performing. I even got permission for him to go out in one of the Q-boats which were at that time more or less in their infancy. I should say that when I got him permission this perhaps should not be taken *au pied de la lettre*. I asked the imperturbable Chief of the Staff (Admiral Sir Henry Oliver) if I might send him out. He looked up at me, merely saying, 'I don't want to know anything about it,' went on writing and smoking his pipe, so I darted out of the room, knowing that I could go ahead and that all I had to do was to square the Senior Naval Officer at the port of departure, which I did ! In due course, therefore, Mr Conrad went for a cruise in a Q-boat."

The Q-boat was, of course, the brigantine under my command. I do not suppose that to this day Sir Douglas Brownrigg knows

how very much I helped him to square that Senior Naval Officer !

The same evening I took my leave of Conrad, with a faithful promise that I would not "let him down" ; also that I would keep him informed of my movements.

Later in the evening I was discussing the cruise with the Commodore. He remarked that he was undecided as to the wisdom of allowing Mr Conrad to come with me ; he was afraid that owing to his European reputation he might be well known to agents of the Central Powers, and if we came off second best in a scrap and he were taken prisoner, he might be treated as a non-combatant and get short shrift. For this reason he felt he was taking a great responsibility, and thought that he ought to cancel his permission. I, however, talked him over by saying that no one knew better than Conrad the risk he was taking, and as long as he was prepared to accept it there need be no opposition on his (the Commodore's) part. Eventually he gave in, much to my great joy.

CHAPTER II

I now proceeded to pick my First Lieutenant from innumerable officers who had volunteered to come with me. My choice fell on Lieutenant Henry Osborne, R.N.R., a great, strapping, lovable, good-looking fellow, to whom hard work was life itself, and who had that rare gift of getting work out of men with a feeling that they liked it. We had been minesweeping together for a considerable time and I had marked him down as a man who would go through anything.

The following morning, having packed away our uniforms overnight, we proceeded in mufti, in order not to excite suspicion, to join the *Ready* at Dundee.

Having inspected her, I found she was in a worse condition than I had anticipated. The foot of the foremast was worm-eaten and so rotten that steel bands were necessary to keep it together, and the rest of her—hull, spars, rigging and sails—was in a deplorable condition. I had a strong feeling that I ought to send Conrad a full and true report of

my inspection, but on second thoughts decided not to do so, because it would not in any way affect his decision to sail with me, and—well, because I very much wanted him to come.

Two weeks later the old craft was considered sufficiently patched, caulked and pitched to leave the dry dock, but on taking the water, like old wine in new bottles, we found that new planking and old timber did not go well together, with the result that the cuddy and lower forecastle were flooded out. More patching, more caulking and more pitching, however, rendered her sufficiently seaworthy to proceed to sea (a Board of Trade Certificate fortunately was not necessary!) and a day or two later we set sail for St Andrews Bay.

I have given the foregoing description of the vessel in order to show that Conrad's life during his U-boat hunting experiences in the North Sea, in the depth of a very severe winter, was not spent in a luxuriously fitted warship—which would have been bad enough in all conscience—but in a very old, water-logged derelict, without the slightest pretensions to comfort of any sort.

On my arrival at St Andrews Bay I dispatched a wire to Conrad's home requesting

him to join me forty-eight hours later, as after that time I proposed to sail at the first favourable opportunity. He came north the same night, fearful lest we should depart without him.

Our guns, ammunition, bedding and stores, consumable and otherwise, were sent round by trawlers from Granton and transferred to us whilst at anchor in the bay—this, of course, to outwit any enemy spies who might be lurking at Dundee.

At the time I did not know that Conrad had come north so hurriedly, and, as I did not communicate with the shore, he, I am sorry to say, had to spend a matter of thirty-six hours at a hotel overlooking the famous golf-course. He had received instructions from the Admiralty not to send wires or give any information of the proposed cruise, so that he was "between the devil and the deep sea" as to what he should do.

However, on the third morning I requested the lieutenant in command of H.M.S. *Zedwhale*, at anchor close by, to proceed on shore, look for Mr Conrad and offer him a passage off. He had not far to look, as Conrad met him on landing, and having introduced himself, was

given my message, and half-an-hour later was on board.

During the preceding two days the four twelve-pounder guns had been mounted, and during the fore and after noons the guns' crews were drilled to the highest point of perfection. They were changed round in order that each member of the crew might understand each other's work and could, if necessary, become captains of the guns. We had imaginary casualties, so that loaders, if necessary, could, in addition to their own work, do the duties of Nos. 1, 2, or sight-setters. Guns' crews on the off side, not engaged in action, were practised in filling up casualties at the guns, or in passing up ammunition from the hold. The "panic party," consisting of the sailing crew, was drilled in hoisting the boat out and scrambling into it for the purpose of abandoning the ship when ordered to do so by signal from the enemy, as was their custom before sending a party on board to destroy the vessel with time-fuse bombs.

When Conrad came on board I introduced Osborne and Moodie the sailing master. With the former he conversed at length on present-day discipline in the Mercantile

AT TARGET PRACTICE

Marine. Osborne had, just previous to the war, been made mate of a four-masted, full-rigged ship, so that they were on common ground, and discussed matters with which they were both conversant. Conrad was glad to hear that the old discipline as he knew it still prevailed; that the master, by ancient usage, had still the undisputed right to the weather side of the poop, and all the power and authority, unaided by any kind of force, which Master Mariners through the ages had built up for themselves, and against whose spoken word there was no appeal.

Moodie, a shy, retiring, soft-spoken man, charmed him. He was different in every way from the skippers he had coasted with, or imagined other coasting skippers to be. Moodie, too, was able to tell him how an enemy submarine had sunk his schooner, and now that he was in an armed ship he was going to try very hard to get his own back.

A little later I asked Conrad what his first impressions were on coming on board. "Different," he replied, "from anything I imagined. Instead of decks holystoned like a yacht, brasswork polished mirror-like, and everything to the last rope-yarn in its place,

your ship seemed full of men, your decks lumbered and littered with all sorts of engines of destruction and ammunition, depth charges, lance bombs and disguises ; and I wondered if it would be possible to enjoy just one fragrant weed without running the risk of being blown sky high."

Needless to say, the decks were cleared before we put to sea, and Conrad was able to enjoy not one, but many, though I am afraid the decks never reached that state of perfection with which his captain, Jasper Allen, of the brig *Bonita* would have been content. At the same time, what would the gallant Jasper not have given for the armament of my almost derelict ship when the Dutch Lieutenant Heemskirk deliberately piled his beloved brig on the Tamissa Reef outside Makassar !

For an hour in the afternoon Conrad was left to himself, during which time he penetrated everywhere, talked to each member of the crew and knew everybody long before I did. He learned that afternoon that the wireless operator was in civil life a bank clerk, and that his name was Musgrove. He was equally well acquainted with the names and occupations of each other individual as well,

including my own ; for I too had told him everything there was to be told almost before I knew him. He was sympathetic, extremely so, and strongly appealed to one. He was never inquisitive, never wanted to know anything which the whole world could not have known equally well. His human side was very human, and I suppose it was that which appealed so strongly to others and which made men trust him.

CHAPTER III

The same evening we weighed anchor and were towed out of St Andrews Bay, having on board the Commodore and his staff, who had come from Granton by sea to inspect the *Ready* and to witness our gunnery practice. A target was laid out at 2000 yards' range. The guns were loaded, the captains of the guns being picked men, and highly trained gunners lined their eyes along the sights. At the order "Fire!" they pressed their triggers, and the target was knocked endways. A new target was dropped, and at 3000 yards' fire was again opened with equally good results.

Practice was then carried out at longer ranges and under more varied conditions, and continued until the Commodore had satisfied himself that further firing was unnecessary.

Conrad had been watching through his marine glasses, and remarked on the fall of each shot which either hit the target or landed within a sufficiently measurable distance not to miss a submarine, offering as it would a much larger surface; and he expressed his

ALL READY FOR SEA

great delight at the superb accuracy of the gunners, congratulating them personally on their high standard of excellence. He remarked to me that no unarmoured vessel could have withstood the withering fire from our guns, and that the odds, as he conceived them to be, had very considerably lessened against the brigantine.

It was a toss up between foolhardiness and cunning, and after some discussion we backed our cunning.

Before the target practice the shooting abilities of our gunners was an unknown quantity ; now we were satisfied that if the enemy adhered to his usual procedure of first interrogating masters before sinking their vessels it would be a hundred to one on us. If, on the other hand, he were suspicious and torpedoed us without warning, we should be given short shrift. This last possibility was thrashed out at some length ; but as the brigantine was, in actual value, about half the cost of a modern torpedo, and as she was flying light, showing that no cargo was carried, we decided that it was an unlikely one.

Conrad here asked me who on earth conceived the idea of sending a small sailing

vessel out to fight submarines. He knew that the fighting men in Flanders in this, the twentieth, century had adopted methods of offence and defence which were not even hinted at in the text-books, and were more in keeping with battles between early day warriors ; but to send a very old wooden sailing vessel, which Nelson would have disowned as a fighting unit, to hunt for and give battle to a type of craft which had already destroyed battleships and cruisers, amazed him. He was somewhat surprised when I told him that the idea was not conceived by the Admiralty, not even by a professional seaman, but by a purely business man, head of one of the largest manufacturing industries in the country, who, on the outbreak of the war, surrendered everything, and accepted a junior commission in the R.N.V.R. on board one of H.M. sea-going vessels. Later on, this man, by sheer ability and powers of organisation, was promoted to the rank of commander, and appointed as Senior Staff Officer at Granton, then one of the largest and most important Bases on the East Coast.

Conrad was greatly interested, and wished to know more about him—how the idea came

to him, and who he was. I was glad of this, as it gave me an opportunity of paying a tribute to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and to Commander Kenneth Walker, the originator of the idea, and certainly the ablest and most capable Volunteer Officer with whom I had been brought in contact during the war.

It was one of this officer's duties to examine the credentials of, and to gain as much information as possible from, masters of neutral vessels arriving in the Firth of Forth; and from many of these he learnt that they had repeatedly been stopped on their passage across the North Sea, and questioned by commanders of German submarines as to movements of British war vessels. (This was, of course, previous to the Kaiser's orders to sink everything, regardless of nationality.)

Commander Walker discussed the possibilities of fitting out such a vessel and sailing her under a neutral flag with Commander W. H. S. Ball, R.N., the technical expert of the Base; and the idea having received his blessing, they both approached the Commodore, who agreed to ask for Admiralty sanction.

Endless correspondence followed with the

Admiralty, their Lordships not at all approving of the scheme. Commander Walker, being a successful business man, and not used to having his propositions turned aside, pressed still further, going as far as to offer to purchase and fit out a vessel at his own expense, the result being the gaining of Admiralty sanction for the purchase of and commissioning of the brigantine *Ready*.

During this conversation with Conrad the Commodore, who had been inspecting the sleeping quarters with Osborne, approached and directed me to assemble the officers, petty officers and crew men on the quarter-deck.

Having reported everybody aft, he asked each man in turn if he still wished to sail in the ship, assuring him that failure to do so would in no way prejudice him or affect his future. But each man had made up his mind to sail, and said so. The Commodore then asked Conrad if he still persisted in such a dangerous undertaking, to which he smilingly replied that he "would not miss the opportunity for worlds." I was thanking my stars that the inspection was over, and that we should soon be under way, when the Commodore suggested that I should return to St Andrews

and anchor there for another day, for what reason I do not know, unless it could possibly have been some premonition of disaster. He himself did not know what fear was ; indeed, he seemed to have been fighting all his life. For his services in the Zulu War he received promotion and was mentioned in dispatches. In the Egyptian War, 1882, he landed with the Naval Brigade. Further promotion and mention in dispatches came to him in the Benin War, and in the China War he commanded H.M.S. *Arethusa*. He wore the Silver and Bronze Medals with two clasps for saving life, on one occasion jumping fully dressed from the quarter-deck of one of his Majesty's ships and saving the life of a seaman who had fallen overboard. He was sixty-three years of age when he won the Albert Medal (the civilian V.C.) for descending into the cabin of a burning motor launch to make sure there was no one left on board. His absolute fearlessness was a byword in the Navy. I felt, therefore, that to obtain his consent I had only to say how very anxious we all were to go. He was not a man easily overruled, and if he decided against a thing he was always right. At the same time, he

listened to everybody and carefully weighed the facts on both sides. Daring and keenness appealed to him above everything, and the humblest rating under his command with any idea of originality would get the same hearing from him as would his "Second in Command." I simply said: "I would rather go, sir," and without any more ado he gave us permission.

CHAPTER IV

It was now getting dusk. The Commodore had taken his leave of us, with parting instructions to keep the colours flying. Conrad entrusted a small parcel to the Admiral's coxswain to be posted to his literary agent, and a few minutes later we were entirely on our own.

The order to "away aloft" was obeyed with alacrity by the sailing crew. Sails were loosened, buntlines and clewlines overhauled, and with the guns' crew manning the halyards and sheets all sail was soon made.

There was one hitch, a slight difficulty in hoisting the upper topsail yard. I had not been in charge of a sailing ship for twenty-two years, and well do I remember giving the order to let go the topgallant sheets—an important detail which had been overlooked. I was glad of this, as I then felt I had forgotten nothing; also it was an opportunity of convincing the sailing crew (a very conservative lot) that I was not a "steam-boat sailor"—a thing of contempt to the sailing-ship mariner.

We got away before a following wind, and were soon clear of the land, when we were overhauled by a destroyer on patrol duty, the commander of which asked us our business. Osborne, disguised in a bowler hat and a thick muffler, with a very much torn, double-breasted, threadworn, blue serge coat, to say nothing of a clay pipe, which he considered part and parcel of a coasting mate's equipment, replied : " Hunting for a submarine."

The destroyer's commander, evidently not having heard of Q-boats in those early days, then humorously inquired what we proposed to do with it when we found it ; to which Osborne as humorously replied : " Hoist it on board and tame it." This settled the matter, and we were allowed to proceed.

All sail now being set, and the vessel making good headway, the guns' crews disappeared to their quarters below deck, in accordance with instructions, well drilled into them, that they should not show their faces above the gunwale during the hours of daylight, unless specially ordered to do so. This was in case a U-boat commander, looking through the periscope of a lurking enemy submarine, should

consider the vessel overmanned, and become suspicious.

Moodie, the sailing master, was at the wheel. Osborne was busy about the disguises which were to be carried out after dark, testing the night sights for the guns, and setting the watches for the night.

I was standing aft with Conrad with an Admiralty Confidential Square Chart spread out on the skylight in front of us. On his asking me where I proposed to steer for, I pointed to the square where the Germans were at the time sinking Scandinavian sailing craft, and informed him that on reaching that position I should cruise about in the neighbourhood for some days. Conrad then laid off the course with the parallel rulers, measured the distance by compasses, looked up the flow of the tides from the sailing directions, and indeed took such a keen interest in the navigation of the vessel that I then and there suggested that he and Osborne should act as joint navigators, which he readily consented to do.

Everything seemed now to be fairly snug, and we were beginning to feel the pangs of hunger when the cook approached with the

joyful information that the evening meal was prepared. It was laid in the cuddy, and, leaving Moodie in charge of the deck, we three descended, Conrad taking up his place in the corner of the port side, which place he kept during the remainder of the cruise. The meal was very enjoyable.

Conrad was very curious to know more about my intentions, and I fully enlightened him, adding that I should be very glad of the benefit of his advice, and hoped he would not withhold it if, at any time, he thought it advisable to proffer it. This put Conrad at his ease. He was good enough to say that he felt sure I should not need it. I, however, put it in orders that he, Osborne and I should meet in conference every evening, and discuss the situation. This was agreed to, and was of the greatest benefit to all concerned.

"The Sea Sense" (one might describe it as "sea instinct") was well developed in all three of us, and it was surprising how much we all agreed on different points. There was no secrecy between us, and the decisions arrived at were at once communicated to the sailing master, and through him to the ship's company. This was all arranged during our first meal,

and after discussing the different disguises, also which flag we should sail under—the Norwegian, Swedish or Danish. As the Norwegian vessels seemed to be receiving the special attention of the enemy at that time, we decided to fly their colours, and hoisted them with great ceremony, not to be hauled down until the first shot was fired in action, when, in its stead, would be run up the British White Ensign, which, on a separate set of halyards, was always ready for the eventful moment. We then returned to the cuddy, and after opening a bottle of rare old port (of which the far-seeing Osborne had laid in a plentiful stock) we toasted ourselves and our ship, and prayed for good fortune on the morrow.

"Well," said I, as we again seated ourselves, "what are we going to call her?"

Conrad at once suggested "Freya," having in his mind "Freya of the Seven Isles," which he published as one of three stories in his *Twixt Land and Sea* in 1912. I had read it, and the name appealed to me. Osborne liked it too, and that same evening our little vessel was christened "Freya," Conrad standing as sponsor, with no small satisfaction that a British

ship-of-war should bear the name of a girl created by his own wonderful imagination. The next thing to be done was to find a "Port of Registry" in keeping with her name and national colours. We wondered if enemy submarine commanders were supplied with the Scandinavian equivalent to our Lloyd's Register, by which he could, through his "glad-eye," as our own submarine officers humorously described the periscope, check the names of all vessels, their rigs, and home ports. However, we decided not to let this trouble us, and spreading out the large scale chart of Norway on the cuddy table, sought for a suitable name, and after closely examining the different ports decided on Bergen. So the same hour our little vessel, called after Conrad's "Freya of the Isles" became the *Freya of Bergen;* and I personally prayed for a happier fate for our *Freya* than befell the beautiful heroine of one of the most charming stories ever told.

At 5.30 P.M. Conrad and I went on deck. It was a bright, clear night, but rather cloudy, and there was a moon somewhere. The dark outline of the coast was still in sight, and he stood for a full quarter of an hour gazing astern.

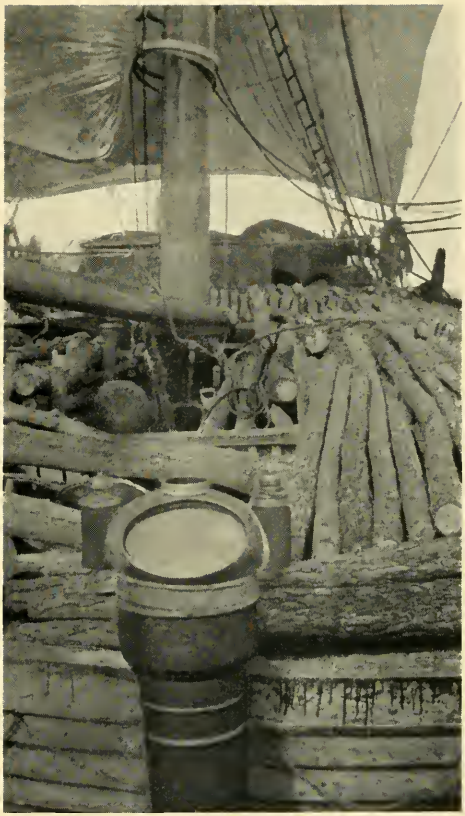
He paced the deck alone, stopping occasionally to look into the lighted binnacle to see the direction of the ship's head, and then aloft to see how the sails were drawing. This he must have done thousands of times in his old sailing-ship days, when watching for every breath of air in the doldrums, between the north-east and south-east trade winds, when ships are becalmed for weeks at a time, and the trimming of the sails to every gust of wind meant so much, or when running before the prevailing westerly gales between the Cape of Good Hope and Australia.

The poor weary officer of the watch, four hours on, four hours off, for months at a time, with record passages in his mind, could no more pass a binnacle without looking into it than fly. He did it automatically, and Conrad was doing the same then. I remarked this to him, and in the few minutes' conversation we had he remarked that in his younger days the romance of the sailing vessel always made him forget the drudgery connected with it, "when the hardest work was never too hard, nor the longest day too long." With steam everything was quite different. The work was too mechanical, and the mantle which rested on the

shoulders of the maker of fast passages, giving him a reputation world-wide, had passed to the cylinder, the piston, the crank, and the power of steam.

It was now quite dark, and Osborne, with all hands, started to disguise the vessel. *Freya*, in large, white block letters, was painted amidships on the port and starboard sides, and Norwegian ensigns on both bows and quarters, all with the aid of lamplight, from stages rigged over the sides. Hundreds of pit-props, cylindrical in shape and about four feet long, were sawn lengthwise in two, and nailed close together on boards, which were set up along the port and starboard gunwales, the full length of the ship, to give the enemy the impression that we were carrying a cargo of props for use in our coal mines. The same arrangement was constructed across the after-deck in front of the binnacle, so that a submarine coming up astern could neither see that the decks were clear of all obstructions, nor that four twelve-pounder guns were waiting for her to come within range.

Whilst this was going on I sat on the after-hatchway, working out what should be done in certain eventualities.



PIT PROPS TO HIDE GUNS FROM AIRCRAFT

Conrad was still watching the fast fading coast-line, which, owing to the freshening of the following wind, was disappearing from view.

I had decided on every action that would have to be taken to frustrate all possible attempts on the part of the enemy to destroy us, and was anxious to discuss my conclusions with Conrad and Osborne.

I waited until Conrad had awakened from his reverie, which he did about fifteen minutes later. Then together we paced the deck in the darkness and I unfolded my plans.

Osborne was still busy with the disguises, on the completion of which we all three inspected and passed them as being sufficient for our needs at the moment. I then suggested that we should adjourn to the cuddy to discuss the plan of campaign, leaving Moodie in charge of the deck; but on Conrad's suggestion he was invited to the conference, for the reason as before related, that he had had his schooner sunk under him and could give valuable information. Moodie was instructed to turn over the charge of the vessel to the mate, a very first-class seaman. This he lost no time in

doing, and we four sat round the little cuddy table, an indifferent oil lamp swinging overhead, throwing out an equally indifferent light, under which we discussed every possible kind of night attack and every possible means of combating each one.

Needless to say, no Admiralty instructions had at that time been issued for plans of attack on board sailing vessels in action against steam- or petrol-driven submarines. Therefore our Round Table Conference might fairly well be described as unique. The decisions arrived at were :

(1) In no circumstances should Morse signalling be used in replying to challenges or directions from other craft, on the score that its use was not customary in small sailing craft.

(2) Should the beam of a searchlight be thrown on us, all hands were to go to action stations, the brigantine to stand on until a shot was fired across our bows, when the vessel was to be brought to the wind, and the twin motors used for working the vessel to keep the guns trained to be got ready for running.

(3) As only enemy submarines were known to be carrying out these practices, every endeavour was to be made to bring the enemy within sure hitting distance before opening fire, owing to the rapidity with which she could extinguish her lights, and make it impossible for us to see her.

(4) Wireless was not to be used until the action opened.

(5) Motors were not to be run until the vessel went into action, for fear of the enemy picking up the sound on their hydrophone.

These instructions were then written out and posted up in the cuddy, the guns' crews mess deck, and in the sleeping quarters of the sailing crew.

We were all very tired by this time, and, leaving Moodie in charge of the deck, Conrad, Osborne and I retired to bunks off the cuddy, with the mistaken idea that we were going to enjoy a good rest, which we should have done had it not been for Rampling, the chief engineer of the motors, who seemed to have a mania for working twenty-three hours out of twenty-four. He kept up an unceasing

hammering, accompanied by song, underneath our sleeping deck. When he was not tinkering with his charges he was oiling them, or filling the tanks, and the smell of petrol permeated our sleeping quarters to such an extent that, in my sleepless moments, I decided that Rampling's occupation of one of the berths would in some way relieve the difficulty. So at 2 A.M. I descended to the engine-room, and informed this worthy that he needed rest—indeed that we all needed it—and with a very cheery "Aye, aye, sir," he finished up with the last two lines of what I was glad to hear was the last verse of his song, and proceeded on deck to have what he described as "a final puff" before turning in.

The moving of Rampling from the deck-house quarters to be nearer his engines meant also the moving of the skipper and mate, to make room for us. Whether Rampling continued his nocturnal tinkerings or not I cannot say; but with the entire absence of any complaints from Moodie or his mate, and the improved and refreshed appearance of Rampling, I gathered that he had decided to rest himself for lengthier periods, and to confine his labours to the hours of daylight.

CHAPTER V

Breakfast the morning after our departure was a wonderful meal, quite different from what I had expected. Heather, my servant, who had been with me when I was in charge of a submarine flotilla, and later in command of mine-sweeping trawlers, informed me in his own inimitable way that we had "some cook." Conrad remarked on his excellent cooking ; Osborne looked happy about it ; and I was so pleased that I sent for him to receive our congratulations.

He appeared with spotlessly white cap and apron, fully conscious of his capabilities. But the rig of our friend gave me food for thought. I felt that he, too, needed disguising, but feared to wound him. I knew he meant well, but I knew also that chefs were touchy people. Yet I saw that it was a difficulty that should be overcome.

Fortune favoured me, for on going my rounds after breakfast I noticed that his apron, owing to the confined galley space, was no longer spotless, and I there and then excused him

from wearing cap or apron during the cruise ; a privilege for which he seemed grateful, and which was satisfactory from all points.

During the forenoon I walked the deck with Conrad, and asked him what impressed him most on leaving the night before. I reminded him that he appeared to be very preoccupied with his thoughts, and, having read his books, I, at the time, wondered what was passing through his mind. He replied that the complete blackness of the coast, absolutely lightless as it was, reminded him of some island in the Pacific, uninhabited or peopled by savages, and that this sight brought war home to him more than anything else had done. Thirty years previously he had sailed in the same waters in the barquentine *Skimmer of the Seas*, on board of which he had shipped at Lowestoft, which town he considers his English birthplace, for the reason that it was the first port he landed in this country after some years' voyaging to the West Indies.

In this vessel, which was engaged in the coasting trade, Conrad remained for a considerable period. *Then* the whole coast was lit up. He knew every lighthouse from their revolving or occulting variations; the lighted buoys,

MR. JOSEPH CONRAD

marking Channels or the outer ends of shoals, he also knew. Passenger liners showing myriads of lights passed him on either side, relieving the monotony of the darkness ; and on the East Coast the flames leaping skyward from the blast furnaces of the great steel and iron works impressed him with the strength and might of the country of his adoption. *Now* everything was different ! Not a glimmer of a light anywhere. The great mother of the greatest Empire the world has ever known was shrouded in utter darkness. Ships passed on their way, not only minus their navigation lights, but with dead-lights screwed hard down over their port-holes, so that not a streak of light should show outboard.

Two years previously the shipmaster's watchword was " Safety above Everything." With us it was Action. We looked for it, hoped for it, and even prayed for it ; also that it should not be long delayed. 'Tis no wonder that the great novelist's thoughts should have been preoccupied.

The wind increased during the forenoon, making it advisable to take in the topgallant and upper staysails. The rottenness of the foremast made it necessary for us to exercise

caution in not putting any undue pressure on it. Under this rig we sailed for the remainder of the day.

It was during the afternoon that we exchanged sleeping quarters with Moodie, the mate (whose name I forget) and Rampling. They were very cheery about it, more especially Rampling, a great, big, fifteen-stone fellow, with a heart of gold, who sang and laughed alternately, and was forever pulling the legs of the guns' and sailing crews. Previous to the war he was chauffeur to Admiral Lord Beatty, and was proud of the fact.

Our new quarters, situated on the starboard side of the deck-house, were very bare indeed. Four unpainted wooden bunks, carpetless deck, a small enamel washing basin, a mirror purchasable at any shop which would stock it at sixpence, and an oil lamp, fixed by a nail to whichever part of the cabin it was at the time required, completed the furniture and fittings.

The second night out we played cards for some hours. Nap was invariably the game, and the stakes were very moderate indeed. Beans were used as counters, twelve of these going to a penny. We all three enjoyed the

game, and though one was never in more than a shilling on the night's play, sometimes even less, the joy of winning was very great ; and the hands held were always discussed over the midnight cup of cocoa, our last repast before turning in for the night.

During dinner, and both before and after play, Conrad would talk on different matters, which always greatly interested Osborne and myself. Never once did we interrupt him, nor was it necessary to have any points explained, so clear did he make everything. Sometimes he would talk of his early sea experiences, and of his book *Victory* which, just previous to the war, he had completed, and which was at the time being dramatised by Macdonald Hastings for the stage. He thought at that time that it would be produced by the late H. B. Irving when hostilities were over ; but, as is now well known, it was produced by Miss Marie Lohr.

The *Freya*, as she must now be described, leaked to the extent of nine to ten feet every twenty-four hours, and was pumped out during the hours of darkness, generally at midnight, when all hands were called to man the pumps.

Usually in Scandinavian vessels a wind-mill, continually working, keeps the bilges dry; but I was not sorry at the absence of this most excellent device, as the pumping, which lasted an hour, kept the men in condition, more especially the guns' crews, who spent their days under hatches.

The pumps, which were as old as the ship herself, were very often choked; but Moodie, with his quick ear, always scented the fault of the mechanism, and was able, with little delay, to remedy the defect, and save us from becoming water-logged.

I can't think of what would have happened if Moodie had not been blessed with this peculiar knowledge. Mr Basil Lubbock, in one of his delightful stories of the American wooden sailing clippers, writes of a certain well-known skipper of bygone days who, when his vessel was lying hove-to and leaking more than usual, threw large quantities of rope yarns over the side, which were sucked into the leaks, thereby lessening the inrush of water. I am afraid our old tub was past that, for the reason that it would have taken the yarn of every rope we had on board to have made any appreciable difference.

CHAPTER VI

We generally retired for the night after the holds were pumped dry. Conrad and I had upper bunks, Osborne occupying a lower one, and, sad to relate, owing to seas which we were continually shipping, a fair amount of which found its way into our cabin, the constant rush of water from one side of the berth to the other as the vessel rolled kept his mattress and bedclothes in a state of dampness, which was not at all to his liking.

As Conrad read for an hour or two before turning in, our one lamp, of the cheap paraffin variety, was hung on a nail close to his bunk, and was generally kept alight all night in case of a sudden call. This suited our guest, as on occasions I turned in leaving him fast asleep, only to wake up an hour or two later to find him reading Hartley Withers' *War and Lombard Street*, the only book he read during the whole cruise. This particular publication was to him one of absorbing interest, and he devoted all his reading time to the study of it. We were not supplied with a library on board,

but individual members of the crew had brought with them novels and magazines of the light and non-technical type. These, however, did not appeal to Conrad, and he never read them.

We seldom if ever undressed. Indeed, we discarded little else than our caps, mufflers and sea boots. It was an every-morning occurrence to see Conrad sitting over the edge of his bunk pulling on his long rubber sea boots in order to step on to the wet deck. This always amused him, and his cheeriness was most infectious.

We each had the exclusive use of the cabin for an hour each day—a bucket of hot water being provided by the cook—and this, save for our after-dinner chats, was voted by all three the most enjoyable hour of the day. Indeed, these two occasions were the only relaxation we had from the dull monotony of eternally looking for an enemy surface vessel, or the periscope of an underwater craft.

The second night out the wind increased to a gale, the sea rising to enormous heights. Canvas was reduced to fore upper topsail and fore and main staysails. We ran before it for a while, and then after an hour or two

decided to heave-to. As we had only about fifty tons of ballast on board, and a couple of thousand pit-props in the hold, the latter to keep the vessel afloat should an enemy shell find its mark below the water-line, we tossed about like a cork on the water, shipping heavy seas and damaging our disguises. Indeed, many were swept overboard, but were replaced by others as they went, even at the risk of losing some of our men, although I had taken the precaution of having life-lines round them. The gale lasted about thirty-six hours, during which time we found it necessary to do double pumping. After that it moderated sufficiently to enable us to run before it, and as it got still finer we set more sail and brought the vessel to her course.

We had had a severe buffeting, and of course the unpleasantness of it all reminded us of worse gales we had been through. All three of us had experienced "Rounding Cape Horn" and "Running the Easting Down" or, in other words, the passage from South of the Cape of Good Hope to Australia; and it was during one of these we had all experienced terrible weather, the worst of which was when we were in sailing ships.

Rampling kept us alive through it all. He was humorous and had a fund of good stories, though his chief subject of conversation was Admiral Beatty—" his " Admiral, as he always spoke of him. According to him, Beatty ought to have been First Lord of the Admiralty, Civil as well as Sea. He ought to have been in Cradock's place at Coronel, where he would have knocked the Germans out! The *Goeben* and the *Breslau* would never have escaped him, and Turkey would never have come into the war had Beatty been in the Mediterranean! Beatty ought to have been Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet on the outbreak of war, as no Hun vessel would then have dared to leave harbour! Indeed, his veneration for his former employer was so great that I at times feared he might say that if Beatty had commanded my Q-boat he would already have sunk half-a-dozen German submarines.

I always felt that I had a lot to live up to in satisfying Rampling as to my qualifications. Whether I succeeded or not I cannot say, but whenever I did anything in front of the guardian of my motors I always wondered how Admiral Beatty would have acted in similar circumstances. I remember

MR. CONRAD AT THE WHEEL

telling Conrad this, and it greatly amused him.

The weather for the next few days was as good as could be expected for the time of the year—strong winds, with high seas, and bitterly cold. Conrad joined in the work of the ship, lending a hand whenever it was required, often relieving the man at the wheel, so that the latter might have a smoke during the forenoon and afternoon watches. The pit-prop disguises, which were continually being washed away, he kept a keen eye on, for it gave him the opportunity of hammering large-sized French nails into the woodwork, which he did with all the strength and power of a village blacksmith.

The rough weather which we experienced and the constant rolling and pitching of the not nearly ballasted vessel (I asked for one hundred tons and was allowed only fifty) damped our spirits but little. We had reached the danger area, and were simply begging to be attacked; eager eyes from behind pit-props scoured the horizon for a sign of anything approaching the appearance of an enemy submarine. Musgrove, the wireless operator, on the pretence that he was always repairing something, simply lived

in the top-mast crosstrees with his Zeiss marine glasses, anxious to be the first to sight the enemy.

The North Sea is a big place, and days passed without our seeing as much as the smoke of a passing steamship. Conrad agreed with me that we should have sailed down the English Channel and up the Irish Sea, where submarines were known to be operating in large numbers. I had pleaded to be allowed to take these courses, and I can never help thinking that commanding officers of areas did not, at that period of the war, co-operate sufficiently. True, up to then no enemy submarine had been sunk by a sailing war vessel. Ours was purely an experimental proposition. At the same time, it ought to have been apparent to even a layman that our chances of success would have been greater in confined waters than in the North Sea, where hunting for a submarine, at the most at six knots an hour, was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

The idea originated at Granton, and to Granton must be given the credit of fitting out the first sailing war vessel. But that was no reason why the task of testing her should

be confined to the North Sea. True, enemy submarines had been active in certain chart squares, but during the interval of getting Admiralty approval for the purchase of and the fitting out of the vessel, German commanders had changed their scene of operations, and during all those disappointing days of not going into action I felt that, had I been allowed to have my way, we should have been in the thick of it within twelve hours of passing through the Straits of Dover and certainly before reaching Land's End.

I could not get this out of my mind, and I expressed my feelings pretty strongly to Conrad on the matter, but he would not be drawn into any discussion, and, beyond agreeing that we had had bad luck so far, he would say nothing more. To him an order from superior authority was an order to be obeyed, and there was an end to it. I, naturally, did not discuss this with Osborne or the crew, so that any expression of opinion to Conrad on the subject would in no way have affected the discipline of the ship's company, which was of a very high standard. Indeed I was reminded of Admiral

Hopwood's verse in his *The Laws of the Navy* :—

> "Take heed what you say of your rulers,
> Be your words spoken softly or plain,
> Lest a bird of the air tell the matter,
> And so ye shall hear it again."

Conrad took under his own special care a quick-firing Gardner gun, which he unearthed from the top of the deck-house, and personally screwed it down on the after-skylight hatch. He examined the mechanism at intervals, to make sure that the sea water had not rusted the parts, and always kept it in a high state of perfection. He called it "his" gun, and assured us that whatever else failed, his gun would not.

We continued to play cards at night, and at the same stakes, small as they were ; indeed our daily and nightly routine never altered, and Osborne and I certainly did look forward to listening to Conrad's experiences, after we had entered up the nightly score and paid over our losses. On one such occasion, and to my surprise, he told me that during the war he had been to sea in one of the mine-sweepers out of Yarmouth, and that what most impressed him was the deadly dullness of

LIEUT. OSBORNE, R.N.R. MR. CONRAD

minesweeping, added to which was the risk at any moment of being blown up without the satisfaction of being able to hit back. He also remarked on the fact that where mines were known to be laid every class of vessel, other than minesweepers, was given a five-mile radius, inside of which they were not to approach until the mines had been swept up and destroyed.

Osborne and I, both being minesweeping officers, greatly appreciated Conrad's views, and said so.

When Conrad had something amusing to say he first laughed to himself, more especially if the joke were against himself. He amused us greatly by telling us that, before proceeding to sweep up mines, he wired his wife of his intentions, and she, in reply, wired, "Don't catch cold," acting on which he went on shore and added to his stock of clothing a cardigan jacket, which stood him in good stead during the bitterly cold days and nights spent at sea with us. The joke was, that catching cold was the last thing that would worry a minesweeper, as in trawlers one went out without any certainty of coming back; and to survive clearing a mine-field in

a vessel drawing from fifteen to sixteen feet was a blessing for which one ought to be sufficiently thankful, without worrying too much about the passing ills to which the flesh is heir from cold or otherwise.

CHAPTER VII

During the hours of daylight, when those on deck were consciously or unconsciously keeping their eyes lifting for submarines, it was no small wonder that this particular object of our search completely dominated our whole thoughts. I had sat with, talked and walked with Conrad on deck, each scanning different parts of the sea, one or the other sometimes stopping to examine through marine glasses what turned out to be purely imaginary objects, yet which could not be overlooked.

On one occasion Conrad spotted a fisherman's dan-buoy just barely visible, which the untrained eye of the landsman could never have detected. I remarked this to Conrad, who discoursed at some length on the subject of optics, to the study of which he had apparently devoted much time.

It naturally occurred to those other than myself that it might be the periscope of an enemy submarine, but as I had been in charge

of a submarine flotilla from August 1914 to March 1916, and had from the latter date used dan-buoys on a large scale in connection with mine-sweeping, I readily distinguished the difference from the fact that where a periscope would be perpendicular, except when the submarine was submerging or coming to the surface, the dan-buoy was tossing about at all angles. It should be explained here that a dan-buoy is a wooden spar, about twelve to sixteen feet long, weighted at one end to keep it as nearly upright as possible, with cork fitted, oval in shape, about the middle of the spar to give it buoyancy.

As usual, my deduction and explanation interested Conrad. I don't think he had previously realised that I had any knowledge of submarines and their workings; he was amused beyond measure when I told him of my appointment to the Submarine Service, which is perhaps worth recording.

Opening my morning paper the morning after the declaration of war I read, in bold, block type, "Naval Reserves Called Out," and on reporting at 58 Victoria Street, S.W., the Headquarters of the Admiral Commanding

Coastguards and Reserves, I found myself appointed to H.M.S. *Dolphin*, better known as Fort Blockhouse, the Alma Mater of the Submarine Service, for command of H.M.S. *Nettle*, and in charge on Extended Defence Duty of the Second Submarine Flotilla. On mildly protesting that I had had no experience with submarines, the Assistant to the Admiral, ignoring my remarks, directed his secretary to make the necessary arrangements for my carrying out his instructions.

On my reporting for duty I was fortunate in meeting a commanding officer, Commander (now Captain) Algernon Candy, R.N., who in peace time had shown great interest in the "Reserves," and who, on the outbreak of war, fully appreciated their value. After a few explanations I found I was to act as his deputy at sea, and soon fully realised that as a pioneer of submarining he was required to be in close touch with the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, not only for consultation on the development of the Submarine Service and the training of officers and ratings, but also for a hundred and one other reasons. Included amongst these was the making of

necessary arrangements for and attending to the needs of French destroyers and submarines operating from our Base and working alternate days and nights at sea with our flotilla, under the orders of Commander Vincent de Brechignac. This officer was of striking appearance, with great charm and personality, who, with the officers under him, at once won the hearts of his British colleagues in the "Trade," by which cognomen the Submarine Service is popularly known. The object of the patrol was that the submarines should attack any enemy vessels which might force the Straits of Dover.

After many weary months of waiting, which sorely tried the patience of the submarine officers, as there appeared to be no likelihood of such an eventuality, the French submarines returned to their Base and the Second Submarine Flotilla was disbanded.

My appointment at Fort Blockhouse was a very interesting and happy one for me, and during my stay there it was my privilege to meet the Lions of the "Trade." Nasmith, Boyle and Holbrooke were there, all three Dardanelles V.C's., who are as well known to the great British public as our greatest and

most distinguished admirals. D.S.O.'s, with and without bars, were common in the "Trade," and the younger officers wore their D.S.C.'s with that delightful feeling that they were well won—and they were.

One fine morning, fairly early in the war, six "H" Class Submarines arrived at the Base from Canada, six others of the same class having been dispatched from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Malta. These vessels were constructed in the record time of five months, and crossed the Atlantic on their own bottoms. I mention this fact, as some years later a great sensation was caused when it became known that the German submarine *Deutschland*, a much larger vessel, had crossed the Atlantic. The secrecy of the crossing of our submarines never leaked out—one of the hundred other feats accomplished by officers and men of the Royal Navy unknown to the many who were continually asking "What is the Navy doing?" In charge of one of the submarines was a temporary lieutenant R.N.R., afterwards promoted to lieutenant-commander and awarded the D.S.O. for a great feat of resource and seamanship. Submerged in the Bight of Heligoland, his vessel struck a German mine,

which completely blew her bows off. By skilful handling this officer managed to navigate his vessel to an East Coast port, under her own power, a feat which won for him the admiration of the "Trade," composed, as it was, of officers who had themselves done great things.

Conrad enjoyed hearing all this, but he said there must have been a hundred and one submarine adventures not generally known outside the "Trade," adventures which to the naval officer, however great the achievement, were looked upon as ordinary incidents in the day's work, to be forgotten and not talked about. Submarine officers are a type peculiar to themselves — very unlike their "big ship" brothers-in-arms. There is a bond between them born of the constant danger to which even in peace time they are exposed, a freemasonry which it is perhaps difficult to describe, and which is extended whole-heartedly to officers and men of the Reserve and Volunteer forces, with whom they were associated during the Great War.

I count myself fortunate to have belonged to the "Trade"; and as Conrad and I continued our walk, still keeping our eyes skinned for a

lurking Hun, I was able to tell him many tales, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

There was the lovely tale of how one of our most brilliant submarine officers hoodwinked the Turks when they thought they were fooling him, and how he more than got his own back. It was during the early days of the Dardanelles campaign when, after some considerable time in the Sea of Marmora, he reported by wireless that he had expended his torpedoes and was returning to the Base for supplies. Whilst waiting either for his relief or for approval of his signal he noticed greater activity on the part of Turkish shipping, and rightly concluded that the Turks had by some means gained possession of our Confidential Code Book and decoded his message. He proceeded with all speed to his Base, took in a full supply of torpedoes and without delay returned to the scene of operations. Immediately on his arrival he sent exactly the same signal and bided his time. Ten Turkish troopships sailed that day and ten Turkish troopships were sunk with all on board.

I gave Conrad the submarine commander's name, but not for worlds would I put it in print. I am too proud of his friendship to do

so, knowing full well that I should lose it if I did.

During the first week of the war a British submarine cruising submerged in the Bight of Heligoland had a very narrow escape from being blown up. A bumping was heard on the starboard bow which could not be accounted for. On the commander deciding to come to the surface to investigate, his horror may be imagined when, on looking out of the conning tower, he beheld a German mine on his starboard forward diving plane. It appeared that the mooring wire of the mine was caught between the submarine and the plane, and the forward movement of the vessel brought the mine down to the plane, which was held there by the weight of the sinker being towed. Very little was known about the mechanism of German mines in those days, but with careful handling it was cleared and destroyed.

To my mind one of the most daring feats carried out by a British submarine was when her commander, somewhere off the German coast, discovered his vessel had developed engine trouble to such an extent that he saw no possible way of returning to his Base except

by being towed back. He made plans accordingly: during the night he explained to his second-in-command, petty officers and crew that just before daylight, the hour when lookouts are most tired and weary, he would endeavour to come to the surface alongside a German trawler which was usually at anchor off a point of land close by. Everything worked according to plan: the submarine was skilfully handled and came to the surface alongside the trawler. The forward hatch was thrown up, out of which and on to the deck of the trawler poured armed men. The wireless was immediately destroyed, the Germans were made prisoners in their own vessel, and a quarter of an hour later the British submarine was being towed to Harwich by a German trawler, where they arrived in due course.

Conrad enjoyed these stories greatly, and was somewhat sorry that at the time I could not recount more. He was amused with a story told me by Commander W. H. S. Ball, R.N., who was one of the pioneers of the British Submarine Service, and who, with Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, Captain Percy Addison, R.N.,

Captain Algernon Candy, R.N., and others did much by taking incalculable risks to bring the Submarine Service to its present high state of perfection.

Commander Ball's story was of what he described as the earliest ancestor of the K boat. This was a glass box covered with ass's skin, made to the order of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. This bold general must have been absolutely fearless, for in those days it required no small courage to allow oneself to be shut up in a box and lowered below the water. Apparently it tried even his own nerves, as he saw many monsters, and some things so horrible that he would not speak of them till the day of his death. It must be remembered that he would be able to see little, so probably imagination played a large part in the things he thought he saw. There are many accounts of this adventure in existence, all more or less wonderful, but the cold facts appear to be that the great general got inside the door, was sealed up with tar, and lowered to the bottom by a chain. By an accident, which in those days may or may not have been intentional, the chain was let go from the boat, and the king was left sitting in

his box on the bottom, looking at and being looked at by "horrible things." However, to the relief of his friends, and presumably the chagrin of those who had axes to grind in his disappearance, the box broke, and up his majesty shot to the surface, when he was rescued, a wetted and wiser man.

This episode stands out alone in ancient history, and it is not on record that any other person went under water in a completely enclosed vessel until comparatively modern times.

CHAPTER VIII

The wireless was rigged after dark, and always taken down before daylight, but we made little use of it. When the weather was not too bad, and the improvised wireless room not under water, Musgrove used to "listen in" for some tit-bits of intercepted information, which we were very glad to get, more particularly the news that President Wilson had been re-elected President of the United States of America. We had all three hoped he would be, and were delighted when the news came through.

Up to this time we had received only one direct wireless message, this to the effect that enemy submarines had been sighted in a certain latitude and longitude; but as we were about sixty miles from that position, it was not much use to us, as it would, at our speed, have taken twelve hours to reach it, during which time the submarines would have altered their positions considerably.

Conrad did not ask to send any wireless

messages, nor did he receive any. He certainly had all a father's anxiety for his eldest son Boris, who had joined up early in 1915 and was then doing his bit in France with the 110th Battery under General Plumer. Boris, of whom his father often spoke with the greatest pride and affection, was originally intended for a seafaring career, and was, previous to the war, a cadet on board H.M.S. *Worcester*. The call to arms, however, was too much for him, and as soon as he was accepted for service he was trained and sent to France. Conrad was proud that he had a son fighting for England, and would have been prouder still if he could have given his son John too ; but John was still a boy at school. Boris went through the campaign scathless until just before the Armistice, when he was knocked out and badly wounded, entailing his going into hospital for a lengthy period.

Admiral Sir Douglas Brownrigg, in his *Indiscretions of the Naval Censor*, writing of Conrad's flight experience, says :

" He was a perfectly delightful man to deal with, enthusiastic over everything he saw and did, including a flight in a Royal Naval Air Service Machine against a 60-mile gale, piloted,

as he put it, by a child ; meaning a young officer of 21 or so."

Conrad told us about this after dinner one night, but he made little of it. "He would not have missed it," he said, and wanted to experience anything connected with the war under the worst conditions. He was certainly doing it with us, as the weather was unusually bad, sometimes terrific, and our clothes were never dry. Yet not one word did he ever express of regret at having come, was always breezy and cheerful, and prayed only that we should have the luck to get into action.

The dynamo for the wireless set was worked by a small petrol engine fitted on deck, and when this did appear above water after heavy weather, Musgrove got busy about it, with the huge Rampling looking on. It was always amusing to watch the little operator trying to start the thing up, and there was certainly every excuse for any difficulties he may have had, owing to its being constantly saturated with salt water. Musgrove knew all about motor bicycles—he had owned different makes at different times—but this was the deuce ! He was a good-natured little fellow, and could stand any amount of chaff, a good deal of

which he got from Rampling, who, naturally, was more expert. They were the Mutt and Jeff of the piece, and Conrad and I laughed loudly and long at their sallies. We never missed this part of the day's work, and, unlike music hall comedians, their performance was different every time.

The ninth day out the wind increased during the afternoon to a moderate gale, making it again necessary to heave-to, and after dark it blew with such fury that we thought the masts would go by the board. The vessel was straining heavily and leaking so badly that it was found necessary to pump her every four hours, and then for an hour and a half at a time. No one attempted to sleep that night, and through the first middle and morning watches we just wondered what was going to happen. How the few sails set were not blown away, worn and old as they were, nobody knew; but they held, or this book would never have been written. It was a terrible night, the worst we had experienced during the whole cruise, and not one that will be easily forgotten. The deck seams opened so much that water leaked through to the cuddy and sleeping compartments, and as we had neither pitch, oakum nor

caulking tools on board, we suffered great inconvenience from wet during the remainder of the passage. When the weather moderated we stood away again, and continued on our hunt.

Bad weather or discomfort made not the slightest difference to Conrad. He was used to it—"brought up on it" as it were—and was just living over again some of the hardships he experienced during his seafaring career. I have often noticed during my old sailing-ship days that sailors are more cheery under short canvas in a gale, when there is nothing else to do but stand-by for the weather to moderate, than in the doldrums between the north-east and south-east trade winds, when there is the constant trimming of sails to catch the varying winds between the intervals of holystoning decks, repairing rigging or scraping paint work. Sailors hate monotony, and there is no monotony in a gale, when any minute anything may happen. True, there was none in fine weather with us, for the reason that we were hunting enemy submarines, but the old training made bad-weather cheeriness a habit with us, and habit dies hard, more particularly at sea.

In bad weather, fiddles (cross pieces of wood)

were always used on the cuddy table during meal times, and even then soup plates and vegetable dishes were constantly somersaulting from one side to the other, and Heather, my small servant, was continually diving under the table retrieving potatoes, cruets, buns and sauce bottles. The breakages were appalling. How we prayed for a table that would remain horizontal, or for something that would keep the ship steady, if only during meal times—a sort of gyroscope that one could run, if only for the time being ; but all the praying in the world made not the slightest difference, and more often than not the meal was a regular scramble. Apropos of gyroscopes a very amusing unsigned article appeared in the *Nautical Magazine*, which read :

"It is related that in a little coasting steamer for a time experiments were made with an anti-rolling gyroscope, and the skipper confessed to a friend that every time, and all the time, the gyroscope was running he was in deadly terror the gyrating object would break loose or asunder and smash the hull to pieces ; and moreover, that whenever he came into 'weather' of any moment he took good

care to see that the apparatus was 'chained up.'"

Coasting skippers, I know, are a conservative lot, and dislike new inventions. Their ships have rolled under them all their lives, and they could go on rolling for all they cared; so it was no wonder that the "apparatus" in this particular instance was "chained up" when it was most needed. Had we been supplied with it, also with the power to drive it, I feel quite certain there were many occasions when we should have used it, even at the risk of parting the old craft's timbers, and eventually ourselves floating away on pit-props.

It was during the last gale, when Conrad and I were taking shelter under the lee of the deck-house, that he reminded me of the parcel he sent on shore by the Commodore's coxswain on leaving. I remembered it, for the reason that the Commodore's vessel had cast off, and in order to deliver Conrad's parcel I requested that he might come alongside again—a request most unusual for a junior officer to make to a senior; but as he was in steam and I in sail there was nothing else for

it. I laughingly asked him if it were his last will and testament. He assured me that it was not so, but a gold watch-chain which he had purchased out of the first money earned as captain of a ship.

It was a bitterly cold night, and as there was no real reason why we should stand there and freeze, I suggested we should go down to the cuddy, where we found Osborne trying to warm himself at the fire, which was doing its best to smoke him out. I have often thought that the cheeriness of the sailor is due in a large way to the delightful way he has of comparing his lot in life, not with those whom fortune has placed in what would appear to others as more enviable surroundings, but to the man who is worse off than himself. He is sorry of course for Bill or Tom, or whatever his name may be, but the fact that he is better placed and perhaps drawing more dollars cheers him no end.

On this particular occasion I was frozen through, and, turning over in my mind those of my friends whom I thought might gladly change places with me, my thoughts flew to my bosom friend, Roderick Day, Commander R.N.R., who must be building roads through

ice and snow somewhere in the Arctic. Day had been with Scott and Shackleton in the Antarctic Expedition, 1901-1904, and was chosen, I imagine, for the reason of his powerful physique and extraordinary strength as much as for his tact and cheeriness. I had known Day for twenty years, and a letter sent from him at Archangel, which I read to Conrad, told me about the great road he had built over the snow, in some places seven feet deep, from Skibotn in the Lyngen Fjords at the extreme north of Norway, over the mountains and along the Finnish-Swedish frontier to the railhead at Tornea in the Gulf of Bothnia, the distance being approximately 380 miles.

The British Government, after the failure of the Gallipoli Campaign, were at their wits' end to get ammunition and stores into Russia from Great Britain; the Dardanelles being closed they were compelled to search for other routes. A firm of Finnish contractors reported that it was possible to make a road between the points before mentioned, and on the Foreign Office applying to the Admiralty for an officer with experience in Polar regions, Lieutenant Day, R.N.R., as he then was, received instructions to proceed to Norway and get

in touch with the contractors. Day examined the whole route from Skibotn to Tornea and reported that it was a practical possibility. The work was commenced by leading reindeer over the route—I say "leading" and not "driving," for the reason that a Laplander led the first half-dozen tied together and the others followed. These were followed by horses drawing sleighs, and in three weeks the road was made. This, of course, from Day's modest description of the undertaking, seems to have been a very simple matter, but during that time accommodation was built at different stages of the route for the sheltering of 5000 men and stabling for 4500 horses, the reindeer of course being allowed to wander about in the snow. When the road was handed over to the Russians, Day resumed his naval duties at Archangel.

Conrad, who had listened intently through the reading of the letter, was deeply impressed. He was glad that a sailor should have been selected, and pleased that he should have accomplished so much, and he often referred to it afterwards.

In July 1919, after completing the mine clearance on the north and north-west coasts

of Ireland, I met Day in London, and although this story has nothing to do with our voyage in the *Freya*, it is more or less a sequel to one of our fireside conversations in the cuddy of the old brigantine. I had just congratulated him on his wonderful undertaking when, with that great robust laugh of his, he assured me that the making of the route was as nothing compared with the anxiety it caused him later.

I include his story in the book for the reason that when I met Conrad after the war he made tender inquiries about Day.

It appears that during the winter of 1916-1917, owing to difficulties between the Russians and Finns, the latter cut off the supply of hay which was necessary for the horses used for transport, and a considerable quantity of war munitions were hung up on the route.

In January 1918 Day was again sent for by the Foreign Office, when it was explained to him that they were afraid that the stores might fall into the hands of the Germans, and that he was to proceed at once to Finland and do all in his power to avert this, the sum of £10,000 being placed to his credit for this purpose. On Day's arrival at Stockholm he

made a provisional agreement with a contractor whereby the latter was to deliver to him all the goods hung up in Finland, with the exception of some 5000 cases of boots, which were to be sold to the Finnish State in exchange for bombs, the remainder of the stores to be placed on board ship at Skibotn. Later, Day left for Skibotn, where he heard from indisputable evidence that a member of the firm of the Finnish contractors had entered into negotiations with the Germans to sell the whole of these goods for the sum of 120,000,000 kroners. He also heard that the same contractor had entered into a sub-contract with a Norwegian shipowner to recover the stores, sell part of the goods in Scandinavia, and transport the remainder over the Narvick Railway to Haparanda. Day took prompt and immediate action ; he prevented the Finnish contractor and the Norwegian shipowner from carrying out their prearranged schemes, and on his own responsibility made new contracts and proposals with the Norwegian. Unfortunately the Germans arrived before all the stores were recovered, and were able to seize 300 tons of metals and 2500 cases of boots. Two of Day's officers, Lieutenant I. K. Storey, R.N.R.,

and Paymaster Lieutenant Burke, R.N.R., were made prisoners and, insufficiently clad, with a temperature of minus 35°, were taken by sleigh under armed escort across Finland to Tornea. Day next proceeded to recover the metal and boots seized by the Germans. He knew they could not transport the stores without hay for horses, and as they had none in Finland they must obtain it from Norway or Sweden, which was prohibited. Day placed secret agents on the frontiers of both countries and reported to Stockholm any attempt made to smuggle hay into Finland. He could not stop it from Sweden, but made it impossible for the Germans to transport the stores to Tornea, and seeing this route closed to them they decided to bring the goods due south to a station on the Narvick Railway in Sweden. As soon as they were committed to this line of action, Day allowed them to have all the hay they wanted, and contented himself by keeping a check on the metal brought to Sweden. The British Minister at Stockholm was then able to seize the whole lot, and by Day's wonderful ingenuity and instrumentality stores to the value of £6,500,000 were not only prevented from falling into the hands

of the Germans, but also, save for a small quantity sold in Scandinavia, reshipped to England.

In return for services which can only be described as amazing, in the face of the extraordinary difficulties with which he had been confronted, Day, as a Royal Naval Reserve Officer, was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.)! Had there been a Scott or Shackleton at the Admiralty or Foreign Office, I venture to think that he would have received something more fitting in the way of a reward.

CHAPTER IX

Since beginning this book I have often wished that I could report Conrad's conversation in his own words. His expressed opinions were given in the most delightful English. I had, in my time, met many distinguished literary men, and listened to them for hours, but none of them had ever impressed me as he did with the beauty of the English language. Whenever I saw him on deck, or chatted with him after dinner, I wondered how on earth he could have mastered it as he did. His vocabulary seemed unlimited, his phrasing delightful, and his delivery such that it always gripped me.

He talked about the Courts of Europe as would a courtier; he knew everybody and how they became anybody; and if a new personage rose to prominence in European or Asiatic affairs he knew what following he had, and how long he was likely to remain in power. He knew the conducts of Parliaments, the Reichstag of Germany, the Reichsrath of Austria, the Italian Senate, and what was once the Duma of Russia. He could trace the

origin of all the crowned heads, and the great aristocratic families who had made history; who married who and why; and the effect these marriage alliances had in grouping great Powers together for their mutual betterment. Nothing has ever so much brought home to me my own utter lack of education as in listening to Conrad. His great flow of language, his wonderful marshalling of facts and marvellous grasp of matters often made me wonder why one sailor should know so much and the generality of them so little.

I remarked to him that, of all the professions, officers both in the Navy and Mercantile Marine were the least educated, adding that the officer in the Mercantile Marine, save for the study of navigation and seamanship, finishes his education at a time when his more fortunate brother goes to his 'varsity or enters one of the learned professions. The naval officer, from the time he first sets foot on board ship, talks of little else but his job. This, I suppose, is as it should be. Start him off and he will hold forth on guns, torpedoes, engines and ammunition, till you hate the very names of them. He will tell you how at target practice his ship had the highest

average of hits of any vessel in his squadron ; how on some occasion or other his ship got torpedo nets out in seventeen seconds ; or how at Zanzibar or Hong-Kong in the all-comers sailing-boat race over a triangular course of three miles their cutter won easily, beating over thirty others of various rigs, from large sailing launches to gigs and whalers ; but, delightful as he always makes his conversation, he never gets away from his own job. All this I told Conrad, even adding that in sport —and the naval officer is always a sportsman— the thing that interests him most is the Navy and Army Rugby Match, or some other form of sport connected with the Senior Service. Conrad listened intently, but he would have none of it. Then I said that, as a naval officer, the cadet from the public school was better educated and more a man of the world than the Britannia-trained youth. Conrad again disagreed with me. He simply would not believe it ; and when I argued that such was the finding of a Commission set up to inquire into the advantages and disadvantages of both, he waxed eloquent, became even dramatic, and said the Commission was no doubt composed of schoolmasters—the very

worst people in the world to decide anything.

The Britannia-trained cadet was to him everything that an officer should be. His education was on right lines, and he would not have it altered one iota. He instanced the facts that Lord Howe's letters, great fighter that he was, were far from scholarly; that Nelson's reports of his manœuvres were in some cases difficult to follow; and yet, in spite of this, Britannia-trained youths had, after rising to eminence, proved themselves great ambassadors, great governors of colonies, and from their quarter-decks had, by rapid computation and with great tact, settled many questions of supreme national importance, and always to their country's advantage. He deplored any outside interference with the education and training of the naval officer. It was a matter which should be left solely and absolutely in the hands of those who had served before him and had risen high in the country's service—men to whom tradition was everything, and who even in their advanced age never lost touch with the great service to which they justly and proudly boasted they had the honour to belong.

Yes ; I was wrong. Conrad convinced me that I was. Not that I was ever lacking in my veneration for tradition, but in this argument I had left it out of my calculations, and thought only of education in its accepted sense as applied to the other learned professions.

I know little about the transference of thought, but with each individual member of the crew thinking the same thing and saying nothing the effect may be imagined. It did not come suddenly, but I felt it growing, and wondered in my own mind where it was going to end. Osborne, usually the cheeriest and most optimistic of souls, lost something of his gaiety. Rampling grew less communicative. Musgrove spent more time aloft, and, if possible, kept a better look-out. I knew what it was, for I had the same feeling myself and consequently felt for the others. In short, it was the bitter disappointment of not having been in action. Conrad must have felt as we did, but he was splendid, and never appeared to lose hope that the great moment for which we all longed would eventually come.

During daylight we scanned the horizon right round, and with marine glasses searched

every inch of the sea within the line of visibility, but up to that time to no purpose ; and it was no small wonder that at the end of each successive day, when the sun went down and darkness set in, that we felt that another day during which an opportunity might have occurred had been wasted.

Sitting in the cuddy one night after our usual game of nap, Osborne, with all the superstition of the seaman, remarked that he thought the Norwegian ensign was unlucky for us, and that we ought to try the Swedish or Danish. As, however, the weather was unusually bad and heavy seas were running, the painting of the flags on the sides fore and aft to bring them in keeping with the national colours flying from the peak seemed too dangerous to undertake, more especially as the operation would have to be carried out under cover of darkness. So the idea was abandoned. Poor Osborne was disappointed—I knew he would be ; I also knew that he would have undertaken the job single-handed. But he was too valuable to risk losing, and it was too much to ask any other member of the crew to undertake what was, after all, the gratification of a mere superstition. Osborne, however,

had had his say ; he had, as it were, got it off his mind and felt all the better for it ; his cheeriness returned and never left him again. Conrad listened to all this without interrupting. He felt, I imagine, that it was a matter of argument between the commander and his first lieutenant ; and when the subject had been well discussed, and a decision had been arrived at, he turned the conversation into more congenial channels.

He talked of his old seafaring days, and amused us greatly by telling us of his experiences as night-watchman on board the wooden-built sailing clipper *Duke of Sutherland*, when lying alongside the wharf at Sydney, N.S.W. He was, I think, sailing "before the mast" at the time, and was chosen from among the rest of the crew for the reason of his temperate habits. This, of course, meant that he was on duty from eight P.M. until six A.M., during which time the safety of the ship depended on his vigilance ; and from my own experience of the old sailing-ship days, a great deal of his time must have been spent in assisting certain jubilant members of the crew over the gangway, and with great tact heading them in the right direction for the forecastle. This was

all that they wanted, as they had no desire to bring down on their own heads, as well as on that of their "ship mate" and friend "the night-watchman," the wrath of an awakened skipper, who had his own way, should he so desire, of making life impossible for them.

His tales of fights between seamen of different ships on the Circular Quay, Sydney, were very descriptive. On occasions, when cabs were waiting for the incoming mail steamers, the drivers would, with their vehicles, form a ring, and many a good scrap was witnessed.

Conrad, as night-watchman, found he was missing a good deal of this sort of fun, and after a time requested that he might be relieved from his night duties, which request, as I can imagine, was very reluctantly approved.

We decided now to head away in the direction of the entrance to the Baltic, and as the weather got finer, and we got a good spell of sunshine, the spirits of the ship's company revived. One night we received another wireless message to say that German submarines were reported to be in a certain latitude and longitude, but as the position was

a hundred miles or so from ours, and we were doing only about five knots an hour, it was not much good to us, more especially as the course they were steering was not given to us. Goodness only knew where they would have been twenty hours later, the time it would have taken us to reach the reported position. So, after a consultation with Conrad, Osborne and Moodie, I decided to stand on, and simply acknowledged receipt of the wireless message. After this decision we returned to the cuddy for cocoa. Conrad was still poring over his book, *War and Lombard Street*, and on this particular night I asked him about it. His reply was: "It is most interesting and full of useful information." He endeavoured to enlighten us on many subjects dealt with in it, and thought all masters and officers should be thoroughly conversant with matters connected with the money markets of the world; also with company law, stocks and shares, insurance and deals. Indeed, according to him, sailors had great opportunities of mastering the details of finance, and had excellent ways and means of studying them. What I thought was that all sailors are not Conrads, but I did not say so. Two or three

days later he presented me with this book, suitably inscribed and autographed, and it is now one of my greatest treasures.

We made a good "land fall" or "we were several miles out in our reckoning" are common enough expressions with seamen, a good "land fall" being the result of good and careful navigation, and sighting a point of land at an expected time on an expected bearing. Conrad could never understand why a steamship should be ever even half-a-mile out of her course, having not only a patent log for measuring the distance run, but what was still better, an indicator showing the revolutions of the engines, which, after allowing for some small percentage of slip, should give her position with great accuracy.

In sailing ships it was different. One certainly did "heave the log" at eight bells—that is, once every four hours. This gave the speed of the ship at the particular moment of heaving, leaving the "officer of the watch" to guess the average hourly speed, after taking into consideration the variations in the strength of wind, state of sea, increase or reduction of sail and leeway, the last perhaps the most important factor of all.

The sailing master has his worries too ; the losing or gaining rate of his chronometer after, say, three months at sea may be anything. Extremes of temperature, from the icy blast off Cape Horn to the heat of the Tropics, are bad for its delicate mechanism, and may put him ten miles east or west of an assumed position. He looks to his big brother the steamer, if he sights one, to give him a "rate," and the big brother is always kind. He hoists his red ensign, and at the moment of hauling it down the sailing master notes the time of his chronometer : later, the big brother signals the time of his and, as he is more correct, the little brother allows for the difference and fixes his position accordingly.

One evening Conrad told me of a "land fall" he made, and of which he was justly proud. When in command of the barque *Otago* he cleared from Sydney for Mauritius on the 4th August 1888. The day of departure was a very stormy one indeed, surprising even to the Sydney pilot, who suggested that sailing should be postponed until the weather moderated. Conrad, however, decided to proceed, and as he was relating the story suddenly remembered and laughingly told me

that when he got outside the Heads all his crockery was smashed. He was racing a French ship, also bound for Mauritius, and had received permission from his owners to proceed by way of Torres Straits, so as to shorten the distance. After sixteen days' sailing in light variable winds and through cross currents, and with but two solar and one lunar observations, he sighted the distinguishing marks—nothing more than a pole and basket on one of the small islands at the entrance to the Bligh Channel. As a navigator this to me was a very fine and skilful feat of navigation. It was not told to me in any boasting spirit : Conrad would have been the last man in the world to be guilty of such a thing, but meant rather to illustrate the instinctive feeling which seamen by long practice acquire, and which makes them feel where they are, and what allowances should be made for combating the elements, and the hundred and one other things sent to try the patience of the sailing-ship master.

The difficulties of navigating the Bligh Channel and the Torres Straits, with their coral reefs, rocks and other outlying dangers, have always been well known to navigators.

Mariners are warned, when approaching the former, that "it is little more than half-a-mile wide, and in some parts navigable for only two cables (four hundred yards). It is dangerous from its intricacy and the great strength of the tidal streams, and it is only necessary to add that the vessel should be navigated from aloft and with the sun in a favourable position." After passing through this channel one enters the Torres Straits, where during the north-west monsoon the water is frequently so discoloured that the eye is unable to detect the position of the shoals. It was here, about twenty-five years ago, that the steamship *Quetta* of the British India Steam Navigation Company, when travelling through at a speed of fourteen knots, took a rock like a steeplechaser, went right over it and down the other side, drowning one hundred and fifty of her passengers and crew. The sailing-ship masters of those days were daring fellows, and Conrad was certainly one of them.

In the Indian Ocean, whilst plunging in a head sea, the *Otago* sprung her fore-topgallant mast. Conrad "put it down" to the second mate carrying the outer jib too long. He

thought for a minute and added "she didn't like the outer jib." Sailing ships, like race-horses, have their own peculiarities, their own likes and dislikes, and it seemed wonderful that thirty years later Conrad should have remembered this particular sensitiveness of his first command. He gave orders for striking the mast (sending it down), but his crew agreed to carry on with it, and take their chances, which gave me the impression that he ruled not by fear but by his own wonderful personality, which attracted men to him and encouraged them to take risks beyond the ordinary ones which are part of a sailor's life. The *Otago* arrived off Port Louis, Mauritius, at night, and anchored close under the land. On the following morning, when weighing anchor to proceed into harbour, Conrad found he had fouled his anchor with another lost or slipped from another vessel, and, in spite of the laborious work in clearing it and the consequent delay, he reached Port Louis two days ahead of the Frenchman. The *Otago* arrived at Melbourne from Mauritius on 5th January 1889. In February 1889 she loaded a cargo of wheat at Port Minlacowie, South Australia, for Port Adelaide, where she arrived on

26th March, when Conrad gave up his command.

I have often wondered why Conrad, born, as he was, far removed from the sea, should have adopted it as a profession. I can't even say whether he inherited the sea instinct or not, but that he was a great seaman there can be no doubt, and great seamen, like men great in other professions, are born, not made.

He once told me he felt more at home with seamen than with men in any other walk of life. He liked their conversation, their ideas, their broad outlook and their views of life generally. They were, above all things, companionable, and their cheery optimism was a delight to him. He could tell a sailor at sight, not by his roll or by his peculiar rig, but by some strange look in his eyes, due, no doubt, to always gazing miles ahead. On another occasion he remarked that although the Mercantile Marine was the most cosmopolitan of all services, the men in it, regardless of different stations in life, were a wonderful band of brothers.

He had serving under him at the same time a nephew of Canon Fleming, a favoured friend of her late Majesty Queen Victoria, and

the son of a fishing-boat builder, these boys cultivating between them a great friendship and becoming almost inseparable. I can imagine this giving Conrad very real pleasure : the nice things of life appealed to and pleased him, and what could be nicer than young boys in such different stations in life sharing the same dangers and living the same hard life becoming such boon companions? The sea is a great leveller—always has been and always will be. Sailors, more than anyone else, have no time for the small things in life. They realise that the greatness of the Empire is due in a large way to the greatness of their own combined efforts, and great they mean to keep it.

He loved a good story in connection with the war at sea. One particularly good one which was told me, the truth of which I cannot vouch for, appealed to him greatly. It was of a certain popular temporary Royal Naval Reserve officer who was stationed at Scapa in command of one of H.M. trawlers. This officer had received instructions to take his ship to Dundee for dry-docking. As was usual when a vessel left the Base for overhaul and repairs, her commanding officer was

commissioned by wine secretaries on board different warships to bring back with him certain consignments of wines, spirits, and tobacco. On this particular occasion he neglected to carry out the various commissions, and in order to save himself the trouble of explanations to the various secretaries entered the Flow with the American ensign flying from the triatic stay. A signal from the flagship demanding the meaning of it brought back the reply "dry ship." It should be explained that before our American cousins adopted Prohibition, wines and spirits were not allowed to be served on board United States warships.

Compass adjusters had some amusing experiences during the war. To readers conversant with magnetism and its effects this story will appeal : to those who are not, it is necessary to point out that when compasses are adjusted they must be in their binnacles on board ship, when magnets are placed in positions to counteract the effect of iron and steel fittings actually within about ten feet of the compass.

One skipper in command of a trawler stationed at Sheerness lacked this elementary knowledge, and, finding great difficulty in making headlands, very properly decided that

his compass must be out. On his next arrival in harbour he proceeded to unship it, and tucking it under his arm strolled to the office of the Commander in Charge of the Compass Adjustment Department. On being informed that this officer was at the time in the billiard-room, our worthy, compass and all, made a bee-line for that particular part of the building, and finding the commander in the middle of an after-lunch game of one hundred up, planted his compass on the green cloth with a request that it might be adjusted. The roar of laughter that went up from the officers present completely discomfited the poor skipper ; but on matters being explained to him he heartily joined in the renewed laughter which followed.

Another commander had just completed adjusting the compass of an American destroyer when he politely asked the lieutenant in charge if he would kindly lend him a pair of binoculars. The lieutenant shouted down the forward hatchway, " Anybody down there ? " Back came the answer, " Yep." " Well, say," continued the lieutenant, " one of you go down to my cabin and in the middle drawer on the right-hand side you will find a pair of binoculars ; bring 'em right along " ; the reply

to which was, "It shall be done just exactly as you say, lieut." One can imagine the difference on board a British warship, where a bluejacket would have bounced up a ladder two steps at a time and on reaching the top would have sprung smartly to attention, saluted, and with an "Aye, aye, sir," carried out his instructions. There's an old saying, "Different ships, different long splices," and I suppose it is the same with nationalities, "Different countries, different customs."

I remember one evening in the cuddy talking about the pronunciation of English words, and how certain words, spelt the same, sound differently when differently applied.

This reminded me of a story I heard of a now very distinguished submarine captain who, as a lieutenant-commander, while superintending the building of one of our earlier submarines at a well-known northern shipyard, appropriated all the lead he could find strewn about the yard. In those experimental days trimming meant everything to a submarine commander, and lead, as the most convenient form of movable ballast, owing to its weight, was for this reason much sought after. In due course the submarine was

launched, and at the luncheon in honour of the event many complimentary speeches were made, special reference being given to the great advance made in the utility of under-water craft, due in no small way to the pluck and energy of, among other officers, the commander in question. The chairman, in proposing the health of the officer, informed him that, in order to signify the Directors' appreciation of the valuable services rendered by him in the construction of what was then the finest submarine afloat, of his valuable suggestions gained from his previous experience, and of the great cordiality and harmony which existed between the submarine officers and the officials of the yard, they had decided to present to the commander a motto, to be considered his own personal property and to be used, they hoped, on board all ships under his personal command, and on his retirement it was also hoped that some place would be found for it in his home. On the completion of his speech the chairman displayed to the assembled guests an ebony board, beautifully engraved, and in brass block letters the motto :

"I NEED NO LEAD."

The commander blushingly accepted the compliment and the pronunciation of the word as it was intended, but deep down in his heart he knew that the other pronunciation must have suggested to the amused Directors the idea of the "motto" and its presentation.

It is now well known that during the early part of the war British mines were very indifferent affairs, and did not by any means do what was expected of them. A story in connection with this was another which amused Conrad, although he doubted, and perhaps with good reason, the authenticity of it. A certain British merchant steamer arrived at Hull from some Continental port, and was met by a naval officer, who asked for his chart showing the route he had taken. On being informed with some heat that he had crossed the British minefield, the master, with that awful feeling that he would be "shot at dawn," was trying to think of some excuse when his mate, who was standing close at hand, chipped in with "Well, sir, that accounts for the bumping last night," which, naturally, did not help matters. This story, though a good one, should be taken with a certain amount of reserve, as I know to my cost, for later I had

a painful experience in a British-laid submarine minefield at the entrance to one of our principal Naval Bases. It happened as follows :—

It was expected that enemy submarines would attempt to get inside the outer defences, and I was instructed to take six drifters towing mine nets and station them in such a position to make their entry almost impossible. I was directed to run a line of towed mine nets inside the minefield, and I pointed out at the time that the ebb-tide would in all probability take the vessels towing the nets across the field. I was told, however, this must be risked. Everything happened as I anticipated. When the ebb-tide did make, we were carried right over the mines, the exploding of which was to us like "hell let loose." We were all very much shaken ; not a pane of glass was left in any of the vessels ; some of them were almost lifted out of the water, and two leaked so badly that it was necessary to put them into dry dock for caulking and other repairs.

Another story that Conrad liked showed the friendly rivalry between commanding officers of destroyers and trawlers. One of the latter, commanded by an R.N.R. officer,

was one day patrolling about twenty miles off the Scottish coast and observed the periscope of a submarine. He at once wirelessed the information to his senior naval officer, which message was intercepted by a destroyer commander, who at once proceeded at top speed to the position given. This greatly angered the trawler officer, who knew that as long as a destroyer was in the vicinity a submarine would not come to the surface. The other was his senior in rank, and he could not order him away, and what looked like a good chance of an engagement was fast slipping away when a brilliant idea occurred to him. He called for his signalman and wrote out the following signal, to be sent by wireless to the senior naval officer:—"Call your dog off, frightening the birds." The signal was rightly interpreted and the destroyer recalled, thus leaving the trawler a free hand to deal with the submarine, which later in the evening it damaged, though there was, unfortunately, no conclusive proof that it had been destroyed.

Of course our general conversation centred around our experiences at sea. I was proud of the fact that I made my first voyage in the year 1887 under Jock Muir in the full-rigged

ship *Invercargill* of the Shaw, Savill & Albion Line. He was known as one of the hardest cases and finest seamen sailing the seas—a broad-shouldered, immensely strong, mahogany-skinned, brown-bearded man, who put the fear of death into everyone sailing under him. He cracked on sail until the last possible moment, and in heavy weather he kept men standing by the halyards, with instructions never to lower away without orders. As long as the masts would stand he carried on, and if one sail blew away into shreds he bent another immediately, seldom waiting for daylight.

We made the passage from the East India Docks to Wellington, New Zealand, in seventy-one days, often averaging, when running our easting down, three hundred and twenty nautical miles in twenty-four hours.

Old Muir was a terror with slackers, and it was a word and a blow to any man who came up against him. With us boys he had a different and more effective form of punishment. Sometimes he sent us aloft and made us crow from the truck before allowing us to have our next meal. At other times he would make us ride the spanker boom for a whole

dog watch. In spite of all this we boys liked him ; he told us it was for our good and we believed him ; and although he was hard on us himself, it was Heaven help anyone else on board who as much as looked sideways at us.

A former apprentice who served under him in the still earlier eighties, and now a much-decorated Captain R.N., had some wonderful tales to tell of old Jock in the *Invercargill*. They left Lyttleton, New Zealand, for Astoria, California, and after a record passage arrived at the entrance of the harbour to find the place blocked with shipping which had been unable to cross the bar owing to the low depth of water. Muir, disregarding orders to anchor, sailed the *Invercargill* across the bar and alongside the wharf, and had no sooner made his ship fast than dozens of boarding-house crimps swarmed on board with the object of persuading the men to desert the ship, under promise of more congenial work on shore at increased rates of wages. Most of the hands were aloft furling the sails, and in their eagerness to get the men for their own particular boarding-houses many of the crimps followed them aloft, ostensibly to assist them with their work. But Jock Muir knew differently. He walked

along the deck, damned the mate for allowing them on board, and hailing the heftiest crimp on the foreyard asked him what the hell he was doing up there. The boarding-house runner, with that want of politeness one would associate with his class, asked him what the devil it had to do with him, whereupon Jock, with a well-directed shot from his revolver, put a bullet through the softest part of the crimp's anatomy, bringing him with a quick slide down the rigging to the deck, where he doubled up squealing and bleeding like a pig. When the shot rang out the others asked who the skipper was, and on learning it was none other than the famous Jock Muir legged it up the wharf and were no more seen. Later, the police called with a stretcher for the wounded man and carted him away, no questions being asked.

The *Invercargill* loaded at Astoria for London, and, before leaving, two elks were sent on board for passage to England. They were very young, and became pets of the crew on the voyage. Three days after the ship's arrival in the East India Docks Jock Muir found them still on board, and without waiting any instructions from his owners gave orders

to the mate that the boys were to take them to the Zoological Gardens. My Captain R.N. friend was one of these. Ropes carefully padded were passed round the necks of each animal, a short lizard rope being attached so as to keep them together. Four boys in their brass-bound uniforms set out with them early in the forenoon, and as they passed up the East India Dock Road a great crowd collected and followed them as far as Aldgate. The animals, to show their friendly disposition, would put their noses into the pockets of any person coming near enough to them ; others fed them with biscuits and other scraps, and the farther they went the fatter they got. By the time they reached St Paul's they were completely blown out. Passing through some parks the animals saw green grass for the first time for four months, and out of this park they simply would not go. They laid down to it, and all the coaxing in the world would not induce them to move. Eventually the boys sat down with them and waited events. After some hours, during which time the elks nibbled until they could nibble no more, further persuasions were brought to bear, this time with better effect, and again they wended

their way Zoowards. It was eleven P.M. when they reached the gates, which were opened by a keeper or other person in authority, who at that time of the night refused to accept them. The boys, however, had not served under Jock Muir for nothing ; they had been taught that difficulties were only things that had to be overcome, so, pushing the animals inside, they bolted for their lives.

We talked late into the night, not retiring until well past midnight.

CHAPTER X

For the first time the weather seemed to be really moderating, and the air was comparatively mild. Towards early morning the wind quite died away, and we were more or less becalmed. The sun shone brilliantly, and the poor fellows below deck expressed a great desire to come up for an airing, see the sun and breathe the warm air. Of course they were always privileged to do so one or two at a time, but on this particular morning no one man saw why he should be below deck at all.

At eight o'clock the wind went to the eastward, so the vessel was put on the port tack and headed to the S.S.E. We had been crawling along at about two knots when an object was observed on the starboard bow—a mere speck at first, which gradually grew, though assuming no real size at all. Osborne had his eyes glued to his Zeiss glasses, with his head just above the gunwale. "By Gad, sir, it is!" he exclaimed, "and heading right for us."

"A submarine?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, and his face lit up as if he had been left a legacy.

Conrad was standing aft on the port side, his face full of smiles, thankful that his prophecies had proved to be true. He had come out with us to experience a real live battle, and not the discomforts to which we had been subjected.

Word was at once passed along, and one by one the guns' crews came up the hatchway and stole under cover of the gunwale to their stations. Rampling warmed up his engines all ready for running, and stood at the bottom of the cuddy hatchway waiting for orders—the only soul on board left below, and who groused only because he would not see the fun.

The wireless being down, there was nothing for Musgrove to do, and as he passed Conrad with a camera the latter asked him where he was going.

"Up aloft," replied he, "to photograph the action."

I, however, stopped him, and told him to assist the "panic party" if necessary.

Everything went like clockwork. Guns were cast loose and loaded; a plentiful supply of ammunition was passed up from below;

and the men were in great spirits. It was here I gave Conrad the first and only direct order during the cruise.

"You," I said, "go down and bring up all the confidential books and take charge of them. If ordered to do so, throw them overboard."

Conrad obeyed with alacrity, and stood by for any other orders which might be given. The sailing mate walked along the decks behind the guns' crews, and in a very cheery voice said: "Knives for those who want them"—these for cutting away the pit-prop disguises, leaving the guns free to work.

On and on came the submarine, making to cross our bows. The guns were brought to the ready, with the crews "closed up" waiting for the order to cut pit-props—"Independent firing, carry on."

I was standing by Conrad, and remarked that she would cross our bows and attack on the port side in the rays of the sun. At about seven hundred yards I examined her carefully, but could see no sign of life on deck, though I knew from my former experience with submarines that an officer was hidden away behind the weather cloth on the conning tower. Her

ensign was flying over the stern, but owing to the bad state it was in I could not make out its nationality.

The guns' crews were growing impatient, and I gently reminded them that all rounds must be hits, otherwise she would submerge and torpedo us ; but they were confident, and smiled back their assurances.

She crossed our bows to the port side at a distance of about four hundred yards, and it was then that we made out the ensign to be British, and from her build beam on to be one of the G class, evidently bound for the Baltic.

I don't know how I gave the order to "secure." The reaction of the intense excitement told immediately, and the feeling of utter depression was indescribable. I have never seen such looks of disappointment on men's faces ; not a word was spoken during the "secure." I looked to Conrad for consolation, but got none, as he was as sad as any of us. I noticed then he was keeping watch over the confidential books, and suddenly remembered the order I had given him. It occurred to me that perhaps I should not have sent him, but at the time I forgot his individuality. I only knew that I was in

command, and that everybody else was there to obey, and when I found him at the end of it all still waiting for orders I realised that in giving Joseph Conrad an order I had done what no other living man could have done. We laughed over it afterwards, and when he insisted on returning them to the cuddy we laughed still more.

He told me later that on his way from the cuddy with the books he twitted Rampling on being out of the fun, and that Rampling assured him that sinking submarines was nothing new to him; which remark was taken at its worth, for the man was never lost for an answer, and this one given was meant only as an excuse for not seeing this particular action.

Conrad was, as usual, the first one to cheer us up. He condoled with us on our disappointment and consoled us for having had an opportunity of experiencing the real thing up to a certain point. Anything, he said, that had been overlooked could be put right, and everything we had done might possibly be improved on; adding that on our homeward passage we should be sure to fall in with something.

H.M.S. READY—BECALMED

It was as much the way he said things as what he actually said that was so convincing. One believed him instinctively and trusted him implicitly, and after this expression of opinion we settled down to our work, our thoughts full of "what might have been."

During the fine spell of weather we examined the spars and overhauled the sails and rigging. Osborne again suggested altering her nationality for luck, but I decided to remain Norwegian, and if I were Norwegian, everybody else had to be, for the time being. I, however, told Osborne that if the next submarine we met proved to be British, we should all turn Danes or Swedes, whichever he liked the better. This pleased him, and settled the matter.

Some days later we received a wireless message informing us that enemy submarines were laying mines off Grimsby, and that we were to cruise in the vicinity. The wind being favourable, we accordingly bore away in that direction. We could hardly expect to find one on the surface, in close proximity to the land, so that our only chance of sighting one would be before dawn, either on her way to the scene of her activities, or returning to

her Base after completing operations. For this reason we steered to get on a line joining the geographical positions of Grimsby and Kiel, before heading for the English coast.

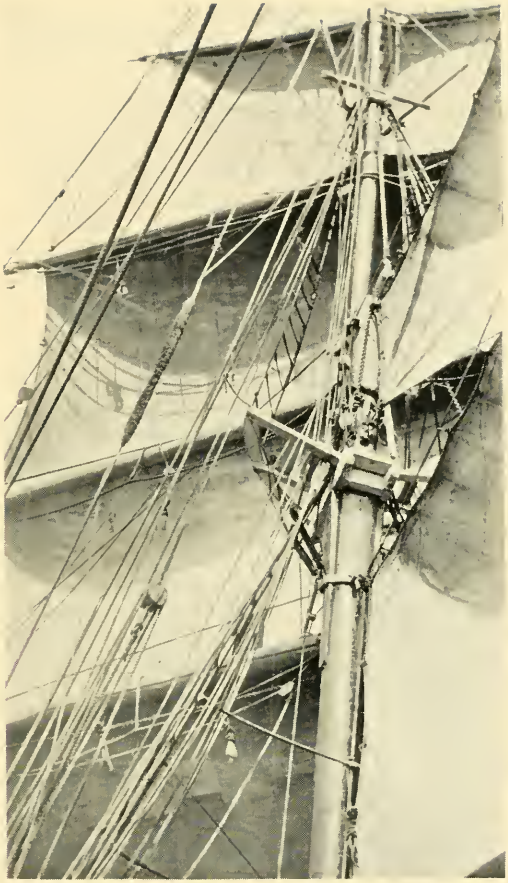
The weather remained fine, though very cold, and instead of playing cards at night we paced the deck and talked. Conrad told me that when war broke out he was in Vienna with his wife and two boys, and had the greatest difficulty in getting permission to leave the country. Mr Penfield, the American Minister, had taken charge of British affairs, and to him he appealed to use his influence with the Austrian Foreign Office to secure passports for himself and family. Mr Penfield received Conrad with the greatest cordiality, and spared no pains in interceding on his behalf, but, as it appeared at the time, all to no purpose, when the strangest of all things happened.

Conrad was at the Legation and in conversation with the Minister when a telegram arrived from our own Foreign Office requesting his Excellency to inform the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the British Government had decided to release the Prince and Princess of Zu Solm, both of whom had

been arrested at Cape Town, and to allow them to return under safe conduct to Austria. The American Minister at once conveyed this information to the Austrian Foreign Minister, making at the same time another request for Conrad's passports. The occasion was auspicious indeed, and shortly afterwards Conrad, with his wife and two sons, found their way to Genoa, where they took passage on board a Dutch steamer bound for England, and in due course arrived at and disembarked at Gravesend.

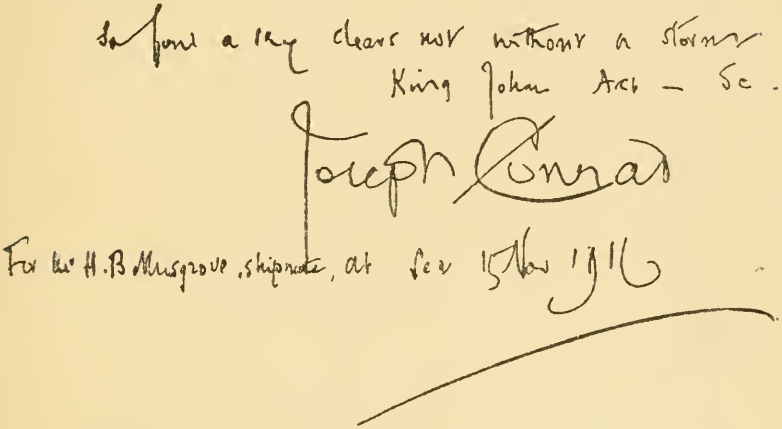
The wind remained favourable, and during the night increased in strength, sending us along at a good seven knots. My decision to steer so as to intercept submarines leaving or returning to Germany put new heart into the crew, as they, like myself, were dead against returning to our Base without what a sporting member of the crew described as a "bag." We still had a good supply of provisions left, though all tinned stuff and hard biscuits, and had saved a good deal of rain water for drinking purposes, so that we could hang about for a considerable time on the off-chance of luck coming our way. But what we did grouse about was the shortness

of daylight — only eight hours out of the twenty-four, with sixteen hours' utter blackness, during which time a dozen submarines could have passed us without being seen. On one or two occasions Musgrove picked up German Telefunken messages, but as they were in code they conveyed nothing to us. The messages were generally weak, indicating that the senders were far away, so that the chances of our falling in with them were small. Musgrove was a wonderful little fellow. I have seen him night after night during heavy weather sitting in his little hut, knee-deep in water, with the receivers to his ears, waiting to catch any Morse signals which might be in the air, and then up aloft all day. I don't believe he ever slept, as when he had absolutely nothing else to do he was teaching Conrad wireless, both in the working of the instruments and the Morse code. Once, during a gale, when poor Musgrove was trying to get his instruments together after they had been knocked endways by a heavy sea, with Conrad as a very interested onlooker, I asked him what progress Mr Conrad was making under his tuition. Musgrove's reply was: "He knows it now from A to Z, sir." The



A STRONG BREEZE

same afternoon Conrad wrote on a sheet of paper :—



Musgrove and I often had long chats together, and towards the end of the cruise he asked me if I thought Mr Conrad would write about our experiences. Strangely enough, it never occurred to me that he would, perhaps for the reason that, had he intended to do so, he would have mentioned it ; also that throughout the voyage I never once saw him make a single note of anything. No doubt, Conrad, on his return home, could have written a most descriptive article on our venture, which would have been read with avidity by his countless admirers ; but the tale he would have told would have had to

include himself, and Conrad's natural modesty would have prevented that. Besides, we were only doing what thousands of others were doing, only in a different and more experimental way.

I have since read that Admiral Sir Douglas Brownrigg hoped he would do so, and must again quote from his "Indiscretions of the Naval Censor":

"It was in the autumn of 1917 that I came to the conclusion that it was time the doings of the wonderful Mercantile Navy should be written up, by which I do not mean slobbered over, or 'boosted,' but written up by somebody whose heart would be in the job, and who would understand the hearts and minds of the Merchant Navy, as well as those of the public. I therefore approached Mr Joseph Conrad, and he very kindly came up and saw me, though he said he was not a writer to the Press. I was overjoyed at securing his co-operation, and we fixed up an extensive programme for him, and he travelled all over the country, and had the free entry into every port and every ship in which the Royal and Mercantile Navies were co-operating."

I never asked Conrad if he intended writing

about his experience with us, so was unable to satisfy Musgrove's curiosity.

One evening, when Conrad was in a reminiscent mood, he told me that when sitting for his Masters' Certificate before Mr Sterry, a London Board of Trade Examiner, he was asked by him how he would "rig a jury rudder," and straightway told Conrad how he himself rigged one in a ship he commanded, when carrying troops to the Crimea. In the circumstances there was nothing for Conrad to do but to agree that Mr Sterry's was the best way. Examiners in those days had their own pet method of carrying out different evolutions, and what would do for one would not always do for the other; so that at the navigation schools it was always impressed on us that if we appeared before Captain So-and-so we were to do things this way, and before Captain somebody else the other way. Conrad, doubtless, had a different and possibly a better and simpler way of rigging a jury rudder, but it was not policy to say so.

There was a certain examiner before whom Conrad appeared (and I also at a later date) who had the reputation of making young candidates talk and talk until they tied

themselves in knots, and then "failing" them. He was out to fail as many as he could, and through sheer nervousness many aspirants to masters' and mates' certificates were sent down. Conrad and I both survived his efforts, and passed our examinations with credit.

I think we discussed the "Merchant Service in the War" more than any other subject. It was a source of delight to Conrad to hear of anything to the credit of the types of men he had served with. He readily understood how easily officers and men of the Merchant Service could adapt themselves to war conditions: all their lives they were fighting the elements, and their discipline and natural courage suited them for the purpose for which they were employed.

The first single ship action of the war between the *Carmania* and the *Cap Trafalgar* was an instance of this, as, although the ship was commanded by a very distinguished officer of the Royal Navy, she was almost entirely officered by lieutenant-commanders and lieutenants of the R.N.R.

The temporary officers of the R.N.R. were taken straight out of the Merchant Service, and without as much as a day's training were

given very responsible commands, at high rates of pay, added to which they had greater advantages of attaining distinction over the more highly trained officer of their own rank in the Royal Navy, who had, in most cases, to be content with a subordinate appointment in a battleship, cruiser, destroyer, or any other class of war vessel, with the exception of submarines.

Conrad was delighted to hear of the good feeling prevailing between the two Services, and agreed that any previous misunderstanding was due to the fact that they had never before had an opportunity of knowing each other. Now they were sharing the same perils, doing exactly the same work and all with the same object. No man had a greater admiration for the merchant captain than the naval officer: he knew almost better than anybody else that the carriage of food, guns, ammunition and other supplies depended on the courage and tenacity of these hardy old seafarers keeping the sea. Submarines and mines had no terror for him; and although during the early period of the war he had no gun to hit back with, he sailed the seven seas rejoicing, and never missed a tide.

Conrad, too, was very much interested in the training of the permanent Royal Naval Reserve officer—how up to 1904 he was not allowed to attain higher rank than that of lieutenant; how during the intervening years the restrictions had been broken down, and that at the time there were officers serving who held the ranks of lieutenant-commanders, commanders, captains and commodores. Decorations had come their way, some of the more senior being awarded Companionships of the Bath (one has since been made a Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of St Michael and St George, and two Knights of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. His Majesty the King has also graciously approved of two officers being selected as his Aides-de-Camp in rotation of seniority). Great strides had been made in ten years: the two Services realised more than ever that they were interdependent, and that henceforth in any common cause they were a band of brothers.

We also discussed the fighting qualities of the Navies of other Powers, and the part played by Japan in her sea fight with Russia. We talked of Admiral Togo, the Japanese

Admiralissimo, having received his early training in H.M.S. *Worcester*. This reminded me of two Japanese naval stories.

In 1902 I was serving as a lieutenant in H.M.S. *Empress of India*, then doing duty as Guardship at Queenstown, when one fine summer afternoon one of the latest types of Japanese battleships entered the harbour and anchored close astern of us, her stay in port extending to a week or ten days. We had one of the finest bands in the Service, and each morning as the Colours were hoisted the National Anthem was played, followed by the National Anthem of Japan. On the fourth night after her arrival we invited the captain and officers to dinner, Captain Henry Louis Fleet, R.N. (a brother of Mr Rutland Barrington, the famous old Savoyard), taking the head of the table. When the wine had been served Captain Fleet proposed the health of his Majesty the King: the band played the National Anthem and the toast was drunk, all officers remaining seated by right of a privilege accorded them by, I think, one of the Georges. Rumour has it that when dining on board some ship or other the King in question bumped his head against one of

the beams in the then low-ceilinged ward rooms, and said that the loyalty of the officers of the Royal Navy was sufficiently assured to drink his health seated. A few minutes later Captain Fleet rose and proposed the health of his Majesty the Emperor of Japan, all officers rising. The band played the Japanese National Anthem, at the end of which each officer, lifting his glass, drank to the health of his Majesty. When quiet again reigned, the Japanese captain, who spoke perfect English, asked Captain Fleet if he would tell him the name of the tune which had just been played. Our captain's consternation may be imagined when our distinguished visitor assured him that he had not heard it before ! Our bandmaster, an Italian, was sent for, who explained that to the best of his belief it was the National Anthem of Japan. Unhappily it was not. Apologies and explanations followed, and a band sergeant was dispatched to the Japanese battleship for the real score, which, when played, was so entirely different that one can only wonder that such a mistake could have been made.

The other story concerns a Japanese battleship which, long previous to the Great War, had anchored at The Nore. On her arrival

the Commander-in-Chief gave orders that during the stay of the vessel in harbour Gilbert and Sullivan's famous comic opera *The Mikado* was not to be played by the bands of ships under his orders. One evening, whilst captains and officers were going about their usual duties on board their various vessels, the strains of a familiar tune floated across the waters ; they could scarcely believe their ears : it was *The Flowers that bloom in the Spring, Tra la la.* Great Heavens, thought everyone, which ship had dared to disobey such an important order ? Officers of watches and signalmen gazed round and looked at one another in bewilderment. The laugh that went round the fleet may be imagined when it was discovered that the opera in question was being played by none other than the band of the Japanese battleship !

As the cruise was slowly drawing to a close I must candidly confess that I thought more of losing Conrad's companionship than I did of sinking submarines. Naturally, the latter was never out of my thoughts, but the other feeling predominated. I knew I should soon be out in the ship again, and dreaded to think how different everything would be without

his company. One evening I gave expression to these thoughts, and added that I should be very sorry to think we should not meet again. Conrad, however, put me at my ease by saying that, if we survived, he would always be delighted to welcome me in his home, and that it would give him a very real pleasure to present me to his wife. Then, turning to Osborne and Moodie, he extended the same invitation. Naturally this pleased us all greatly.

That same night I asked Conrad what first induced him to take up literary work. He was silent for some minutes, and then said, as if he had considered my question: "Well, Commander, I was a long time on shore." What he meant by that I don't know to this day, and as he did not enlighten me, I did not ask.

It is a curious thing that followers of the sea seldom or never betray the slightest curiosity in connection with the antecedents or private affairs of each other. I have been shipmates for twelve months at a time with men without knowing whether they were married or single, where they came from, or what their future intentions were. I suppose it was partly for the reason that I was not

interested ; I could have asked, but there was always something about it all which prevented me, and there was always this something which prevented others from knowing any more than I did. Sailors are not communicative about their homes or their affairs ; they know each other's names, and that appears to be good enough to go on with.

I candidly confess I was most curious about Conrad. I wanted to ask him hundreds of things that I would greatly like to have known, but couldn't. Had he been purely an author, or any other kind of landsman, I should have had no hesitation ; but he was a seaman as well : I could never get away from that, and so my tongue was tied, and I had to rest content with what he was pleased to tell me. Perhaps it was that he had told me so much and interested me so much that, like Oliver Twist, I wanted more. Anyway, I was never the first to rise from the cuddy table during our long talks after supper, and willingly would I have remained, even to daybreak, had it not been that there was always a possibility of much to do on the morrow.

We had not played cards since falling in with the British submarine, and three nights

before we made the coast Osborne suggested that play should be resumed. Conrad readily agreed, and we played until it was time to man the pumps. Osborne brought the card book out, and as far as I can remember the biggest loss was not more than two shillings, so that the play was throughout very even. The wind remained in the east, varying from north-east to south-east, and we were not obliged to do any beating to windward. The weather, too, held good, which was a blessing after all the atrocious weather we had experienced on the outer passage. Night sleep was less disturbed, and we felt much fresher for the benefit of it.

CHAPTER XI

The following morning it was Osborne's turn to take over charge of the deck at six o'clock, and when daylight broke he called me to report that a submarine was in sight. Conrad and I turned out immediately, jumped into our sea boots, and were on deck in an instant. Osborne had turned everybody out, and having handed me his binoculars superintended the clearing away of the guns. I turned to speak to Conrad, but found that he had not waited for orders, but had bolted down to the cuddy for the confidential books, and a moment or two later reported to me for orders. He remarked, with a smile of satisfaction, that surely our luck would be in this time. He was fearfully anxious that this should be the case. Alas! We were again doomed to disappointment, as she, too, proved to be British. I shouted down to Rampling that he could let his engines cool down. "What?" replied he, "another Britisher?" and when I answered in the affirmative, I heard Rampling muttering

"My Gawd, and some people ask, 'What is the Navy doing?'"

We had a good beam wind, and with all sail set were fast approaching the coast. During the afternoon a British airship crossed and recrossed over us, and as it descended to scrutinise us the better we could see its occupants were examining us closely through binoculars. We were still flying the Norwegian ensign, and as we were not sure whether she could see our guns or not, we brought up our largest-size white ensign, and spreading it out flat on the deck pointed to it; on which the airship made off for the coast. Later, we learnt that she reported us to her headquarters as a suspicious vessel.

Just before dark we sighted the English coast, but knowing that we could do nothing during the night, and in order to keep clear of shipping, we stood out to sea until daylight.

The wind was light and variable, with a smooth sea, so we just sailed about, altering our courses so as to bring us at daylight to a position about five miles east of Grimsby, as we thought it unlikely that an enemy submarine would be on the surface much inside that distance.

AIRSHIP WHICH REPORTED US AS A SUSPICIOUS VESSEL

We remained on deck until ten P.M., then sat in the cuddy till midnight, talking, as sailors always will, of their sea experiences.

Conrad listened rather than talked on this particular night, and was interested in my Klondyke experiences in 1898, and of the shooting of Soapy Smith, a notorious Alaskan highwayman, which I witnessed in Skagway, a small port at the foot of the White and Chilcoot Passes, over which one had to climb to get to Dawson City. Osborne, too, had some thrilling experiences to tell him, all of which he greatly enjoyed.

At daylight we sighted a submarine about 1½ miles on our starboard bow, and altered course in her direction. The wind was very light at the time, so we made little headway. Before we could get near enough, even to make out her nationality, a cloud of smoke appeared from the entrance to the Humber, out of which emerged four destroyers, steaming at top speed in the submarine's direction, forced her to submerge, and she was lost to us. Had we been left to it, and had she remained on the surface, we should, no doubt, have got her ; but our chance was spoilt, our optimism reduced to a minus quantity, and

feeling that our luck was dead out, I sent a wireless message to Granton asking permission to return to harbour. This being approved, I headed away for Flamborough Head.

The wind increased very slightly, but the glass was falling, and as heavy clouds were gathering I felt that we were in for a bad night.

Towards evening we sighted minesweeping trawlers to the north, so steered in shore so as to intercept them. I suggested to Conrad that he might like to land in the vicinity, and so shorten his train journey from the north to his home. He at first wouldn't hear of it, as he thought we might still have a chance of a scrap ; but I held out little hope, and in the end he decided to take advantage of my offer.

As the minesweepers closed on us I made a signal to the senior officer of the unit informing him that I wished to communicate with him. On receiving this, to my surprise he signalled to the other vessels of his unit to spread, and they took up positions far apart from one another. I then signalled requesting him to be good enough to land a passenger from my ship, also to send a boat for this purpose. We were still under the Norwegian flag, which, naturally, made the officer in charge take every

TRAWLER WHICH LANDED MR. CONRAD AT BRIDLINGTON

possible precaution; so that when he sent a boat alongside with armed men under the command of a lieutenant, the astonishment of that officer, on stepping over the gangway and finding the vessel armed as she was, may be imagined. He looked hurriedly aloft at the ensign, to make sure he hadn't made any mistake, and even when I had introduced myself he seemed doubtful. Conrad was an amused spectator of all this, and I must say I enjoyed it not a little myself. My invitation to the officer to descend to the cuddy was not readily accepted, so once again the confidential books were sent for, and these reassured our visitor, who thereupon signalled to his senior that everything was in order. He then informed us of the airship's signal which they had intercepted, and how on sighting us they had thought that they had really fallen in with the strange suspicious craft. Not knowing our armament, the senior officer decided not to have his vessels in what he described as a "bunch," lest we should open fire from guns heavier than their modest six-pounders. The senior officer, having signalled his willingness to land Conrad, immediately proceeded to reform his unit, during which time we were

regaled with the latest news, the officer also very kindly sending his boat to collect newspapers for us.

Soon afterwards Conrad bade us good-bye, every man coming up from below to bid him farewell, and as he passed over the side there was not a soul on board who did not feel that he had lost not only a very real friend, but also a very good shipmate.

Our vessel, which had been "hauled to the wind" with the fore-yard aback, was then headed to the north, and in the twilight—both going in opposite directions—we soon lost sight of each other.

The wind increased during the first watch, and at midnight was blowing very hard. At four A.M. Osborne called me and told me that the whole of the North Sea was in the cuddy, and certainly there was a certain amount of it. Between that time and our arrival at Granton we experienced our very worst weather, and I felt somewhat relieved that Conrad had missed it. Our light square sails and upper staysails were blown to ribbons, and our rigging badly damaged.

On nearing May Island at the entrance to the Firth of Forth we unshipped all our

disguises, unmounted our guns, painted out the Norwegian ensigns on the bows and quarters of the hull, and ran up the red ensign, in order to deceive any neutral vessels which we might pass or overhaul in the Firth.

There was a howling gale behind us and with the flood tide we went along at a great pace. At the Examination Anchorage we were challenged and directed to proceed to Leith, but on satisfying the officer-in-charge were allowed to proceed. Then came the tricky work of manœuvring between the fifty odd vessels at anchor in order to pick up a sheltered berth, the hauling to the wind, and eventually, with the helm hard-a-lee, the main-sail to windward and the fore-yard aback, we dropped our anchor after certainly a novel and experimental experience. It was nearly forty-eight hours later before the weather moderated sufficiently to allow us to land.

Conrad certainly left a great impression on me, and this, I know, was quite apart from that subconscious influence which the study of his writings for years previous had had upon me. To me, having lived with him in fair weather and in foul, the thought always in my mind was that he could never have

remained merely a seaman ; his genius and temperament forbade this. The quality of his brain being of so alert and virile a nature, even the constant warring with the elements would not have given him sufficient outlet for his creative powers. The poetry of the man's mind required the possibility of constant expression. His characters are live people, and in my old sailing days I met them frequently. He describes them, not only as he saw them, but as they saw themselves, and also as they saw others. He read men's minds and knew their innermost thoughts. He revealed beauty as he saw it in language which his marvellous genius has enriched. He, in all his works, extols all that is great and wonderful in life, and portrays not in words but by inference the true beauty of righteousness.

To a student of psychology Conrad would have been a wonderful study. He was, to me, intellectually head and shoulders over any man I had ever met. His charm, his ideas, his outlook on life generally were to me wonderful, and much as it puzzled me then, it has since puzzled me still more how he, a Polish aristocrat, should have adopted as a profession

the sea, with all the cramped hardships of forty years ago in pilot vessels out of Marseilles, in small sailing craft in the Mediterranean, and later in the crack flyers out of England. A sailor spending his life on the waste of waters is naturally a dreamer. Hours at the wheel, with every stitch of canvas set in the trade winds, with little to do but keep the weather leach of the mizzen-royal shivering, or at the weather ear-ring when reefing a topsail, the sailor is always the same, always dreaming ; and what visions Conrad, with his great imagination, must have conjured up in these varied and trying circumstances !

I had been wondering whether I should have the good fortune to meet him again when I was reassured by a letter which arrived at the Base from him, and was sent on board (the weather had not sufficiently moderated to make it desirable for me to land). He thanked me for what he was good enough to describe as " my true seaman-like hospitality," and repeated the wish that I should visit him, asking me at the same time to extend his invitation to certain other members of the crew. Then followed an account of his landing at Bridlington, and the kindness he had

received from the minesweeping officers, whom he invited to breakfast with him at his hotel on the following morning ; of the visit of a police officer during the meal asking him to explain his landing from a sailing vessel flying a foreign flag, and his satisfactory replies ; and, finally, more grateful remarks on the kindness and consideration shown to him both by myself and those serving under me, ending up with the ten words quoted in my opening chapter, "The Brotherhood of the Sea is no mere empty phrase."

I made two more trips in command of the brigantine, each extending over three weeks, but without any results. It was thought that she was known to the German submarine commanders, who let her pass on her way. I then returned to minesweeping, and Osborne, on my strong recommendation, was appointed in command.

In the meantime other sailing vessels had been fitted out, all of them being placed under the orders of Admiral Sir Alexander Duff, K.C.B., then Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff; and my old brigantine, under Osborne's command, was ordered to the English Channel. On the 16th June 1917 she engaged two

German submarines off the coast of Brittany (one of them being disguised as a ketch), and after a prolonged and gallant action sent one to the bottom totally destroyed, gaining for the officers and crew two Distinguished Service Crosses, three Distinguished Service Medals, and the thanks of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

It was characteristic of Osborne to write to Conrad and myself on his return to harbour, saying that after the action his one regret was that we were not on board at the time ; also that this regret was shared by the whole ship's company.

After the Armistice Conrad sent me a very cordial invitation to stay with him, but as I was at the time engaged in clearing the sea of mines, British as well as German, I was unable to accept ; in fact it was not until the summer of this year that I met my old "Comrade in Arms" again. I suggested to him that the time was ripe for my long-deferred visit, to which he lost no time in replying, adding that he would meet me at the railway station with his car.

The train by which I travelled steamed punctually into the station, but alas ! there was

no Conrad and no car. Later, he turned up brimful of laughter and apologies, explaining that he had abandoned his own car in mid-road and transferred his flag to this jury-rigged arrangement, as he described a very worn and rickety old taxi. A mile from the station his own car hove in sight, and in this—a magnificent smooth-running Cadillac — we soon covered the six or seven miles to his home. As we swung into the drive Conrad looked skywards and smilingly whispered, "The sun is over the fore-yard." As a sailor I knew what he meant, and I was glad, because, as some writers would describe it, "It was near high noon."

Some few minutes later we celebrated our reunion. He was delightful, full of laughter, and when he presented me to Mrs Conrad and the other members of his household he gave me the true Conradion impression that I was the one person in all this wide world that he most wished to meet.

In his study, with its shelves on three sides full of books, we talked for an hour. He recalled many incidents of the cruise, and nearly five years later had not forgotten the names of different members of the crew.

At luncheon we laughed as we recalled our menus on shipboard, starting with all the delicacies in season, and ending with salt horse (as sailors describe salt beef) and hard biscuits.

Afterwards he showed me round his wonderful gardens, and on his well-rolled, carefully trimmed lawn, which he called his "Quarter deck," we walked arm-in-arm, as we had done many and many a time on the deck of the old *Freya*. It was a lovely day in June; the trees were in full leaf and the flowers in bloom; the sun was shining gloriously and the birds singing to their hearts' content: it was a day when one felt that it was good to be alive; and yet we would have given everything, risked all, for one glorious hour of battle with an enemy submarine.

After tea I took my leave, after a truly delightful and most enjoyable day. What I felt on leaving was that I had been "At sea with Mr Conrad" and "At home with Mr Conrad"—two great privileges; but what was to me greater than all was that I had made a friend of Mr Conrad.

Since my visit to him it has many times occurred to me that the countless admirers of

Conrad's works would be interested to read of the great part he nobly played in the Great War for Civilisation. He chose the three most dangerous sides—the Q-brigantine, mine-sweeping and flying—at an age, too, when thousands of men years younger than himself were excused from serving. My attempt, unpractised and unliterary as it may seem, can convey only but a poor idea of the great charm of the man—his love of the sea and seamen ; his kindness and thoughtfulness for others ; his nobility ; his bravery and every-thing about him, which brought to mind Kipling's conception of "The Hundredth Man." Having said this much, my story is ended.