SEA SALTS
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and

CELLULOID
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by

ALFRED J. WEST
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> "… Mr Alfred West has accomplished with
> his pictures what Mr. Rudyard Kipling
> has done in story and verse ……………."

'MORNING POST', 1905
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PREFACE

Living beside the historic harbour of Portsmouth with its great naval traditions and fame as a yachting centre, and with my own love of the sea which as a boy gave me a strong desire to join the Royal Navy and capture pirates, it was natural that in taking up photography I should grasp the opportunity that dry plates offered to obtain sea scenes, and that on the advent of cinematography I should welcome the chance to take living pictures where I had taken still ones. My first attempts with snapshots in 1881 and with the ciné camera in 1897 were both brought to Royal notice, and being thus honoured gave me zest to obtain pictures which were to cause considerable sensation in all parts of the world.

There are still many who have happy recollection of my films which, under the title of “Our Navy”, were shown for fourteen years at the Polytechnic, Regent Street, and throughout this country and Colonies. Commencing with an exhibition given before the late King George V when he was Captain of H.M.S. “Crescent” in 1898, it subsequently was honoured by Royal commands from Queen Victoria and King Edward VII.

I think I may lay claim to be one of the earliest of the pioneers following M. Lumière and Mr. Paul, who started exhibiting films in this country in 1896. Certainly I was the first to take films of scenes at sea, and to my programme were later added films of the Army, the Mercantile Marine and the Dominions overseas. Thus was formed an entertainment of imperial interest, in which I was greatly encouraged by the intense enthusiasm with which it was received by the public. With the aid of these pictures it was made possible for people to realise what life in the Services is like, and in the Midlands, where many had never seen a ship and some not even the sea, the films aroused intense patriotic feeling and stimulated recruiting.

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty and the members of the Army Council recognised that my efforts were proving splendid propaganda for recruiting purposes, and granted me every facility for obtaining films. I felt that in stimulating patriotic interest with my pictures, I was making myself useful to my country, and from the time of its regal inception until the moment when, fourteen years later, I had to relinquish my work through ill-health, this was my aim. Before I started, I knew nothing of how to run a show, but with the able help of my staff, which numbered something over 50, all of whom loved their work and rendered me loyal assistance, most of the difficulties were overcome. On the eve of my departure for Canada in 1902, my wife and I were deeply touched when the staff presented me with a gold watch and her with a gold bracelet as tokens of their esteem.

It has been suggested that I should write a book about my life’s work, and I am leaving this record of my experiences in the hope that it may be as interesting in the reading as it has been in the fulfilment.

ALFRED J. WEST.
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PORTSMOUTH 1936.

CHAPTER I. FIRST SNAPSHOTS.

It was the first week in August, 1882, and the anchorage at Cowes was crowded with vessels of all descriptions, ranging from the smallest racing craft to the stately Royal Yachts. Queen Victoria was in residence at Osborne, and the great yachting festival was in full swing. Dotted about the Solent, "White Wings" were heeling over and tearing along under clouds of canvas; truly a glorious sight, and one not to be seen in any other part of the world.

From the direction of the Needles came steaming into the Roads a British corvette, H.M.S. "Bacchante", on board which the two Royal Midshipmen, Prince Albert Victor and Prince George, were returning home from a two years' cruise to South America, South Africa, Australia, Fiji, Japan, Ceylon, Egypt, Palestine and Greece. The Trinity House yacht "Lively" led the procession, and astern was the cruiser H.M.S. "Inconstant". The first Lieutenant of the latter vessel was a young officer named Percy Scott, afterwards Admiral Sir Percy Scott, whose name will be for ever associated with the relief of Ladysmith. Little did I think then that I was subsequently to be so intimately acquainted with him, and that the country was to owe to him the state of efficiency which he was instrumental in bringing to the gunnery of the Royal Navy.

How small an incident often determines the whole of one's after life may be appreciated from the following fact. From aboard the guardship, H.M.S. "Hector", I obtained an instantaneous photograph of the "Bacchante", one of my earliest snapshots, then just made possible by the introduction of the dry plate process. Had this trivial incident never taken place, the whole tenor of my after life would have been altered, and this book would never have come to be written, for Captain Balliston of the Royal Yacht happened to see a copy of this snapshot. Taking it aboard with him, he showed it to the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII), who was so pleased with it that he expressed a desire for the photographer to be presented to him. A telegram was sent commanding me to attend at once on board the Royal Yacht, and from this contact with Royalty resulted my long association with the Navy, Army and Mercantile Marine, the whole of my after life, until my retirement, dating from this episode.

Though I had been a photographer for some time before the advent of dry plates, yet, until then, I had not been able to fulfil my great ambition, which was to photograph racing yachts under full sail. I was the first to attempt to do so as soon as it became possible, and my first pictures were obtained during a regatta held off Southsea beach by the Royal Albert Yacht Club in 1881. I took six exposures in all, and was highly delighted with the results. For the next regatta held by this club I was able to obtain views from the Committee boat at much closer quarters than formerly. But though they were more striking than my previous pictures, what I really wanted to do was to photograph the big cutters. So it became necessary for me to sail my own boat and manoeuvre into favourable positions from which to secure shots after my heart's desire.

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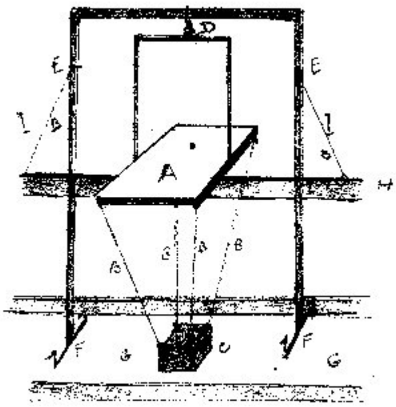
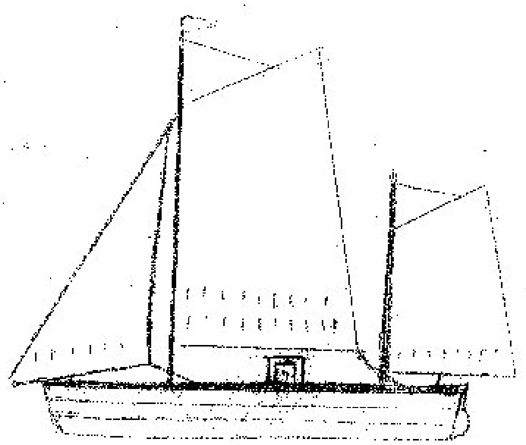


A. board on which Camera was screwed. B cords attached to C weight. D swivel. E Eyelets: F. screwed to deck floor. G. deck floor. H Gunwale of Boat. I Guy ropes to steady the Gibbet

I had a little yawl in which I rigged up a contrivance for supporting my camera, which was too heavy to hold in the hand. Over the yacht's well I arranged a frame of iron tubing, from which was slung a board on which the camera was clamped, and from each corner of this board hung a stout cord tied to a large weight resting on the floor. The camera could thus be kept steady, but at the same time could be turned in the direction from which my next subject was approaching.

To photograph objects in motion it is necessary to use an instantaneous shutter, and since no such thing was then in existence, I had to invent one myself. A flat piece of wood with an aperture in it was arranged to slide across the lens, and this was actuated by an elastic spring which could be released by a simple lanyard. Nor was such a thing as a view-finder existent at that time, but I used to get very good results by simply levelling the camera and aiming the top of it at the cross-trees of the oncoming vessel. I soon became adept at judging distances, and used to know to within a fraction how large the yacht would appear on the plate.

I managed to secure some photographs which astonished the yachting world, and for the artistic merit of which, in all, I was awarded over 60 medals by the different photographic societies. So praiseworthy was my work considered as a whole by the St. Louis Convention of America that I was awarded their coveted Gold medal, for which eight countries competed. I attribute my success to my careful study of light and shade on the sails of the craft of which I took photographs, for in this way I could often produce very beautiful effects.

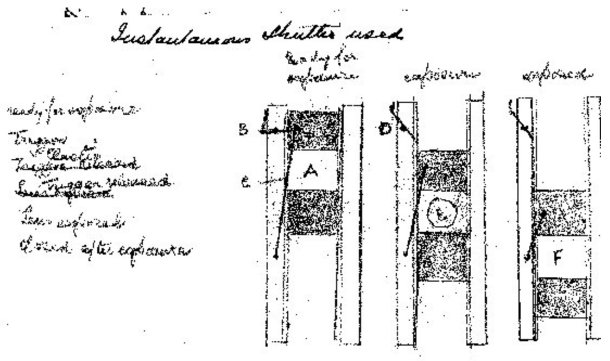


Camera as seen from outside

I kept my gadgets very much to myself, with the result that no-one could understand how I obtained such results, and indeed, the judges of the first exhibition in which I entered any of my pictures would not believe that my picture of Lord Cecil's yacht "Chittywee"[1] was not elaborately retouched. Much discussion in the press resulted from this, and finally the negative was examined and the judges were proved wrong.

Later, I invented a hand camera made of light wood and conical in shape, using plates measuring 16 by 13 inches, which I took with me to America to photograph the race for the America's Cup in 1895, between Lord Dunraven's Yacht "Valkyrie" and the American "Defender", and the shot I obtained of the famous foul that took place was the subject of much official discussion.

The Press soon became full of enthusiastic comments about my photographs. The "Land and Water" said: -



"A finer collection of instantaneous photography has never been seen, and knowing as we do the difficulties in the way of obtaining them, we cannot praise too highly the skill, patience, and manipulation of Alfred West."

Most of my original plates are still in existence, and are at present held by a firm of yacht photographers at Cowes[2] who state that they still have a good sale for them as art studies, and that no one has since been able to produce anything quite the same.

In obtaining my famous picture of the "Mohawk"[3],

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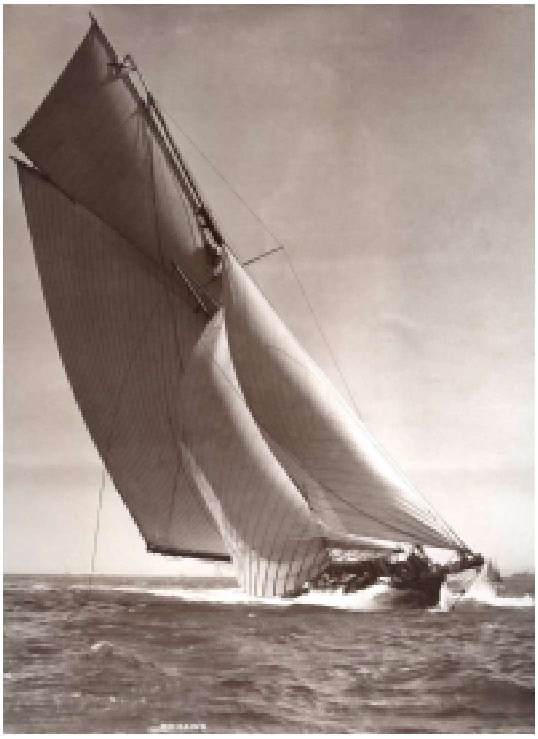
[1] Lord Francis Cecil's yacht 'Chittywee' was photographed racing at the Royal Portsmouth Corinthian Yacht Club Regatta in Osborne Bay in the year 1882.

[2] The company referred to is Beken of Cowes. It is believed that the G. West archive of photographic plates is still held by the company as an identifiable and separate collection.

[3] The portrait of the 'Mohawk' racing at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club Regatta in 1884 was awarded the gold medal at the St. Louis Convention USA for which 9 other countries competed.

I had a very exciting experience, for I came so close to her that even my Skipper almost lost his nerve, and the spinnaker outhaul of the big yacht, plainly visible in the picture, trailed across my little boat and I actually caught hold of it as it swept past. The heeling of this yacht and the effects of light and shade on the sails make it an attractive study. When I visited the New York Yacht Club I saw a very large reproduction of this picture hanging on the wall at the f trot landing of the main staircase



"Hullo!", I exclaimed. "You've one of my pictures up there."

"Yours!", said a Member who was on the stairs as I made this remark, "Why, that was taken by West, the famous yacht photographer of England."

"True", said I, "I am West of England."

"Waal, is that so?" said he quite taken aback "Say come right in, I'll introduce you to a few friends!"

I was once invited aboard the late King's racing Cutter "Britannia" by Captain Carter, then the King's Sailing Master.

When he took me down into the saloon I saw several of my yachting pictures hanging on the bulkheads in pretty paper frames, and I felt greatly honoured when he told me that these had been made by the Princesses.

An early photograph of mine is still to be seen in the Naval Museum in Portsmouth Dockyard. It is a panorama of Portsmouth Harbour, which I took in 1882 from the top of the old Semaphore Tower. It is made up of a number of snaps all joined together in a strip, and was one of the first of its kind. It shows both sides of the Harbour and all the old wooden training ships, including the famous "Victory", the "St. Vincent", the "Duke of Wellington", and many more whose only utility then was as coal hulks, though some had seen service during the Napoleonic Wars as accommodation ships for French prisoners. The old Royal Yachts "Victoria and Albert", "Alberta" and "Osborne" can be seen, together with the historic "Bellerophon", which conveyed Napoleon to St. Helena.

Another object of interest is on the right of the panorama, where the warship "Canada" can be seen at the actual moment of launching.

One of the ships seen alongside a jetty is the troopship "Serapis". This vessel once took King Edward VII to India when Prince of Wales, and the Bandmaster of the R.M.L.I. band that accompanied him was the father of a friend of mine. He was very partial to cigars, and brought a large quantity home with him, but the problem of smuggling them out of the Dockyard at first presented come difficulty. However, in the end he managed to solve this by placing then inside the big drum, and since the band did not play when it marched out of the Dockyard, his ruse escaped detection. His son subsequently gave me one of these cigars, the first I had ever smoked, and though I have never been seasick, if sufferers from 'mal de mer' feel anything like I did after I had finished that cigar, all my sympathy goes out to them.

On March 28th 1884, Queen Victoria's youngest son, the Duke of Albany, died at Cannes, where he was staying on account of delicate health. The body was brought across the Channel in the Royal Yacht accompanied by the Prince of Wales, and soon after the yacht had berthed alongside the South Railway Jetty at Portsmouth Dockyard, I received a command to go on board. I was rowed to the yacht in a Naval cutter, and at the head of the gangway was met by the medical officer who explained that the Prince wanted me to photograph the interior of the saloon where the body was resting. The coffin was enveloped in a Union Jack on which had been placed many magnificent wreaths and a cross of white lilies. The bulkheads and ceiling were draped in dark purple, and the only light came from a few electric lamps which gave a very subdued illumination.

I told the doctor that it was impossible to take a photograph in such a dim light, and it was suggested that two reflectors each holding seven electric bulbs might give sufficient light. I was rowed back to get my camera whilst these were being fitted, the current being obtained from a troopship, which had to be moved closer to the yacht before the cable would reach. I made two exposures, one of an hour and the other of an hour and a half. It was midnight before I was rowed home, and despite my eagerness, I felt too tired to develop my plates right away. Next morning I was up at five o'clock, only to find to my dismay that they were very much underexposed. I rushed off with two more plates, and engaged a boatman to pull me over in the direction of Portsea. When half way across I ordered him to put me alongside the Royal yacht. He refused at first but when I offered him double fare he reluctantly agreed. Much to the surprise of those on board I sprang up the gangway and asked for the doctor. He looked very serious when I told him of my failure, but when I said I should get good results if the curtains on the harbour side were raised, he said he would go and ask the Prince about it. He came back and told me to carry on, but warned me to be quick because there was little time before the coffin was due to be transferred to the train waiting to take it to Windsor. I made one exposure, and was greatly relieved on developing it to find that it was a success.

I always looked forward to the time when I should have a picture of every warship in the British Navy and those of foreign countries, so that the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Review in 1898 gave me a good opportunity of adding to my collection. My sailing yacht having been wrecked in a storm off Southsea beach, I bought a steam launch, which had formerly belonged to Bessemer of steel fame.

It was a smart little vessel 35 feet in length and painted white with a brass funnel and teak fittings, and she used to steam at 8 knots. The Commander in Chief had granted me special permission to remain in the lines during the Royal Procession but notice of this permit was not down in the orders for the day, since I had applied for it after they had been issued to the Fleet, and, therefore, I had been given a special pass to be shown should my presence in the lines be questioned.

There was a dense fog in the early morning, and I had difficulty in steering clear of the ships as I steamed through the fleet to Ryde Pier, where I had arranged to take three friends off to their yacht which was lying at anchor close by. The fog cleared away after a while and the sun broke through so we were able to spend the morning steaming through the Fleet, my friend steering while I photographed the various ships. We returned to the yacht for lunch, during which we heard a signal Sun fired to order all vessels to clear away from the lines of ships.

Finishing our lunch we steamed for the "Renown", flagship of the Commander-in-Chief. The long rows of warships Sally decorated with vari–coloured flags in rainbow fashion was an impressive sight. With the exception of my yacht, nothing else was to be seen on the water between all those lines of ships, and it reminded me very much of a racecourse that has been cleared for a race when a dog appears the moment before the horses gallop past; I somehow felt that in my little yacht I resembled that dog. For a long while all was still and a gentle breeze rippled the water. Then suddenly the silence was broken by bugle calls to 'man ship' and by the thunder of guns firing a Royal Salute to the Queen as the Royal Yacht steamed out of the Harbour. She entered the lines of ships and came to a halt opposite the "Renown" to allow the flag officers and captains to go aboard and be received by Her Majesty. In my position I was able to secure photographs from a close range, and since I was near the flagship all was well but after this reception the Royal Yacht proceeded slowly through the fleet followed by my launch, and the trouble began. As I steamed past the other ships, officers on their bridges waved their arms at me and shouted to me to get clear of it.

Five picket boats came dashing up, the first to reach me being commanded by a Sub-lieutenant who accosted me in an angry tone of voice, shouting: -

"How dare you come into the lines during the Royal inspection!"

"It's quite alright", I called back. "I have the C-in-C's permission."

"I know nothing about any permission", he replied, "Lay hold there forward, tow him out of it!"

"Hold on!" I said. "I tell you I have permission."

"We know nothing about a permit, you've no right here, so pass that tow rope aft."

I held out my permit for him to take, "Before you go any further, you'd better read this", I said.

"What to it?" snapped the young officer.

“The C-In-C’s permit”, I replied with a smile.

He snatched it from me, put the engine-room telegraph at ‘Full ahead’ and steamed away, I thought for good, but he soon returned and gave me back my permit saying testily, “I suppose it’s all right” and with that he steamed away again, followed by all the other picket boats. I carried on with my own flag streaming out behind with my name written on it, to be gazed on with wonder by the crews of the various ships and their guests.

I suggested to the Commander-in-Chief that an album of photographs of the principal ships with their respective Admirals and Captains would make a fitting Jubilee gift to be presented to the Queen, and he agreed. I had the album beautifully bound in navy blue Russian Leather inscribed in gold lettering and placed in a silk lined case. It was sent to the Queen at Osborne, but was returned to me a few days later with a very nice letter from Lady Knollys stating that Her Majesty had been very pleased with the album, but did not wish to retain it. I did not know until then that members of the Royal Family do not accept gifts from private individuals. The C-in-C heard of this, and sent for the album to show the German Ambassador who was then staying with him. I never saw it again, but some time afterwards I received a letter from the German Embassy in London stating that H.I.M. the German Emperor had received the album and requested me to send an account. It had interested him because he had been present at the Review with six German warships.

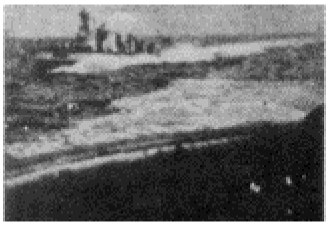
It was at this same Review that a wonderful little vessel named the “Turbinia” appeared, steaming through the Fleet at 35 knots, a speed never before achieved on water. She was the first ship to be fitted with the turbine machinery invented by her owner, the Hon. C. A. Parsons of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and a great sensation was caused by her steaming through the lines at such a speed. Whilst she was at anchor in Portsmouth Harbour, I went aboard and told the owner that I would like to get a snap of his craft going at full speed.

“No one has succeeded yet, although many have tried”, replied Mr. Parsons.

“I should like to have a shot at her”, I persisted.

“Alright, so you shall!” he said with a smile, “I will make another run through the fleet tomorrow, look out for me between lines A. and B. at noon. That should give you an opportunity.”

“I’ll be there, opposite the Flagship”, I told him,



Punctually at l2 o’clock there appeared between the leaders of the lines a smother of foam - it was the “Turbinia”. As she raced past the Flagship, I was waiting in my launch and took a flying shot of her. When I developed the plate I was delighted to find that I had “got her”, and the owner was so pleased with the result that he invited me to take a number of photographs and a cinematograph film of his craft on the Tyne.

CHAPTER II. A FLOATING EXHIBITION.

The year 1898[4] was of special importance among the first class racing yachts, since four new cutters had been completed by the beginning of the season. They were "Valkyrie II "Satanita", "Calluna", and the famous "Britannia", which latter was designed by Mr. Watson of Glasgow for the Prince of Wales, and which was raced every season, excepting for the War period, up till the Jubilee year of King George, who was himself an enthusiastic yachtsman and loved to race her. Besides these British craft, the American yacht "Navahoe" was sent over to race in English waters, but she met with little success.

In this same year I conceived the idea of a yachting exhibition afloat, and purchased for the purpose a schooner of 150 tons named the "Daphne", which for many years had been lying in Haslar Creek, but was nevertheless in a good seaworthy condition. She had roomy accommodation, with a main saloon the width of the vessel out of which led the Captain's cabin, kitchen and bathroom. There were three good sized cabins with swinging bunks on the port side, and a passageway to starboard led to a large cabin aft with double and single bunks, bath, wardrobe and desk. To the right of this passage were three more sleeping cabins, and to the left the main hatch to the deck. The focsle was large, and able to accommodate a crew of twelve.

Excepting for about 15 feet forward, I had the whole of the upper deck housed in with framework and waterproof canvas, on which was written in large letters the words "Yachting Exhibition". This formed a large structure which was utilised for the showroom, and in the bulkheads were fitted several sashed windows, whilst the roof was draped with art muslin. The large number of exhibits included various inventions useful to yachtsmen, paintings and watercolours of famous yachts of the past, and models of different designs, including one of the famous yacht "Sunbeam" sent by her owner, Lord Brassy. Some of my own medal photographs were also put on view, as well as specimens of life saving apparatus, signal rockets, and other items of great interest to yachtsmen, making altogether a very fine, collection of exhibits. The yacht clubs along the South Coast Save me their patronage and sent their burgees to be flown when visiting their ports, and the "Yachtsman" and other papers spoke in high terms of this enterprise, unique in exhibitions. I was warned that I should find some difficulty if there was any rough weather, especially when going westward, but luckily on each occasion when moving from one place to the next, the sea was smooth.

A Captain and crew of three were engaged, together with a tug for towing the yacht, which had no means of self propulsion. All was then ready for the tour, and whilst lying off Gosport, numbers of people came on board to give us a good send-off. Proceeding out of the Harbour with the burgees of the Royal Albert and Portsmouth Corinthian Yacht Clubs flying, we anchored off Southsea, but stayed only a few days as we intended to stop there again at the end of the cruise. We were towed round to Southampton and lay alongside the Pier, where visitors could easily stop aboard. Whilst lying in my bunk on the first night of our stay there, I heard a grinding noise and noticed that the vessel had a slight list. Running up on deck to investigate, I found that the davits had hooked on to one of the beams of the Pier and were preventing the yacht from dropping with the tide. It was certainly lucky that I had noticed it, because within less than half an hour serious damage would have been done. Seizing a capstan bar, I levered the davits off, and the vessel dropped with a splash.

After staying a week at Southampton, we left for Cowes, and whilst being towed down Southampton Water we dressed ship in rainbow fashion with signal flags. On passing Calshot Castle, all the yachts at Cowes hoisted their flags, and as I said to my Skipper jokingly, it was as if in honour of our coming, though actually it was to greet the Royal Yacht which had then just left Portsmouth Harbour on her way to Cowes.

The buoy which the Cowes Harbour Master had assigned to me lay between the Royal Yacht and the Commodore of the Royal Yacht Squadron's vessel, but the following day I received a courteous letter from the Secretary asking me to shift my billet, since the exhibition yacht obstructed signals from being made between the two yachts. I at once ordered the tug to move us to another buoy lying astern and out of the way; the tug also came in useful for bringing visitors off from the shore. On the third day of the regatta it blew hard and the sea was rough, but it did not stop Prince George and Princesses Maud and Victoria from coming alongside in their launch and honouring the exhibition with a visit. I showed them round, explaining the various exhibits and before leaving they expressed their appreciation of all they had seen. They were greatly intrigued by a fortune telling machine that had been installed, and to judge from their merry laughter they derived much amusement from reading the cards telling them their "fortunes".

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[4] A pencilled annotation in Alfred West's hand in the manuscript has the note '1893 ??'

After Cowes Week, Weymouth was our next call and we were towed round there in a smooth sea. As we entered the port a flood tide drew us towards the bridge which spans the Harbour and threatened to drag us under the arch, which would have swept away the exhibition saloon. People ashore yelled at us to drop the anchor, but my Captain had a cool head and objected to being ordered about by landlubbers. A rope was thrown to another vessel and we warped alongside; afterwards we got alongside the Quay and people could step straight aboard.

They came in large numbers and at times the exhibition was overcrowded; many had never been aboard a large yacht before and were very interested in exploring below and seeing the accommodation.

From here we proceeded in smooth water as usual, to Torquay, where the Harbour Master had arranged a berth alongside the jetty in the inner harbour. There were a number of people awaiting the coming of the unique exhibition, as nothing of its kind had been seen in the district before. On the last day of our stay there it came on to blow half a gale, and as I had arranged to leave for Dartmouth at 4 o'clock the next morning, I was wondering how long it would last, but was happy to find when the time came that the wind had dropped and that there was a dead calm again, enabling us to proceed. The reason for making such an early start was to ensure arriving at Dartmouth at high water and getting alongside the Quay, which at low tide was left dry. There was considerable difficulty on our arrival, because a number of small yachts moored to the quay objected to moving. The Harbour Master got busy, but the tide was ebbing and the yacht went aground 10 feet out from the quay. This meant that unless something was done quickly, at low water she would heel over and lie on her side. Spars were obtained to shore her against the quay and guy ropes fixed to the masthead were made fast to bollards ashore. Pig iron ballast brought up from below was laid along the deck facing the jetty, and this gave the yacht a slight list towards the shore, so that at low water she was on an even keel, and on the following tide we were able to haul alongside.

The last races of the season are held at Dartmouth, and there is a lack of formality at the regatta which makes it quite different from the aristocratic Cowes. A fair used at this time to be held on the quay, complete with merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries, and various stalls and amusements. Everyone used to join in the fun, and yacht owners and their guests came ashore in the evening to whirl round and round on the wooden horses, laughing and thoroughly enjoying themselves. One wealthy yachtsman and his party wanted to try their skill at the shooting stall, but were told by the proprietor that they would have to wait and take their turn. This the leader of the party was not disposed to do, and asked the man how much he wanted for the show. "I'll take £60", replied the owner. Taking a wallet from his pocket, the yachtsman counted out bank notes to this amount and handed them to the surprised owner of the stall. "Now", said the new owner, "the stall is mine", and taking possession of it, he and his guests took pot shots at the different targets until they had had enough, when they walked off, leaving the proprietor again owner and richer by such a windfall.

On the tow back from Dartmouth to Southsea there was not even a ripple on the water and the sea was like a sheet of glass. We duly arrived off Southsea and dropped anchor, my wife with our two children and their nurse coming aboard to greet me. It was the end of August, and the town was full of visitors. In the evening I had the yacht illuminated "over all" with Chinese lanterns in rainbow fashion, and a display of fireworks was set off and watched by crowds on shore. I gave the Captain leave to go on shore, but told him to haul down the lanterns before going. He said that they would be alright and could be left to burn out, as there was no wind, so I let it go at that, and the lanterns remained aloft. Shortly after 10 o'clock I decided to turn in, but my wife insisted on going up on deck for a breath of fresh air, since it was hot and sultry and the sea was a dead calm. I followed reluctantly, feeling very tired and sleepy, but it was as well that we did so, for whilst seated chatting, my wife suddenly said, "I can smell something burning!" and looking round I saw the roof of the exhibition saloon was on fire just above the gangway. I jumped on the taffrail, tore away the burning art muslin and ran my hand along the canvas side which was also alight. My wife ran forward to rouse the crew, who tore aft with buckets of water which we threw on the fire, and managed to put it out before it could spread far enough to get a serious hold. Though my hands were badly scorched, I considered that a detail compared with what might have happened if the fire had not been discovered in time. It had been caused by one of the Chinese lanterns falling down on to the roof when still alight, and whilst resting on the eaves it started a blaze that would have enveloped the whole structure, since it was only made of canvas and dry wood. Had we turned in without first going on deck, the fire would have been allowed to spread, and since there was no escape other than through the exhibition saloon itself, we should have been trapped like rats below, and all the valuable exhibits destroyed. The next morning I ordered the tug to tow us into the Harbour and we dismantled and packed away the exhibits, after which the yacht was taken to Haslar Creek and secured to the moorings from which she had originally been taken.

In the following February there was a severe blizzard, and just as I was thinking of going to bed, a man came over from Gosport in an excited state and told me that my exhibition yacht had been blown from its berth and was colliding with others and doing a lot of damage. I could do nothing that night, but early next morning I hurried over to Gosport and was happy to find that the man’s report was grossly exaggerated and that with the exception of having been blown a little to one side, no serious damage had been done. My wife wanted me to keep the yacht and use it for a house-boat, for which purpose it was very suitable, but I felt that after the shocks I had experienced in connection with it, I had had enough, and gave instructions for it to be sold.

CHAPTER III. THE FIRST FILMS.

The first invention to demonstrate the law of visual persistence was devised by Sir John Herschel, who called it the Thermatrope. In 1867 Dr. Horner of Bristol invented the Zoetrope or ‘Wheel of Life’, of one of which I remember as a boy being the proud possessor. Other similar toys were invented under such awe inspiring names as the Promoscope.

The first living picture machine to use a photographic process was the Phasmatrope, invented by Henry Hale of Philadelphia; previously the pictures had been drawn by hand. In 1870 he obtained a number of photographs in sequence and at brief intervals, using an ordinary camera. In 1872, Edward Muybridge obtained a rapid succession of snapshots by having 24 cameras mounted side by side, to the shutters of which were attached threads connected to a line of posts opposite them.

A horse was ridden between the cameras and the posts, and as it passed each camera it broke the thread and made the exposure. When placed in the Wheel of life these pictures gave persistence of vision. Though this had no commercial possibilities it started other brains at work.

In 1886. Dr. Murey in France used a camera with which he obtained a series of motion pictures by turning the handle of a mechanism which made a succession of exposures at brief intervals. When shown through a projector the semblance of movement was given to the subjects, though the apparatus wad too elaborate and expensive to be of any commercial value.

A great step forward was made when Mr. Robert Paul in London succeeded in persuading a firm to produce celluloid film which could be coated with light-sensitive emulsion, but at first it was found impossible to obtain strips of celluloid of uniform thickness owing to the primitive methods for producing it then in existence. Mr. Eastman of Rochester U.S.A. had succeeded in making a dry plate in 1884, and the following year he invented a folding camera using roll film, the parent of the Kodak. This attracted the great Edison, who developed the basic principle of the Wheel Of Life into a scientifically designed instrument for making and reproducing animated photography. It was introduced to the public under the title of Edison’s Kinetoscope, and was shown at the World’s Fair at Chicago in 1893. However, it proved only a nine days wonder, for only one person could view the films at a time looking through the eyehole of the machine in which a coin had to be inserted.

Mr. Robert Paul was attracted by this invention, and himself made several models, which he supplied to buyers from all parts of the world, one of his first customers being M. Charles Pathé. Meanwhile, the Americans had also entered the market, but Paul produced the first British camera and projector, and gave his first public demonstration of moving pictures with his Theatograph at the Finsbury Technical College, causing great interest and excitement. On Feb. 28th 1896, he again exhibited his invention in the Library of the Royal institution of Great Britain before an audience of distinguished scientists, by whom he was heartily congratulated.

Sir Augustus Harris, the great impresario, saw possibilities in this Theatograph of Paul’s as a form of amusement, and proposed installing it at Olympia, which he had then just bought. Paul was very doubtful of the results that would come from such an exhibition, but it proved to be the most popular entertainment at Olympia, which was the first picture palace in the world. In France, the brothers Lumière were also investigating this new form of photography, and introduced a camera which, however, failed to gain a foothold owing to the size of the film and of the perforations, which were different from those generally in use.

Various countries then concentrated on inventing a machine which would project a steady picture, since up till this time the results were marred by excessive flickering. It was Paul who first succeeded in accomplishing this and in 1897 my attention was drawn to the art of cinematography, and from that time forward I devoted myself to obtaining films. Amongst the very first of my efforts in this line were some pictures of a torpedo explosion and a Whitehead torpedo being fired, both of which I obtained from aboard the old training ship “Vernon” in Portsmouth Harbour. However, I little knew to what extent my adoption of this form of photography was to spread or how much I was myself going to be associated with its beginning as a commercial proposition.

The death, in 1893, of his elder brother, Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence, left Prince George, Duke of York, in line of succession to the throne. He had been intended for a naval career, and had been through a gunnery course at Whale island as a sub-lieutenant. Later he was commander in H.M.S. “Melampus”, and I was sent to photograph him and his crew. Finally he was promoted to captain, and commissioned the cruiser H.M.S. “Crescent”. It was through these circumstances that I began to see the great future that cinematography had before it at a means of entertainment, and an account of how my first show was given will perhaps prove of interest.

In the month of September 1898 the “Crescent” was lying alongside the South Railway Jetty in Portsmouth Dockyard. She had just returned from a three months’ Cruise in Home Waters, and before paying off a unique entertainment was to be given before the ship’s company. Close alongside the ship a large white screen had been erected, on which were to be projected a series of films and lantern slides depicting various incidents during the cruise.

Some of the crew were allowed to sit on the Jetty close to the screen on condition that they did not smoke, whilst those who wished to do so were lined up along the deck. On the Quarter Deck the officers of the ship were assembled headed by the Captain, H.R.H. The Duke of York, who was accompanied by the Duchess. Great personal interest was taken in the show since the films had all been taken on board during the cruise, and the whole ship’s company were looking forward to seeing themselves at work and at play.

All the surrounding lights were switched off, and the only illumination was that thrown on the screen by the lantern. The films varied in length from 40 to 100 feet, and lantern slides were shown while the film was being threaded through the projector. Each subject was greeted by cheers, and comments in the vernacular were received with roars of laughter. The show lasted about an hour, and the final picture of the Duke and Duchess with the little Prince Edward (Now King Edward VIII) brought the crew at once to their feet at the salute. Their final burst of cheering could be heard across the Harbour. The first attempt to show animated pictures in Portsmouth had proved a great success.

Three months previously whilst at breakfast, I had received a reply-paid telegram which had made me leap to my feet. It had come from Sir Charles Cust, the Commander of the “Crescent”, and read :-

“Can you be aboard at 9 o’clock?”

As it was then 8.30 I did not stop to reply, but cycled down to the Dockyard, arriving on board at 8.55 and meeting the Commander on the Quarter Deck.

“ I sent you a telegram “, he said.

“Yes, Sir Charles, I received it, I replied.

“But I have not had the reply I paid for.”

“I stand in front of you before a reply could have reached you”, I answered.

“Very good”, he said, “His Royal Highness wants to see you, he’s at breakfast now, but he’ll be on deck shortly, better stand by.”

Soon afterwards the Captain came up on deck and explained to me that he wanted a series of photographs taken during the cruise. I showed him a piece of cinematograph film taken of a torpedo explosion, and explained that it was a new development in photography. The Duke took it into his own hands to examine it more closely, and called out to the Commander.

“Look here, Sir Charles, isn’t this wonderful?”

Turning to me he asked whether I could obtain some films during the cruise. I told him that I would do my best, and he told me to wait till the ship arrived at Portland, because they were all sixes and sevens just then.

This was how the entertainment came to be given, the first of its kind, and little did I dream then what immense developments would follow.

Queen Victoria was in residence at Osborne House in the isle of Wight at the time of the “Crescent’s” return, and hearing of my pictures, she expressed a desire to see them. A royal command was sent for me to exhibit them before the Royal Family, and all the apparatus was fixed up in the drawing room at Osborne. Over 50 films and lantern slides were shown, and the Duke of York explained each as it was projected on the screen. At the close of the demonstration the Duke told me that the Queen wished him to express the pleasure the pictures had given her.

On the day following, a Southsea concert agent strongly urged me to give a public show of these pictures, saying that he would do the organising and arranging in connection with it. The Portland Hall at Southsea was therefore booked for one night, and was crowded out, numbers being turned away. The distinguished audience was strongly represented by the Senior Service, and despite the absence of title slides or commentary they all thoroughly enjoyed the programme, which was interspersed with solo vocalists and instrumentalists, and lasted over two hours. The newspapers made much of it, since these were the first animated pictures seen by the general public, and to add to the interest in the novelty there was the knowledge that they had been shown before the Queen. It was soon realised that such pictures were of more than local importance, and the Secretary of the Navy League invited me to bring them to London, promising me good patronage and support.

In the meantime a number of other films had been obtained, including one of drill with a 9 pounder muzzle loading gun at Whale island. I had a rather startling experience in taking this film, because I persisted in having the gun pointed directly at the camera to give the effect of its being fired at the audience, though I was warned that I should probably be hit by the burning wad. I told the petty officer in charge of the gun's crew that I would chance it, and placed the camera on top of a grassy bank to get an elevated view of the gun and take the smoke being blown back to envelope the gun's crew in a cloud, from which they would gradually appear as it drifted farther to the rear. The gun was sighted with deadly accuracy, the muzzle being only about ten yards away from me. At the order "Fire!" I received a shock that nearly bowled me over; pieces of burning wad had burst all round me; my clothes were on fire, and blood streaming down my face; worst of all, the film was broken by the jolt. The gun's crew limbered up and were running away in merry mood, thinking it a huge joke, when they were quite surprised to hear me call out "Halt, I want that done over again, my film is broken." They came back and performed the evolution again, but this time I made sure that the gun was pointed a bit more to the right.

I decided to try the show in London, and St. James' Concert Hall, Picadilly, on the site of the present Picadilly Hotel, was booked for three evenings. The stage was profusely decorated, the screen being draped with the Union Jack and the White Ensign flanked by palms and banks of flowers. A large orchestra was engaged together with a professional lady singer. The Hall was packed with an appreciative audience which included some of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, members of the Navy League, and many representatives of the Press. Shortly before the orchestra played the overture of "A Life on the Ocean Wave" a telegram was received from Prince George which ran: -

"Regret unable to be present at the launching of "Our Navy" but wish it a successful commission."

In my advertisements I described the entertainment as 'A Night with Our Navy. The cruise of H.M.S. "Crescent" under the command of Captain H.R.H. The Duke of York.'

I decided to act as compère myself and to introduce sound effects, as I considered that it would not do for the audience to see, for instance, a gun fired and hear no report, and so I arranged with someone behind the screen to hit a big drum at the right moment. With such effect was this done that it quite startled the audience, particularly the ladies, and caused roars of laughter. Sheets of coarse sandpaper rubbed together gave a realistic enough impression of the splashing of waves, and words of command delivered at the right juncture unknowingly anticipated the 'talkies" of today and added to the appreciation of the films.

With such a distinguished audience I was extremely anxious that everything should go well, and I felt more than a little nervous. It was my first experience of addressing such a number of people, but reading to the audience my telegram gave me courage to carry on because they became enthusiastic from the outset. Great applause greeted one particular film taken from the Warner lightship of yachts racing in rough weather. They came so close to the camera that, smothered in foam, they appeared to be sailing right out of the picture, and the effect on one member of the audience was so realistic that he was forced to leave suffering from acute sea- sickness!

Although films were then being shown in Music Halls, yet the subjects were mostly of little interest, poor in quality and, because of the flickering, very trying to the eyes. They were used as the last item on the programme, and were usually taken by the audience as a signal to get up and walk out. Animated pictures had thus not caught on with the public, so that for the principal concert hall in London to be booked for a two hours show of films and for the prices of the seats to range from 5/-

to 1/- was something new. Many doubted whether the interest of the audience could be maintained for so long, and were very sceptical as to the prospect of success. The fact that the pictures had been shown before the Queen was, of course, a great draw, and moreover, the Royal Navy was much before the eyes of the British Public at that time as a result of the Fashoda incident, over which diplomatic relations with France became somewhat strained. Furthermore, the scenes depicting a warship under the command of a Royal Prince were undoubtedly a great attraction.

Hitherto little was known by the general public of the Royal Navy, many had never seen a warship, some not even the sea. Public interest in the Senior Service having been aroused, it was a particularly opportune time for such a series of pictures to be shown. Amongst the pictures was one of the Captain of the “Crescent” mustering his crew, who marched past him in single file. Each one halted before the Captain and saluted whilst an officer by his side read from a large book the man’s name and rank. It was a formal introduction, enabling the Captain to become personally acquainted with his crew, the Naval term for the evolution being called “Inspection by the Open List”. Other subjects included physical drill by the Midshipmen - H.M.S. “Crescent” leaving Portsmouth Harbour - General Quarters - Preparing for action - working the guns - away boats’ crew - racing round the fleet - dancing on the fo’c’sle - The Hornpipe - Firing torpedoes - Attack and defence - Cutlass drill. The series concluded with a remarkable shot of the “Turbinia” steaming at 35 knots.

Between these films various lantern slides were shown, amongst them a group of the ship’s company and another of the officers, seated in the centre of whom were the Duke and Duchess of York. Whilst explaining the pictures I related that on one occasion an entertainment was being given on board by some of the crew when the Duchess drew the Captain’s attention to the fact that the men were not smoking. They had refrained from doing so because of her presence, and the Duke at once stood up and told the crew that they might smoke, immediately pipes and tobacco were produced and a cloud soon enveloped everyone and made the Duchess cough, but she laughingly remarked that she did not mind it a bit. Songs were sung and all joined in the choruses with gusto. After the National Anthem had been played, three lusty cheers were given for the Duchess who remarked that she had spent a jolly evening and had thoroughly enjoyed herself. It was her kindly thought for others that endeared the future Queen to the hearts of all.

Some time after the commencement of the show, a pause in the programme became imperative. Half an hour before the show began the projector had had to be enclosed in an iron box at the order of an inspector of the London County Council. This was the first time that such an order had been given, and I told him that he should have inspected it earlier and not waited until the audience was beginning to arrive. The erection of the screen and decorations had just been completed, and sheets of corrugated iron were hastily procured and fixed in place. The operators found the confined space excessively hot owing to the arc lamp, and the reason for the pause having been explained to the audience, the lights were switched on, and amidst loud applause the lady singer took her turn on the platform. At the conclusion of the performance a portrait of Queen Victoria was projected while the orchestra played the National Anthem. The audience rose, lights went up, and more cheers were given as I made my final bow.

So ended my first cinematograph show given in London; many remained to congratulate me on its success. Next day the Press was enthusiastic, the “Times” stating that “there could be no question as to the educational value of these pictures.” The Daily Telegraph said - “No healthy boy’s education is complete until he has seen this breezy entertainment which smacks of the salt of the sea.” St. James Gazette - “For its intrinsic excellence, no less than for its inspiring and healthy purpose, this entertainment deserves the highest commendation.”

The Secretary of the Navy League told me that such an entertainment should remain permanently in London, but the only question was to find a hall. He suggested the Polytechnic in Regent Street, and after an interview with the Directors they agreed to let their hall to me, and at this address under the title of “Our Navy” the show came to anchor and remained there for 14 years. Each year new pictures were added or substituted on the programme, the Admiralty affording me special facilities to obtain them. It was recognised that besides acting as an incentive to the right class of recruit such an entertainment would prove of great value in popularizing the service.

The films were only shown at the Polytechnic in the afternoons from 3 till 5, so that the evenings were free for booking elsewhere. In every part of London and the Suburbs it received an enthusiastic reception. Increasing demands came from the provinces, and touring companies were organised under the direction of Captain F. Edwards R.N. retd. A wing was built on to my private house at Southsea and called ‘The Anchorage’, which I made my headquarters for developing and distributing the films and for carrying on my business.

The fame of my work travelled to the Dominions, which soon wanted to see the films also, and companies were sent to Australia, Canada and india, so that “Our Navy” gradually became known throughout the Empire, and there was hardly a city or town that it did not eventually visit. Living at Southsea I was at a great advantage because I was in close touch with everything Naval, and was kept busy obtaining fresh films of Naval life, its various aspects offering endless subjects of public interest.

CHAPTER IV. THE TRAINING OF THE BOY.

I felt that in obtaining fresh subjects I could not do better than study the early training of boys for the Royal Navy. The Royal Naval College at Osborne, where several films were obtained, used to be where embryo Nelsons received early training before being transferred to Dartmouth.

“The Cradle of the Navy”, the Royal Hospital School at Greenwich (since removed to Holbrook), was visited on an inspection day, and in addition to the march past, various other evolutions were filmed showing stages in training. In the words of Harold Begbie, this is “Where little Jack is nurtured who will one day man our fleet, and its O he’ll keep the decks of England clean.”

In those days the old training ship “St. Vincent” was moored at the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, and used to present a picturesque sight when the boys were aloft at sail drill. Over a thousand boys were under training at a time in the old wooden battleship, and to see these young fellows running up the rigging, laying out on the yards and letting loose the sails until the old ship was under a cloud of canvas, was a wonderful sight. The Chaplain was very concerned about the public misconception that the lower deck of the Navy was recruited from guttersnipes, scallywags and boys of bad character, and asked me if I could do anything to make it clear that only boys of good character were allowed to join the Service, and then only with the consent of their parents and a commendation from a clergyman or magistrate. I told him that I thought the reason for this delusion lay in the fact that most of the notices “Join the Royal Navy” are posted outside Police stations, which, in the minds of many, are associated with crime, and I suggested that the correct place for such notices was outside churches and schools.

I asked the Padre if I could inspect any boys who had been in a choir, and from the fifteen he lined up for me, I chose one who looked a suitable type to appear in a film. Dismissing the others, I took the boy on one side and explained what I anted him to do,

“I want to take some animated pictures of your last Sunday in the choir, not at your church but at mine, where I am also a chorister. You will get leave whenever I want you, and each time you will get half a sovereign. I hope you will take the part satisfactorily.”

“I will do my best, Sir”, replied the lad.

He turned out to be a splendid little actor, taking his part well, and following the promptings I called out to him with great earnestness of purpose.

The scenario of the film, about the first example of the sentimental picture, was as follows :-

Assembled outside the ivy covered vestry door in the June sunshine, the choirboys are putting on their cassocks and surplices, and chatting together whilst the bells are chiming for service. Then as the organ peals forth they slowly wend their way, two by two, into the church, our sailor boy and another being the last to enter.

The scene changes to a pretty panorama of the old church with its square tower nestled among the trees; floating out on the still air can be heard the voices of the choir leading the congregation in singing the hymn “Peace, perfect peace”.

The cuckoo leads other birds in accompanying the songs of praise, whilst in the foreground a group of cows grazes quietly by a running stream, and all is peaceful and uplifting.

The service over, our boy, still wearing his surplice, stands at the door of the vestry shaking hands with the others and wishing them goodbye as they pass out. Lastly the Vicar stops for a final chat, placing his hand on the lad’s shoulder to wish him God’s speed, and handing him a letter to give to the Padre aboard the training ship.

The next morning he leaves his village home, a pretty thatched cottage with flowers bordering the pathway leading to the gate and a porch smothered with climbing roses and honeysuckle. He opens the gate for his Mother, and behind him follows his white haired old Grandfather, whilst just outside the gate a group of school children are waiting together with the old milk man, all of whom have come to wish him goodbye, and give him a hearty cheer as he walks away with his widowed Mother’s arm around him. They wend their way along the country road towards the railway station and the old Grandfather, who is left leaning over the gate, calls out “Do your duty, my lad, and you are bound to get on!”

Shortly after their arrival on the platform, the train, runs into the station, and the porter running up to the boy, shakes him by the hand, whilst his mother stands by the window. Leaning out the boy gives his mother a kiss and tells her that he will let her know how he gets on, and that he will be home again at Christmas. He is her only boy, she is loath to part with him, and as the train moves on she is left alone with a “pain in the heart that only Mothers know”. After walking away with her face hidden in a handkerchief, she turns round and waves to the train a last farewell.

Arriving at the Coastguard station opposite which his ship is lying, he watches with keen interest the two Coastguards as they hoist signal flags and semaphore for a boat, in which he is rowed off to the ship. He is met at the gangway and taken to the upper deck and brought before the Padre, to whom he hands the letter his Vicar gave him. The Padre reads it and patting him on the shoulder tells him in kindly words to look upon him as his friend. Thus was shown the connecting link between the Church ashore and the Church afloat.

After this he is allowed to look around the ship, and makes his first attempt to climb the rigging, getting as far as the ”lubbers’ hole”, the “futtock rigging” being too risky to go over. He is then measured for his uniform and taken before the Captain, to whom he makes a declaration and signs on.

The uniform duly arrives, and he is shown how it should be worn. The outfit is a liberal one, including everything he will require to use and wear. Besides three suits of clothes, there is a Ditty box with lock and key, in which he can keep personal possessions. One of the first important things he has to learn is that whatever he is told to do, it must be done “at once, if not sooner”.

I followed this boy’s career, obtaining films of him drilling with other boys up till the time when he became a sub-instructor and was transferred to the brig “Martin” for short cruises in the Solent. He then passed to the gunnery school on Whale Island, where I took a film of a class learning all about shells. The class was seated on wooden forms around three sides of a square, the fourth side being occupied by a blackboard resting on an easel. Alongside the easel stood the instructor with a piece of chalk in his hand to illustrate his lecture on the board. The class industriously made notes which they would later have to learn by heart.

The lecture started with the instructor drawing the outline of a shell, and he then began to explain its composition to the class :-

“This is an armour piercing shell; it has various marks for identification. On the top are three bands, the first is white, denoting that it is armour piercing and made of steel. The two red bands beneath show that it is filled and ready for use. Below these bands is a 1 inch disc, denoting that the shell has seven drawn primers that give the flash and ignite the charge. The charge is contained in a bag and is marked ‘Bag’.

“Beneath this comes the date of filling, and next the letter ‘P’ which stands for the kind of powder used - Pebble Mixture. The letter ‘N’ beneath indicates that it is intended for use in the Navy, and the letter ‘W’ denotes that it was made at Woolwich.

At the base of the shell is the driving band, made of copper, which is cut into by the bore of the gun, giving the shell that rotary motion that makes it spin through the air. Now, have you all got that down”

“Yes, sir”, the class would reply.

“Very well”, continued the instructor, “Close your books, and as I go over the lesson again, you are to name each mark as I point it out.”

This being done correctly and the lesson concluded, the class dismissed. When exhibiting this film, someone behind the screen took the part of the instructor, whilst the Orchestra comprised the class, calling out the marks of identification as they were indicated. It was such effects as these that so materially added to the interest of the picture, and in its effect was a forerunner of the present day “talkies”.

At Whale Island I also filmed a unique display given before King Edward VII when he visited this establishment. It was called the “Pekin Wall Evolution”, and won the commendation of the King for the ingenuity and smartness of the sailors. An imitation wall about nine feet high was erected, behind which was supposed to be a strong enemy force which had to be dislodged. The sailors advanced in skirmishing order, crawling along the ground under cover of small bushes which they pushed before them as they advanced. Behind them were two 12 pounder field guns which came into action and cleared the wall of the enemy. The skirmishing party then rushed up, climbed the wall by mounting on one another’s shoulders, and jumped down on the other side. The field guns were brought up at the double, limbers, trails and wheels were lifted over, and the gun tubes were parbuckled, drag ropes being lashed to them so that they could be hauled over the top by a party on the other side. Rapidly remounted, the guns were ready for the guns’ crews to bring into action again.

A 4.7 inch gun that had been used in the relief of Ladysmith was then dragged up by a party of 60 sailors. It was, of course, too heavy to go over the wall, so a mine was placed against the middle of the wall and connected to a firing box in the rear by an electric cable. The mine was fired with a terrific explosion, and a great breach was made in the wall, enabling the 4.7. inch gun to be brought into action.

HOME AGAIN.

CHAPTER V. THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH.

Shortly after the Boer War, the British Empire learned with deep sorrow of the death of Queen Victoria at Osborne in the Isle of Wight. The news cast a gloom over the whole nation who mourned for one who was greatly beloved by all her peoples and who had reigned longer than any other British monarch. The coffin was conveyed from Osborne House to the Royal Yacht “Alberta” on a Naval gun carriage, and each side of the roadway was lined by crowds of people gathered to pay their tribute to one who had so greatly endeared herself to them. Warships were assembled at Spithead to pay last respects to the Sea Queen; minute guns were fired; flags were flown at half-mast; and the crews manned ship and stood with bare heads bowed as the “Alberta” steamed slowly past.

There was a remarkably fine sunset, shafts of sunlight breaking through the clouds, following the Royal Yacht as she passed through the fleet. In describing the scene the “Daily Telegraph’ said of this:

“Sun, sea and sky laid as it were the fairest offerings in the path of her whose life had helped to make the world so fair, but no earthly pomp could rival the glory of the gorgeous sunset that appeared like a ray of hope through the gloom of a nation’s sorrow.”

I was on board H.M.S. “Collingwood” during the passage of the Royal Yacht, and photographed this marvellous sunset, which was shown subsequently as a lantern slide together with a film of the “Alberta” passing through the fleet. Purchasing what I considered to be the best of the films taken of the procession ashore, I was able to trace the progress of the cortege along the whole of the route from Osborne to St. George’s Chapel, Windsor. The chief mourners following immediately behind the coffin were King Edward, Prince George and the German Kaiser, then came Queen Alexandra, the Duke of Connaught and the other Princes and Princesses. On arrival at Windsor a startling incident occurred which caused considerable alarm. The six horses of the Royal Horse Artillery that were drawing the gun carriage became restive and appeared to be getting out of control. King Edward gave a signal to the leading company of bluejackets following the cortege, and they quickly unshackled the animals, seized hold of the traces themselves, and drew the carriage to the foot of the steps leading to the entrance door of the Chapel. Because of this unfortunate incident the gun carriage at the funerals of both King Edward V11 and King George V was drawn by bluejackets.

I stopped showing the usual programme and arranged for one hour to be devoted entirely to films of the procession. The white screen of the Polytechnic was draped with purple, and full effects were given by the firing of minute guns, tolling of bells and the soft playing by the orchestra and organ of funeral marches interspersed with suitable hymns. The audience were greatly moved by the impressiveness with which the scenes were presented.

The Queen had passed, a King ruled Britain once more, and it seemed as though a new era had begun. The coronation of King Edward VII took place amidst great rejoicings, and the pomp and grandeur of the procession as it passed through massed crowds of loyal subjects on its way to Westminster Abbey, was filmed and shown at the Polytechnic. The beginning of a new era was also noticed in the Navy, for in the opening years of the 20th century it was decided to do away with all the old floating training ships and establishments. The passing of the wooden warships that in the past had done so much to maintain Britain’s supremacy on the seas caused deep feelings of regret among many, but sentiment must give way when the advance of science in Naval warfare demands different conditions of training. The paying off pennant was hoisted in the old “St. Vincent” which had for so long done duty in training boys for the Navy. The ships company of cooks and Instructors was paid off, and the pennant was hauled down by an old seaman who had been one of the first instructors in the ship 40 years before. When she was towed away to be scrapped, crowds lined the shore on both sides of the Harbour to see her depart, and a band from the Royal Naval Barracks played “Auld Lang Syne”. I obtained some pictures of this, which I proposed incorporating in a film to be entitled “The Passing Away of the old and the birth of the new”.

In January 1908, a new “St. Vincent” of the improved “Dreadnought” type was laid down in Portsmouth Dockyard. She was launched in December the same year, and commissioned in 1910. Special permission was given me by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to take a series of films of her construction, which were of great interest, since pictures wore taken of her every month from the laying of the keelplate to the time of her launching. Each autumn, before showing my films in London and the provinces, the new series of pictures I had obtained during the summer were exhibited for about four weeks in my native city of Portsmouth, since I knew that if naval audience, all was well. The Portsmouth papers invariably gave the show a good send off and on one occasion made the following statement:-

“The entertainment was wholesome and refined; moves the better part of one’s nature, stirs our patriotism, and quickens our interest in the all-in-all of the Empire.”

It was in the second year of the existence of ‘Our Navy’ that the Second Boer War broke out. Films were shown of troops embarking at Southampton, and of many other incidents, including pictures of the Naval Brigade from H.M.S. “Powerful”, under the command of Captain Sir Percy Scott, who devised the field mountings for the Naval 4.7 inch guns used in the relief of Ladysmith.

In contrast to the enthusiasm with which the entertainment was received in England was its reception when it visited Dublin in 1902. I received a telegram from my manager there on after its arrival, advising me to go over, as there looked like trouble ahead; posters and bills all round the City had already been defaced and torn down. I immediately went over to see what was the cause of the trouble. Two Coastguards volunteered to attend and keep order if required. On the opening night the hall was crowded, and in the cheaper seats was a rough looking lot that evidently intended mischief. However, they were fairly orderly and appeared interested until they were shown a film of the Union Jack being hoisted; then came pandemonium. They stood up, booing and yelling; things began to look ugly, and the respectable class of the audience were becoming alarmed when I jumped on to the platform in front of the screen. Holding up my hand I called out:-

“Halt! Up lights”, which had the effect of bringing silence.

I demanded what was the matter with them, and why they were making “such a bally row”.

“If it’s the flag that’s worrying you,” I said, “let me point out that it is respected and revered in every part of the world where it is flying. It is made up from three crosses, and one of them is St. Patrick’s, so that you are only booing your patron saint. If there happens to be any picture you don’t like, you are at liberty to walk out, but if there is repetition of this stupid nonsense, I shall stop showing. Down lights! Carry on.”

There was loud applause from the better class people, and the programme continued without further trouble until the end, when the National Anthem was played and a portrait of the King shown. Then they burst out again so loudly as they walked out that the music could not be heard. I called out to my Manager, a powerful man over 6 feet in height:-

“Mr. Howard, have the National Anthem played right through tomorrow evening. They shall hear it!”

One of the Coastguards got a bit of his own back, for one of the hooligans came up to him and sneeringly told him to ‘take off that !!!!!!!! uniform.”

“It has never been insulted yet,” replied the sailor.

“Well, it has now, begorra” said the hooligan as he spat on it.

The sailor let out a right and left, which laid the dirty fellow flat on the ground, senseless. This seemed to intimidate the others, and there was no more trouble.

Returning to my hotel, a gentleman came up to me saying he would like to shake me by the hand, remarking that I had handled the crowd splendidly, and that it was a marvel that they had not taken charge and wrecked everything. Evidently it was a preconcerted arrangement, as during the rest of the week the audiences were not only peaceful, but enthusiastic.

CHAPTER VI. LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE.

At the invitation of Captain, afterwards Admiral, Sir John Durnford, I went aboard his ship H.M.S. “Jupiter” for a cruise during the Naval Manoeuvres of 1902. I was thus able to obtain such films of life afloat as “General Quarters” – “Hoisting out torpedo nets” – “A torpedo attack” – “Man and arm ship” – “12 inch barbettes in action” and various other evolutions. Not was the lighter side overlooked, for as the popular song goes:-

“Jack’s the boy for work and Jack’s the boy for play”, and it was important to add films of the sailors in their merry moods.

There was no difficulty in securing fresh films for new programmes each year**,** so that the interest of the public was fully maintained if not increased. My enthusiasm never flagged, and with my knowledge of naval routine I was well able to select subjects for such pictures as I knew would appeal to the audience. The following is a description of one of them

‘Manning the Cutter.’

The Jupiter had dropped anchor, and the boat booms were out. The one on the starboard side had a Jacob’s ladder dangling from its far end, and lashed to it one of the ship’s cutters was being tossed by the waves. The crew had been piped away, and were running along the boom with the lifeline under their armpits. The Commander and I were looking on from the 6 inch gun casemate.

“That would make an interesting film,” I commented.

“Quartermaster,” called the Commander, when that cutter’s crew returns, pipe them off to man the boat again, they are going to be photographed.”

“Aye, aye, Sir!”

On their return, the crew of eight were surprised to learn that they had to man the boat again. It was nearly 8 bells, the dinner hour, and they were hungry, so that when they were piped away, the evolution was not performed with the usual alacrity.

“Stop! Stop!” ordered the Commander, “That won’t do, call the boat’s crew aft. I want to speak to them.”

The men doubled aft and lined up whilst it was explained to them that as they were to be photographed, they were to see how quickly they could nip along the boom. Whilst the Commander was talking, I asked the Quartermaster in a whisper whether he could arrange for one of them to fall overboard, and, with a grin, he whispered back, “I’ll ask the Cox’n”

The boat’s crew took up their stations, whilst the camera was put into position.

“Are you ready. Mr. West?” asked the Commander.

“Quite ready,” I replied.

“Carry on!”, called the Commander.

The Bos’n blew his pipe, and shouted :-

“Away cutter’s crew.”

There was such a rush that it was a marvel that they did not all fall off as they raced along the boom. One lost his cap, but it was the sixth man, a hefty chap, who did the trick. With arms and legs outstretched, he spreadeagled into the sea, sending up a splash like a miniature torpedo explosion.

“Great Scott!!!” exclaimed the Commander, “one’s gone overboard!”

Then seeing the man swim to the boat, where his shipmates laid hold of him by the scruff of his neck and the slack of his trousers, somersaulting him into the boat, he turned away protesting that the ship was being turned into “a bally bathing machine”. I afterwards complimented the man on the way he had done it, passing him a reward.

"That's alright," replied the sailor, "any time you want anything of that sort done, just ask me." The film was a great success, the audience being taken by surprise when they saw the man fall into the water, and laughing at the unceremonious way in which he was hauled into the boat.

There was another amusing incident which would have made a good film had I known beforehand that it was going to happen. A good title would have been 'The Lost Breakfast'. It was on August 1st, my birthday, and I was invited by the Warrant Officers to have breakfast in their mess. Early in the morning, a signal had been made to the fleet from the flagship for "General Quarters", which meant all hands turning out to put the ship in fighting trim. Guns had to be run out, shell rooms opened, and hoists operated; in short, everything made ready for action. One of the 6 inch gun casemates was just outside my cabin, so I was awakened by the noise of the gun being trained out, to say nothing of the language that was used by the Royal Marines working the gun; they were rather disgruntled at having to turn out at such an early hour.

This evolution prevented the Chief Gunner, Reeves by name, from coming to breakfast until the others had finished, because he had to see that everything was returned in proper order, and that the ammunition stores were locked up.

"S'trewth!" said the C.G. as he entered the Mess and pressed the button of the electric push which dangled at the end of a cord suspended over the table, "I could eat an ox!"

A youthful "domestic", as the servants were called, appeared at the entrance.

"Now then, you, hurry up with my breakfast!" said the C.G.

"Please, Sir, I had a h'accident," the boy began sadly.

"Had a what!!" exclaimed the C.G.

"They're scrubbing decks, Sir," went on the boy in a doleful tone.

"What the devil are you talking about? What the blazes has scrubbing decks got to do with my breakfast??" shouted the now enraged C.G.

"I stepped on a bit of soap. Sir," continued the boy.

"May I be forgiven," gasped the C.G., "but where – is – my – breakfast?"

"In the soapsuds, sir," came the reply, and the boy flew for his life, leaving the hungry man beside himself. Words could not express his feelings adequately, and suddenly he remembered that if he didn't get a move on and have his smoke, he would lose that too, as there was only a limited time available, so he left the mess and went on deck, leaving the others around the table rocking with laughter.

Following him, I found the starving man in a 6 inch gun casemate puffing great clouds of smoke from his pipe, and looking as glum and sorry for himself as a sick dog.

"Aren't you going down?", I enquired, "the bacon and eggs were A1, they've cooked you a relay."

"Don't want any," was the muttered reply.

"You have time If you go at once," I continued, "I'll come and keep you company."

Knocking the ashes out of his pipe, he went below to the mess, pressed the electric push and sat down. He did not have to wait long for the poor domestic was anxious to retrieve his character and appeared at once with a plate of bacon and eggs. He was in such a hurry, however, that he quite forgot the coaming or raised step of the doorway, and over it he tripped. Falling on the table, he flung the plate of bacon and eggs with such impetus that it slithered along and toppled over into the Gunner's lap. The latter jumped up quickly, and what he said as the greasy contents of the plate spread over his trousers was too lurid to set down. The boy picked himself up and darted for the door. I was so doubled up with laughter that I had difficulty in getting my breath.

In some mysterious way, news of this incident travelled around the ship, and even the first Lieutenant and the Commander got to hear of it, as a result of which when the Chief Gunner appeared on deck he was met by Number One, who accosted him with :-

"Oh, Mr. Reeves, I want you to – – – but, by the way, have you had your breakfast?"

“No, Sir, I haven’t” replied Mr. Reeves, snappishly.

On the Quarter Deck the Commander came up to him and said :-

“Mr. Reeves, when you have had your breakfast I want – –”

“Haven’t had any breakfast, Sir”, answered the goaded O.G.

Even the “Snotties”, as Midshipmen are invariably called, had heard about it, and as Mr. Reeves passed a group of them, he was asked “What’s the price of eggs this morning, Mr. Reeves?”

A few years later I again came across Mr. Reeves at Whale Island, and we had a good yarn about old times in the “Jupiter” and a hearty laugh over the incident of the lost breakfast

One afternoon whilst seated writing in my cabin, there was a rap on the door and the curtain was drawn aside by a Marine who had brought me a message.

“The Captain’s compliments, Sir, he wishes to know if you will take dinner with him this evening.”

The Captain lives in lonely state in his quarters right aft, with dining saloon, day cabin, study and sleeping quarters, all leading into each other. His responsibilities are great, for upon him depends everything concerning the working and welfare of the ship and the[5] men who form the crew. I spent a very pleasant evening with him, discussing my work and its effect on the public mind, and also the films I had taken whilst aboard the “Jupiter”, in which latter he took a great interest and made several helpful suggestions for more subjects. It was a glorious moonlight night, and the squadron was steaming in single line ahead at about 12 knots. The sea was flat calm, and as we stood on the stern walk, the twin screws were visible as they revolved in the phosphorescent sea, leaving behind a long streamer of foam, which played against the bow of the next astern.

Next in authority to the Captain comes the Commander, who also has commodious quarters but, unlike his senior, joins the other officers in the ward room, as the senior officers’ mess is always called. He is without doubt the hardest worked officer in the ship, for so much depends on the way in which he rules the ship’s company and sees that discipline is conformed to, not only as to the smartness of the men, but of the whole ship itself. At meal times, the Commander takes his place at the head of the long Ward Room table, and the Padre offers a very short prayer of only two words, but meaning much ‘Thank God!” At the end of the evening meal, the wine decanters are passed clockwise round the table, starting from the Commander, who when all glasses are filled, taps with his ivory mallet on the table and calls for a toast, “The King”. In accordance with Naval custom, the Sovereign’s health is drunk sitting down in all ships of the Royal Navy. This custom dates from the time when William IV visited one of his ships, on which occasion he stood up to answer a toast, and in so doing knocked his head against a beam. He thereupon commanded that in future his health should be drunk by officers in his ships from a sitting posture.

In dressing for my first dinner aboard the ship, I found that my wife had inadvertantly packed my son’s dress coat instead of my own, and since he was of much smaller stature, I found that the sleeves finished half way up my arms, and showed a superabundance of cuff. The Torpedo Lieutenant came to the rescue by lending me his, which turned out to be just the opposite from my son’s, for the sleeves nearly covered my hands.

The 6 inch gun casemate adjoining the Ward Room was converted into a card room, the gun being trained round to the side of the ship to make room for the settees, easy chairs and card tables. A Midshipman from the Gunroom had been invited to dinner on one occasion, and what he lacked in stature he made up for in self-assurance. He took his place at one table with the Commander, Paymaster and Doctor, and began airing his views and criticising the Admiral’s tactics in the fleet manoeuvres quite impervious to the Commander’s grim smile looking down on him. However, he seemed to be quite an adept at poker, judging by the pile of chips in front of him; he was doing remarkably well.

Each morning at 8 O’clock, the White Ensign is slowly hoisted on the ensign staff astern, whilst the band plays the National Anthem. Every Officer and man, no matter where he is or upon what matter he may be engaged, faces aft and stands at the salute. After this little ceremony comes “Divisions”, when the whole ship’s company fall in at their stations, on the quarter deck, amidships, and on the fo’c’sle. The Padre holds a short service, and all join in the General Confession that “they have done those things that they ought not to have done, and left undone those things that they ought to have done and ‘there ain’t no ‘ealth in us’ ”

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[5] In the typescript, the word ‘thousand’ has been crossed out

I was much impressed with the Sunday morning routine whilst the Fleet was anchored at Portland. Impromptu seats, formed from planks rested on buckets placed at each end, were arranged beneath the awning on the Quarter Deck. Chairs were placed for the officers, and the reading desk was covered with a Union Jack. The whole of the crew were dressed in their ‘Number One Rig’, and the officers wore full dress. A small orchestra led the singing, and the Padre conducted the service. The Church pennant was hoisted, and the ship’s bell tolled; the men marched to the Quarter Deck to the tune of “Hear the Merry Christchurch Bells”, played by the band.

Meanwhile, the Captain and other officers inspected the ship throughout, and woe betide if the slightest speck of dirt was found, or any metalwork had not been polished until it resembled a mirror. This over, all took their seats, and the Padre in his surplice gave out the first hymn. Then was heard what congregational singing can really be like, I have never come across anything like it anywhere else. Those manly voices sang with a heartiness that was quite exceptional, and as all the other ships were then holding services, the Harbour resounded in praises to God; the effect was most inspiring. The whole course of a Church service was carried out, the Captain reading the lessons, and when I looked about me there was not one face that had not an expression of earnestness.

Service over, the band again played as the crew marched away and dispersed. The seats were removed, and the Quarter Deck once more resumed its normal aspect. There is time for a smoke before lunch, and many of the officers walk up and down chatting together. I overheard one remark to another that out ship was 5 seconds ahead of the others in the singing of the last hymn; such is the spirit of competition!

The Gun Room is the junior officers’ mess, inhabited principally by the midshipmen and the sub-lieutenants, lively young colts straight from Dartmouth. To qualify for the Navy, they have to pass a stiff written examination and then go before a board of examiners, consisting of a few Senior Officers[6] who put questions to the candidate, not so much to test his education as to see whether he is nervous or lacking in self-assurance. There is a story about one lad who went for his interview and was greeted by a gruff voice saying :-

“Hullo, another black sheep of the family, I suppose?”

To which he cheerfully replied:

“Oh no, Sir, that is all changed since your time!”

Another time one was asked what was the good of his joining the Navy to which his reply was :-

“Well, sir, Admirals like yourself will be wanted.”

One, far from nervous, had given some smart replies and finished up by re-opening the door after he had gone out remarking:

“Oh, by the way, I quite forgot to tell you that I have thoroughly enjoyed our little chat.”

Such replies as these are approved of, for they show a spirit not easily to be daunted; anyone who hesitates and shows any nervousness is not wanted. Thus, in the Gun Room, I could not help being struck by the personality of these young officers, and the evening I was invited to dine with them was a special occasion. They were perfect hosts, and it was a pleasure to listen to their merry banter and distinctly amusing to hear the earnestness with which they discussed any subject concerning the ship and the Service generally. In their frolics a certain amount of damage was done which had to be made good, and the messman received a modicum of censure if the food did not come up to the standard they expected, or if the supply was lacking from their point of view. The President of the mess, usually the senior Sub-lieutenant, is about the only one to have some controlling influence in the Gun Room; his word is law, and summary proceedings are taken if it is defied.

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[6] In the typescript, the words ‘Old Captains’ has been crossed though and ‘Senior Officers’ inserted

After dinner someone started playing popular music on the battered looking piano which, apart from being somewhat out of tune, had several silent keys owing to certain items that from time to time had been thrown into its interior. I was called upon to sing or to do something, but for the life of me I could not bring to mind anything suitable for the occasion. However, they would take no refusal, and at last I thought of Harold Begbie's poem "The Handy Man", which was very popular at the time, and which I was illustrating in "Our Navy", I rolled it out with considerable feeling, and they all listened in deadly silence until I got to the part:

"Handy afloat, handy ashore

Handler still in a hole,

Ready to fight, and ready to die."

At this point one gave a suppressed snigger, and another was cramming a handkerchief into his mouth; at last, unable to contain themselves they burst into an explosion of mirth in which I was obliged to join. The President rapped hard on the table and called for order whilst offering me apologies. The piano was then called into play, and after staying a while longer I thanked the President for entertaining me so well and wished them all good-night.

Passing the door of the Gun-room the next Sunday afternoon, I wondered what could be wrong, for all was so quiet and not a sound was coming from the mess that was usually so noisy. I peeped in and found they were all fast asleep in all manner of positions on the settee and the chairs. What a chance for a photograph! It would need a time exposure, for there was not enough light to take an instantaneous shot. Fetching my camera, I placed it on a tripod stand and crept in with it, careful not to make the slightest noise. I focussed the lens and stealthily inserted the dark slide. I had just taken off the lens cap when … Yoicks!! Hallo!!!", yelled one who had been quietly watching me though pretending to be asleep.

This roused all the others, who leaped up, and seeing what I was up to, started pelting me with anything handy, so that I was forced to beat a hasty retreat. Pity, it would have made an interesting picture.

Battleships of the "Jupiter" and "Majestic" class were, in their day, considered to be the last word in Naval architecture, but this was before the advent of the marine turbine (first introduced by the little vessel the "Turbinia" already mentioned) and also before the days of oil fuel. The first battleship to be fitted with these turbines and to utilise oil fuel was H.M.S. "DREADNOUGHT". Prior to this, coal was the fuel and triple expansion reciprocating engines provided the propelling force. A very dirty job was coaling ship, and though not looked upon with any pleasure, yet when the time arrived for it to be done, it was treated almost in the way of a festival, the object being to get on with it with all possible speed. To save the paintwork and to prevent coal dust from penetrating into delicate machinery or down into the living quarters, canvas screens were extensively used.

When the "Jupiter" came to Portland for coaling, the whole ship's company from the Commander downwards dressed in their coaling suits, and after being lent one by the First Lieutenant, I was able to take part. As I walked along the deck with two and a half gold stripes and a curl on my sleeves and Number One's cap on my head, comments were made that promotion was very rapid in this particular ship.

From the moment the coal lighter was made fast alongside till the last sackful was dumped aboard, the coal was moved with feverish haste. Parties with shovels jumped in and went hell for leather filling the empty sacks. As the sacks are swung aboard in bundles of half a dozen by the derricks, officers as well as men took a part in loading the hand trolleys and trundling them to the bunker chutes. Clouds of dust were raised, smothering everything and everybody, including myself and my camera, with which I was busy in the think of it, taking a series of films of this very important evolution. Apart from the desire to get the coaling over and the ship all cleaned up again, there was another reason for the hurry, which was that we were competing with the other ships to see who could finish first. Signals were made from one to the other periodically signifying the quantity taken aboard, and the ship that finished first received the congratulations of the Admiral for smartness. No football match was carried on with greater zest, the Gun Room officers joining in with gusto and throwing heart and soul into the fray, running down any that got in their way, thoroughly enjoying themselves in a "go as you please so long as you get there quick" sort of style.

There is no rest until the last sackfuls are bunkered, and then follows the great clean up. The canvas screens are removed and hosepipes and squeegees are brought into play, the whole deck looking as though the ship had risen from the sea with water pouring off from all sides. However, it is soon swabbed dry, and the ship looks again as the crew loves to have her, spotlessly clean from truck to keelson. Like the rest, I looked as black as a nigger, and to recover its former whiteness my borrowed uniform had to be sent to a laundry, but I had been able to obtain some very interesting films and snapshots, so that it had been well worth it.

At the invitation of the Engineer Commander, I paid a visit down below to his domain, descending steel ladders which shone like Sheffield plate, into the engine room with its gigantic machinery and superabundance of bright shining metal, pistons, cranks, cogs and levers, only awaiting the turn of a wheel to start them moving. He explained in detail the intricacy of the machinery, but I am afraid it was all too technical for me to grasp, and the engine room was too confined a pace for me to take any photographs. I was also taken into he channel in which revolves the shaft that turns the propellors; all very wonderful and bewildering. I also visited he boiler room, with its fiery furnaces and stokers stripped o the waist shovelling the coal from the bunkers into the furnace doors. Some of the furnaces were not in use, and I suggested that If some magnesium powder was placed in one of them and fired by an electric wire, there would be sufficient illumination to obtain a photograph of the stokers at work. This was done, and it turned out very successfully, in fact I used it in my series of films “Our Navy at War”, entitling, it “Below there! Steam for full speed.” Tinting it red gave it a more realistic appearance.

CHAPTER VII. THE CRUISE OF THE “OPHIR”.

After the coronation of King Edward VII came the historic cruise of the Orient liner “Ophir”, in which the Duke and Duchess of York, later our King and Queen, paid a visit to our Empire beyond the seas, travelling right round the world without once treading on foreign soil.

I was again requisitioned to obtain films of a royal cruise and a photographer attached to H.M.S. “Vernon”, the torpedo depot, one Chief Petty Officer McGregor, was instructed in the use of a cinematograph camera and provided with full equipment.

This C.P.O. had a gramophone, and one Sunday during the cruise he was told to set it going, since the Duke wanted to hear it after dinner. To ensure that it was in perfect order, McGregor tested it in the music gallery overlooking the dining saloon. Quite unknown to him the Padre was holding a bible class on deck just above the open skylight, and had just started to read that “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle” when the gramophone below struck up the song

“You’ve a long way to go,

And if it is only as far as Pic-ca-dilly,

You’ve a long way to go.”

This annoyed the Padre so much that he rushed off to locate the gramophone, but as it had stopped in the meantime, he was unable to do so. Thinking it had left off for good, he returned on deck to his class, but no sooner had he resumed the story about the camel than it started playing the same tune again. Off rushed the Padre once more, and his class immediately took up the chorus, singing with great gusto :-

“You’ve a long way to go” etc.

Whilst the “Ophir” was at Sydney, ‘Our Navy’ happened to be showing there under the management of Captain Edwards, R.N. retd., who received a Royal Command for it to be exhibited at the Government House before the Duke and Duchess, the Governor General and many other high officials.

The “Ophir” returned to Portsmouth on a Wednesday, and I immediately went aboard to collect the films taken during the cruise, as no time was to be lost in having them developed ready for the Royal Command that I felt sure would soon be forthcoming. Nor was I far wrong, for only two days later, the Friday of that week, I received a telegram from Sir Charles Cust as follows :-

“Be at Wolferton at noon tomorrow to show pictures of cruise of “Ophir” before His Majesty.”

The King and the Royal party were then in residence at Sandringham, and Wolferton is the station nearby.

The films were not ready, and I had none of my staff at hand to deal with them, and since I should have to leave that night if I was to be there at noon next day, I wired to Sir Charles Cust :-

“Impossible to be at Sandringham at noon tomorrow what time are the pictures to be shown?”

The reply came:-

“The pictures are to be shown at 8.30.”

My answer was :-

“Will arrive 5 p.m. ample time to fix up and show at 8.30 have conveyance for staff and gear.”

I also wired to the Polytechnic and my other companies, detailing the best men to be at “The Anchorage” that evening.

By working at full pressure, the films were got ready, and were run through a projector late that evening. The assistants all slept at my house, and next morning we caught an early train for London, in a reserved carriage the films were arranged in their proper order en route, under the direction of McGregor, who fortunately turned up at the last moment and was able to tell me which was which. Two cylinders of gas were picked up on arrival in London, in case electric light for the lantern was not available, for I did not intend to take any chances, and it was a good thing I had the forethought, for on arriving at Wolferton the first question I was asked was :-

“Have you any gas?”

and when I told the official that I had, he replied :-

“Thank goodness! I quite forgot to tell you that there is not enough power to supply you with electric light.”

A wagonette was waiting for the staff, and another conveyance for the gear.

At Sandringham carpenters and gardeners were ready to assist in erecting the screen, which was draped with flags, whilst on each side were banks of palms and flowers. The operator’s box was fixed up on a platform so as to raise the projector above, the heads of the audience. A screen was placed in front of the grand piano to hide the musical director, and plants and flowers were placed in front of it. By seven o’clock all was ready, and chairs were being brought in when I noticed that the front row had gold frames with crimson seats.

“Who are sitting in these chairs” I enquired, sitting in one of them and looking up at the screen.

“Their Majesties and the Royal party”, was the reply.

“Too close, much too close,” I answered.

A lady’s voice behind me remarked

“Whatever are we to do?”

Jumping up and turning round, I found that the lady was Queen Alexandra. Making my obeisance, I explained that I always arranged for the best seats to be at the back, as distance lent enchantment to the view. The Queen was very concerned, remarking :-

“There are so many coming that these seats cannot be moved further back.”

Turning round I had another look at the screen which was only bout 15 feet away, and assured the Queen that it would be quite alright, although it would have been better if the screen could have been put further back, which, however, was not possible, since it was already up against the wall. This ended the interview, Her Majesty, with a slight inclination of her head and with a sweet smile, departed.

Shortly afterwards. Prince George came in and called out :-

“I say, Mr. West, I want you to explain the pictures, but don’t go saying ‘Your Royal Highness This’ and ‘Your Royal Highness that’.”

“Very good, Sir, I quite understand,” I replied with a smile, “but it will be somewhat difficult, as we have had so little time to study the pictures.”

“Oh! Just say that we have arrived at Malta, or wherever it is, and I will do the rest.” replied the Prince.

I handed him a parcel which I explained contained the programmes I had had printed for the occasion.

“That is splendid!” he replied, “Just the thing!”, and rushed off with them.

A sumptuous dinner was provided for me and my staff, but with the exception of a glass of wine and a biscuit, I was to busy getting dressed and writing down what I could think of to say to join my company.

At 8.15 all was ready, and everyone in their places. The Royal Orchestra. In a recess near the screen, played the National Anthem, as, punctually at 8.30, the King entered with the Duchess of York on his arm; behind came Queen Alexandra arm in arm with her son the Duke of York. They walked down the centre of the room between the rows of chairs, and were followed by the ministers of state and other guests. Arriving at the front row of seats, the King directed the others to their -seats, calling out :-

“Mary, you come and sit with me,”

“George, you sit with your Mother.”

Then he looked round to see that all his guests were comfortably seated before finally seating himself. The whole proceedings were so homely, and the King was such a perfect host, that he was just the pattern of the country gentleman, a part he always loved to play when off duty.

It was a day of particular importance, for besides being His Majesty’s first birthday as King, it was also the day on which Prince George, Duke of York, officially became Prince of Wales. On the left of the Screen I stood waiting the signal to commence, which was signified by a little smile and a motion of assent from the King. Immediately the lights were switched off, and I started by saying:, “May it please Your Majesty, these pictures I have the honour of presenting to you Illustrate the cruise of the “Ophir”. The first shows the ship leaving Portsmouth Harbour.”

As I stopped speaking, the slide appeared on the screen, and there was a hum of comment. After a few moments the operator began to fade it out, thinking that it had been projected long enough.

“Show it again!” called out the King, “and don’t take any picture off until you see me wave my programme.”

I bowed my acknowledgement of the command. The operator also heard, and the picture was again shown; he thereafter alto watched the King’s programme and acted accordingly.

The various films showed the reception given to the Royal couple at different outposts of Empire - the ceremony of crossing the line - arriving in Australia - the review of troops at Sydney -log chopping competitions - Maori war dances in New Zealand - arrival in British Columbia - a panorama from the train going through the Rockies - Niagara Falls. The films were interspersed with lantern slides.

During the running of one of the films the Prince of Wales beckoned me over to him and asked me a few questions.

After pictures of the arrival home at Portsmouth, the entertainment concluded with a portrait of the King. The Orchestra struck up the National Anthem, and lights were switched on; the show had taken nearly an hour and a half.

Before leaving, both the King and the Prince of Wales came over to me, his Majesty expressing in kindly words the pleasure the pictures had given him, and regretting that more time could not have been given me for making the arrangements, but was very gratified at the way his wishes had been carried out. I took the opportunity of expressing the hope that I might have the honour on some future occasion of showing His Majesty some of my films of the Royal Navy. Of course it was wrong for me so to address the King, but the Prince of Wales covered my confusion by exclaiming :

“Oh, yes, they are splendid!”

This ended the interview, and I made my obeisance as the King and Prince walked away to escort the Queen and Princess to the exit, followed by the guests in the same order as they had entered. Thus ended an evening which was, undoubtedly, the most memorable in my life.

CHAPTER VIII. TRAFALGAR CENTENARY.

The year 1905 being the centenary of the battle of Trafalgar, a special programme was arranged introducing Our Navy of the past. One of the films obtained was of an old naval veteran, 92 years of age, then living in Portsmouth, who had served under Admiral Hyde Parker, one of Nelson’s captains. He was a little feeble on his legs and rather deaf, but otherwise well and hearty, and he was not only willing, but eager to take part in the film I outlined to him. He was taken aboard the “Victory”, then lying at anchor in mid-stream, and accompanied by a Petty Officer from the Royal Naval Barracks and two Boys from the “Royal Seamen and Marines’ Orphanage”. After climbing a gangway without assistance, a chair was placed for him to rest before proceeding to the Quarter Deck. Looking around, the old salt remarked that the ship was somewhat altered from when he was last aboard 72 ears before. He seemed a little overcome as he saluted the Quarter Deck, and taking out his handkerchief to mop his face, he sat down to watch me act the part he was going to take. He understood what he had to do, and did it splendidly. With one hand on one of the boys who were beside him, and the Petty Officer following behind, he slowly came to the spot where Nelson fell, and kneeling down with some difficulty he took he wreath which one of the boys was carrying, and placed it carefully and reverently over the tablet that marks the spot.

He had to be helped up by the Petty Officer, and then proceeding slowly to the poop, pointed out with his stick the famous words that are painted around the steering wheel :-

“England expects that every man will do his duty.”

Turning round, he points aloft, and the scene changes to the famous signal, which was hoisted for this occasion by the special permission of the Commander in Chief. Other films obtained included one of guns used at Trafalgar being worked by seamen in contemporary rig. These, together with lantern slides of the battle and the death of Nelson were included in the Centenary programme.

To do honour to their former foe, the French Navy sent a squadron of ships to Portsmouth. The City laid itself open to give a great welcome to “Our friends the enemy”, and “L‘entente cordiale” was the greeting to the French officers and men. The streets were profusely decorated, and that feeling of brotherhood for which the League of Nations was afterwards instituted, and which we, as a nation, so much desire, was thereby warmly fostered.

Amongst the many festivities organised to entertain the guests, Captain Sir Percy Scott, who then commanded H.M.S. “Excellent”, the gunnery school, provided a surprise when they arrived at Whale Island. It took the form of a special evolution for which the whole complement of the island was required to carry out. On the top of a grassy hank bordering one side of the parade ground, nothing could be seen but a long row of straw hats. On a blast of a whistle, these straw hats immediately became animated, the sailors jumping up and, scattering themselves about the bank in a mixed crowd of moving objects. The whistle blew a second time, and this multitude suddenly formed themselves into letters, making the words “Vive La France.”

This evolution was greeted with intense enthusiasm by the French visitors. So large were the letters in the words that it took five men to form the full stop after “France”. In the rush that followed the second whistle, one man lost his place, and was standing wondering where it was, when he was summarily greeted by an exasperated officer who shouted at him :-

“Where the blazes are you supposed to be?”

“In L, Sir,” came the prompt reply, and the lost soul suddenly saw the vacant spot awaiting him in that letter, and made a dive for it amidst the titters and rude remarks of the others.

On the whistle being blown for a third time, the sailors broke up and dashed across the plateau in two lines, then forming fours they went off at the double amidst the cheers of the on-lookers. A film of this scene was included in the new programme of “Our Navy” which, as in previous years, was being shown at the Victoria Hall at Portsmouth before being taken to London.

A special matinee was given to which 1,500 French officers and men were invited. They marched from their ships to the hall headed by the full band and pipers from the Royal Naval Barracks, and when I stood at the entrance and watched this long procession advancing, I wondered how I was ever going to accommodate them, but all was well, since the last man sat down on the last seat. The programme and the title slides were printed in French, which was greatly appreciated by the guests. The excitement and enthusiasm was intense, and when a film was shown of a White Ensign and a Tricolour being hoisted side by side, whilst the Orchestra played the National Anthem and the Marseillaise, caps were thrown into the air, and the visitors stood up and shouted “Vive l’Angleterre.” I later received the following letter from the Commander of the Royal Naval Barracks :-

Sir,

I beg to inform you that I am directed by the Commander in Chief H.M. Ships and Vessels, Portsmouth, to convey to you the thanks of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for the very valuable assistance rendered by you in entertaining the officers and men of the French Fleet during their recent visit.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

E.P.F.G. Grant.

Commander.

On Trafalgar Day, “Our Navy” pictures were in great demand. Apart from being shown in three provincial cities, they were also exhibited at the Polytechnic, the Crystal Palace, the People’s Palace, and the Royal Albert Hall, where special arrangements had been made for the Nelson Centenary celebration in aid of the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society, under the patronage of King Edward VII.

A bust of Nelson made out of oak and copper from the “Victory” was presented to me in recognition of my services in helping to organise and assist in the programme. Miss Weston’s Naval Boys’ Brigade from Portsmouth arrived with a field gun to give a display of drill, and a wreath sent from the Royal Sailors’ Rest was placed upon another bust of Nelson and sent with it to Admiral Togo of the Japanese Navy from the boys of Britain. The Brigade, under Naval instructors, gave a unique display in the arena of the hall.

At 3 o’clock the vast audience stood up and sang the hymn “All People that on earth do dwell”, after which the Revd. Canon Barker, private Chaplain to the King, offered up an appropriate prayer. Mrs. Tree then recited Rudyard Kipling’s much treasured “Recessional”.

On the platform was the oak timber taken from the “Victory” and presented by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to he British and Foreign Sailors’ Society. On it were the words in faded gilt :

“Here Nelson Died.”

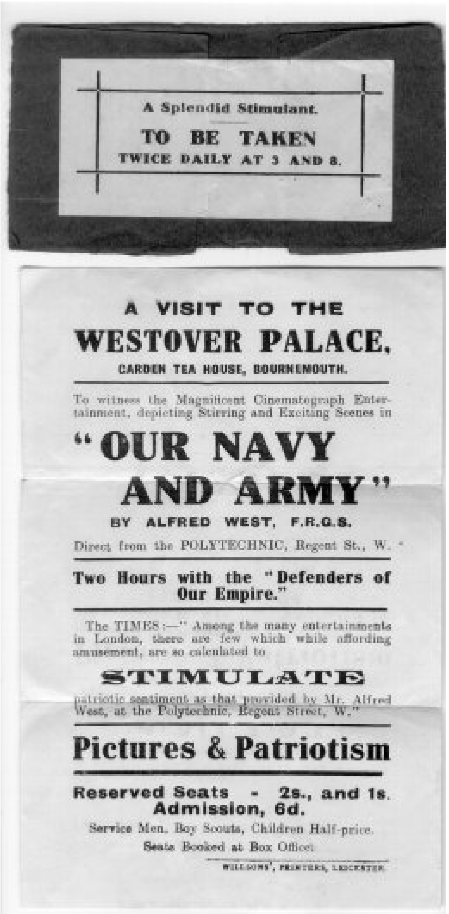
By its side was a flagpole, and at the exact moment, when, one hundred years before, Nelson had breathed out his heroic soul in the ‘Victory’s cockpit, an English sailor boy hoisted the Union Jack to half mast; after a brief silence Mr. Ben Davies sang “The Death of Nelson”, and the flag was mastheaded.

Following this came an exhibition of films and lantern slides depicting “Our Navy in 1805 and 1905”. Lord Brassy presided over the whole proceedings, and was supported by a number of Admirals. The Lord Mayor of London and the Mayors of many London Boroughs were present in their robes of office, as well as many other high dignitaries. The performance closed with the hoisting side by side of the Union Jack and Tricolour and the singing of the National Anthems of England and France.

CHAPTER IX. THE BAIT.

When I first started to exhibit my pictures, I found that there was a lot I had to learn about the art of advertising in such manner as to attract the public attention. The heading “A Night With Our Navy”, used on the programme of my first show at St. James’ Hall, was cut down to “Our Navy”, which served very well as the title of the entertainment. Quite apart from the advertisements in almost every national newspaper, pictorial and letterpress posters and bills had to be drafted, and these required a great deal of thought and study. Artists in lithographic firms submitted coloured drawings following descriptions of what was wanted, and these, when approved, were printed in large numbers and sent from the head office to the towns where the films were to be shown, a blank space on the poster being filled in with the name of the hall where the show was to be given. My agents were responsible for well plastering a town with advertisements before the show, arrived, and the manager of the company on tour inspected the town to make sure that they had done their work properly. Besides the posters, a great number of handbills or “throwaways” were delivered from door to door. Thus every precaution was taken to ensure that at every performance of the show, no matter where given, the hall was well advertised. In London sandwich-board men were employed, and used to line up in the morning outside the Polytechnic for refreshment before going into the streets.

However, these methods are commonplace, if essential, and I was always on the lookout for some novel method that would draw the crowds. One such novelty took the form of a medicinal powder wrapped in a small rectangular blue paper packet. On the outside was the usual white label with an Oxford line framing. on which was printed :-



A Splendid Stimulant.

TO BE TAKEN

TWICE DAILY AT 3 AND 8.

A VISIT TO THE

WESTOVER PALACE,

GARDEN TEA HOUSE, BOURNEMOUTH.

To witness the Magnificent Cinematograph Entertainment, depicting Stirring and Exciting Scenes in

“OUR NAVY AND ARMY”

BY ALFRED WEST, F.R.G.S.

Direct from the POLYTECHNIC, Regent St., W.

Two Hours with the “Defenders of Our Empire.”

The TIMES:—“Among the many entertainments in London, there are few which while affording amusement, are so calculated to

STIMULATE

patriotic sentiment as that provided by Mr. Alfred West, at the Polytechnic, Regent Street, W.”

Pictures & Patriotism

Reserved Seats - 2s., and 1s.

Admission, 6d.

Service Men, Boy Scouts, Children Half-price.

Seats Booked at Box Office.

WILLSONS’, PRINTERS, LEICESTER.

A Splendid Stimulant.
To be taken after lunch,
Preferably in Salt Water

The contents of the packet was not a powder, but a folded ,slip of paper on which was printed

A visit to
“Our Navy”
at the
Polytechnic Regent St.
Daily at 3.
Doors open 2.30.

Thousands of these were ordered, and my staff derived great fun dropping them on the seats of buses, and in Tubes and other places, watching the eagerness with which they were caught up as they left. I frequently lunched at a cafe in Great Portland Street, and upon showing one of these packets to the Proprietor, with whom I was well acquainted, he laughed heartily, and willingly agreed to have some of them placed on the tables. From my table I could watch the results, and before long an elderly lady came in and sat down at a nearby table. After giving her order she suddenly espied the packet, and looking round to make sure that no one was looking, she deftly smuggled it under a plate. The waiter brought her soup, and when he had gone she again looked about to see if she was still unobserved; the plate was then stealthily raised, and the little packet quickly transferred to her handbag.

One morning a friend dropped into my office; looking hard at him I exclaimed, “My word, old chap, you’re looking off colour, what’s the matter?”

"I feel rotten," he replied, " the fact is I met an old friend last night, that I hadn't seen for years, so we had a spot of dinner together and a bit of a celebration; result that I woke up this morning with a head like a ton weight."

"Try one of these powders," I said, placing one on the table in front of him. Looking at it and reading the prescription he asked, "Are they any good?"

"Splendid" I replied, "do you no end of good."

"Well, I won't take it now," said he, "I'll wait till I get home. Thanks very much!" He shook hands and departed. I calling after him, "Good luck'. glad to know results."

Next morning he burst into the office again, exclaiming :-

"For the love of Mike let me have some more of those powders!"

"Do you any good?" I enquired seriously.

"Good?" he gasped, sitting down to recover from another gust of laughter, "I'll just tell you what happened. When I got home my wife was there chatting to my friend of the night before, and he said he had just dropped in to see how I was. He was suffering from the same sort of head as mine, and I then remembered the little packet you so kindly gave me. Wishing to do a kind and generous action I offered it to him, telling him what you said about it doing a lot of good."

Here he was obliged to pause and have another good laugh, then continuing :-

"My friend looked at it and read the label. Then he said 'Funny for it to be taken in salt water, something new to me." I told him to hold on while I went to get a glass of water and some salt and a spoon to stir it up with. When I came back he said :-

'it doesn't say how much salt should be put in..'

I suggested about a spoonful. He then held the packet over the glass, and I said :-

'Be careful not to spill any.' This made him very careful, and he gradually unwrapped the paper. When it was open he said :-

'There's no powder here, only a slip of folded paper.'

'Anything on it?' I asked.

'Yes,' said he, unfolding it, "A visit to Our - - - - - - Well, I'll be hanged, that's a good one!'

We both looked at the glass, at the packet, and then at one another, and exploded with laughter. It was quite a little wile before we could pull ourselves together, in fact I still keep laughing when I think about it."

"Did it cure the headaches?" I enquired.

"That's the funny part about it," he answered, "we forgot all about our headaches and found ourselves quite alright again."

"Told you it would!" I said, handing him more of the powders with which he went off full of eagerness to relieve more headaches.

The Editor of the "Kinematograph Weekly" announced that a prize of two guineas would be awarded for the most original way of advertising. I sent him one of these powders, and was agreeably surprised to receive a letter from him saying that I had won the prize and congratulating me on such a novel idea.

Another advertisement was in the form of a model battleship, which would be especially useful in the Midlands, where many people had never seen a ship. It measured 13 feet 6 ins. in length and was correct in every detail, complete with 12 in. guns in barbettes fore and aft, 6 inch guns in casemates and an auxiliary battery of 12 pounders, torpedo nets, and masts fitted with fire control positions. It was thus a very good waterline model of a first class battleship, and I named it the "King Edward VII". Placed on a trolley covered with a Union Jack, it was first taken around Portsmouth whilst "Our Navy" was being shown there, and it attracted great attention, crowds gathering round to inspect it whenever it stopped.

In a short while it was taken to London, but I was not prepared for the attraction it was to prove. The first morning after its arrival in town, the driver of the trolley brought it round in front of the Polytechnic and asked me for instructions. It had been dressed overall in rainbow fashion with signal flags and looked altogether shipshape. I told the driver to cruise Citywards through Oxford Street and Holborn to the Bank and back via Ludgate Hill, Fleet Street, the Strand, Piccadilly and Regent Street. On his return for dinner I went to see how the model had been received.

"Well! How did you get along?" I enquired.

"It caused a sensation, Sir," he replied, "I kept on being stopped by the police who took lengthy notes, and in Cannon Street I got fairly hung up by one who seemed very upset over it."

"Much of a crowd?" I asked.

"Crowd!" he exclaimed, "I should just think there was. Besides that the traffic was held up; I'm afraid you're going to get into trouble over it."

"Nonsense!" I replied, "Anyhow, this afternoon try the West End, and see how you get on there."

When he again returned at 5 in the afternoon, he was grinning all over his face.

"More trouble!" said he, "got hung up at Marble Arch and such a crowd gathered round that the traffic was stopped and the Bobby had to let me go on."

As I had just received a letter from Sir Evan McGregor, Secretary to the Board of Admiralty, asking me to have the model taken round to the Admiralty the next morning to be inspected by the Lords Commissioners, who had expressed a wish to see It, I decided to go at once to Scotland Yard to try and find out what was the cause of the bother. for I did not want it stopped on the way to Whitehall. I was interviewed by an Inspector whom I had met when I had invited the inmates of the Metropolitan Police Orphanage to the show. He cordially greated me, and I told him the reason of my visit.

"Oh, yes, Mr. West," he said, "there are no end of reports coming in about it. By the way, what's the length of the model?"

"Thirteen feet six," I told him.

And the trolley?" he asked.

"Twelve feet," I replied.

"Well, what's all the trouble about, you're allowed three feet overhang."

"I know," said I, "but I wish you would kindly find out, because I don' t want to be stopped on the way to the Admiralty tomorrow."

'I'll see you are not stopped," he replied, "and in the meantime I'll look into the matter and find out what all these reports are about. You know, there must be something wrong the police wouldn't report unless there was. By the way, I suppose there is nothing in the form of an advertisement on the trolley. Is there?"

"Well, said I, "as a matter of fact there is, I've got a few bills saying that the show is at the Polytechnic."

'Ah!' he exclaimed, "that accounts for it. There's no objection to the model, but it must carry no advertisement."

"I can't believe that that can be the reason," I said, "what would happen if I refused to take them off?"

"You would be summoned and fined," he replied.

"Upon my word!'" I said, "I feel inclined to carry on and see what happens. After all, if I am summoned it would give me a very big advertisement. Just think of the headline in the newspapers, 'London Police capture a battleship.' " The inspector was tickled at this and gave a hearty laugh.

"Certainly a good piece of publicity," he said, "but if you take my advice you won't defy the police."

I told him I would think it over, and we shook hands and I departed

Next morning I duly took the model down to the Admiralty, and the Lords Commissioners came out to inspect it. I showed them how the guns could be made to move, and they appeared very interested. Asked what ship it represented, I said that it was a cross between the “King Edward VII1” and “Agamemnon”. It appeared that it was likely to cause a certain amount of difficulty in official circles, and rather than get mixed up in red tape, I said that I would be prepared to withdraw it as an advertisement. I also suggested that I should be given a number of booklets detailing particulars of joining and service in the Navy, since many boys used to wait after the performance to ask me how they could join up. This idea was heartily endorsed by the Board, and accordingly a large quantity of pamphlets was sent along, and I was able to assist large numbers of lads anxious to become sailors. On one occasion a young sailor came to see me after the evening show, and asked if he could shake me by the hand, since it was through seeing “Our Navy” that he had first resolved to join the Service, and he said that he had never regretted it. I congratulated him on the gold stripe on his arm, and he told me that it was his first step to his ambition of gaining warrant rank.

Although I never used the model battleship again as an advertisement, it came in very useful in the filming of my series entitled “Our Navy at War” described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X. “LET LOOSE THE DOGS OF WAR!”

One of the most striking achievements in “Our Navy” was series of films representing “Our Navy at War” compiled in the year 1906, before wireless was in general use. This series was shown for the first time at Portsmouth, before an audience of Naval Officers and men from the various ships in port, and they spoke highly of the realism of the different scenes. The following is a synopsis of the pictures shown :-

Diplomatic relation appear strained; rumours of war are in the air; ships with nucleus crews are brought up to full strength and leave harbour to assemble at Spithead, where they are inspected by His Majesty the King. Each ship as she steams past the Royal Yacht sends up a roar of cheering and a Royal salute is fired as, under sealed orders, they leave to defend England’s shores.

War is declared, an enemy submarine steals into the harbour and destroys the defence boom. The Fleet is steaming down Channel in Line ahead, when a destroyer steams up at full speed with news of the enemy. The Fleet prepares for action and ships are stripped ready for fighting. Another destroyer, smothered in spray, reports having sighted the enemy, and bugles sound for “General Quarters” and “Man and Arm Ship. Watertight doors are closed and every man is at his station; all is ‘Ready aye ready’ to meet the foe.

The Chaplain has offered up prayers for victory, and a vision of the old “Victory” at Trafalgar is shown with Nelson’s famous signal hoisted. The whole fleet is full of enthusiasm and inspired to carry on as in the days of old, prepared at all costs to keep the flag flying.

The enemy’s ships have been located, and together with the signal from the flagship for full speed flies another - - “Sink, Capture and Destroy”.

Gunnery officers are at their rangefinders to report to the guns the distance of the enemy. All is suspense, awaiting the opening of the hostilities. The enemy’s fleet is on the horizon and fires the first shots, which fall wide of the mark. Meanwhile our gunlayers are sighting their guns in accordance with orders from the fire control position, and at a range of 10,000 yards the 12 inch guns of our ships come into action. A terrible bombardment follows, heightened shortly afterwards when the secondary armament begins firing.

Amidst the smoke the destroyers dash forward at full speed to discharge their deadly Whitehead torpedoes, and a terrific explosion follows as an enemy ship is seen to blow up and sink after being hit in the magazine.

The battle rages in detail; one of our ships is hit and takes on a nasty list, but still fights on; another is like a floating volcano, with all her guns belching forth shell in rapid discharge. The accurate aim of our gunlayers, and the torpedoes discharged from the Destroyers have done their deadly work; and the enemy has met with crushing defeat; their ships are disabled; our ,flag has been kept flying, and Britain maintains “the supremacy of the seas”.

Many were puzzled to know how some of these films were obtained. I did not explain that large models were used for the ships that were sunk and that the old ironclad “Bellerophon” when expended as a target had come in useful, as did also the cruiser “Gladiator” when she went ashore near Yarmouth in the Isle of Wight.

This series was greeted with the utmost enthusiasm and applause. Two bluejackets, each having the gold crossed guns of Gunner’s Mates on their arms, were overheard commenting on the films. When they saw one of the ships heeling over and still firing, one said :-

“Where the deuce was that taken?”

“Oh, I should think it was during the Spanish-American scrap,” replied the other.

“No fear it wasn’t! Look! See she’s got the White Ensign flying!”

“I give it up, beats me.”

Realism was further enhanced by the effects behind the screen. Three men were kept hard at work beating drums to represent gun fire, knocking chains and other metal objects about, and generally making a terrible din. This was the first time hat anything of this kind had been filmed and though nowadays such scenes as I tried to portray are made more realistically and simply by the employment of such artifices as cross-cutting and double printing, it may perhaps be of interest to describe how I obtained some of the scenes.

The model I had used for advertising (described in the previous chapter) came in very useful, and I used it for several shots. It had no bottom, so I floated it on casks and rigged up fireworks to represent the firing of the guns, Brass tubes filled with alternate charges of powder and packing were inserted in the gun barrels and connected to a fuse; as the fuse lighted the end of the tube, each charge was exploded after the other giving the effect of rapid fire.

A charge of powder was also placed near the bow, close to the water's edge. When discharged it gave a very realistic representation of the ship having been holed by a torpedo. When I took my first films of this model, I had a party of friends standing on the shore bombarding it with stones, while one blazed away with a large duck gun. The model stood the onslaught very well, until the magazine was hit, when we had to stop operations until it could be patched up.

On the next occasion, I mounted it on trestles close in shore, and waited for the tide to rise to the water line. This time a charge of powder was placed inside the fore barbette, the guns were reloaded and a small charge was placed under fighting top. The battle went on as before, but when the fore barbette was hit by the enthusiastic gentleman with the duck gun, one of the trestles gave way and the ship took a nasty list. However, nothing daunted, it heroically kept on firing all guns, and though I thought that the film had been ruined, I was able to save the situation by entitling this shot "Magazine hit! Fight on!!"

On the third occasion, my long suffering model received its "coup de grace". It was again floated on casks, and decorated with White ensigns and Union Jacks, flying from all masts and staffs. Several large charges were placed in different parts of the hull, and after a few minutes bombardment they all blew up together. When the smoke cleared away there, was nothing to be seen of the model except a few scorched fragments flying through the air. That was the last of the "King Edward VIII"; it would never worry the police again.

It so happened that a coastguard was close by watching this last fight with the greatest interest which took place at the entrance to Langstone harbour near Southsea. He declared that he had never seen anything that looked so real; I told him I hoped he never would.

The whole series made a marvellous and inspiriting series of pictures, and was most favourably commented on in the press. Scotland gave her opinion, when they were shown at Her Majesty's

Theatre at Dundee, in the following words :-

"The patriotic sense is stirred to the highest pitch; one feels the pulse of Empire beating in it; it fires the beholder's blood, and thrills that deep emotion that belongs to the everyday romance of Naval life."

Another newspaper said: "Altogether Mr. West provides a pictorial entertainment of the highest possible class, but again we repeat, he does much more—he teaches and preaches patriotism."

CHAPTER XI JACK'S THE BOY FOR PLAY.

Always on the lookout for any incident likely to suggest a film, I found many scenes ashore that were worth filming. Strolling on to the Pier at Southsea one afternoon, I was attracted by shrieks of laughter issuing from the Pavilion, where rinking was in full swing. The cause for this hilarity was found to be in the antics of a bluejacket, who, judging from the way he was carrying on, evidently had roller skates on for the first time. His cap was stuck on the back of his head, and he was in deadly earnest in his efforts to master the art of skating. His movements were so erratic that he lost all steerage way, and went bumping into all and sundry, and became involved with the chairs at the side of the rink. His feet slipped from under him, and sent him sprawling. More often on his back than on his feet, he was in everybody's way, so that the other skaters sat down to watch, letting him have the floor to himself. He carried on, determined to learn or break his neck, but his legs would persist in parting company, one to port, the other to starboard, with the result that he found himself doing the splits. Two of his shipmates standing by spurred him on with caustic remarks, roaring with mirth each time he came a cropper, which was very frequently. Finally he collided with a chair on which a girl was seated, and slithering into her lap, he, the girl, and the chair collapsed on the floor in a tangled heap whilst the onlookers shrieked with laughter. In trying to help the young lady up, away went his feet again, and to save himself he clutched her round the neck. He no sooner had managed to seat her on the chair, than his legs again failed him and he went bump on the floor once more, looking up into her face with a sweet smile. This was the anti-climax, and everyone in the Pavilion was convulsed with laughter.

Looking on and laughing with the rest, I decided that if I could get a party of about half a dozen sailors learning to skate, there should be some fun and a chance for an amusing film. Soon after this I came across a party of bluejackets decorating a hall for a naval dance, and I enquired if any of them knew anything about roller skating. They looked at one another, passing the question along.

"Never had 'em on in my life," said one.

"Nor me, neither," said another.

None of them seemed to know anything about it.

"You are just the boys[7] I want," I told them and explaining what I had seen on the pier, I said I should like to obtain a film of them with skates on for the first time. They all agreed, and promised to be on the Pier at one o'clock the next Saturday.

They turned up punctually, and I decided to use the promenade for the purpose, as it was made of concrete and there was a band-stand on which the camera could be placed to get an elevated view. Whilst the attendant was getting them chairs and skates, the sailors adjourned to the Buffet for a little refreshment. After imbibing a certain amount of Dutch Courage, they were shown by the attendant how to put the skates on. One of them eager to start tried with one foot first.

"Here, Bill!" he called out, "its quite easy, see?"

"Ah, you wait till you get the other one on," replied Bill, "You'll see alright!"

As one got his skates fixed on he was eager to see what it was like; in fact too eager, for his feet went from under, and he went down with a bump just in front of two others, who promptly fell over him. Another couple grabbed hold of each other round the necks, and with feet outstretched in opposite directions, they went down together. The others tried to help them up, but in doing so they all slithered down in a heap like a Rugger scrum. It was a regular mix-up, and the difficulty was for them to get on their feet again, hanging desperately on to one another in their efforts to rise. Then one had a brainwave and what he considered to be a splendid suggestion.

"Let's all get hold of hands in a row and see how that works." They all agreed, but it took some manoeuvring to get into position.

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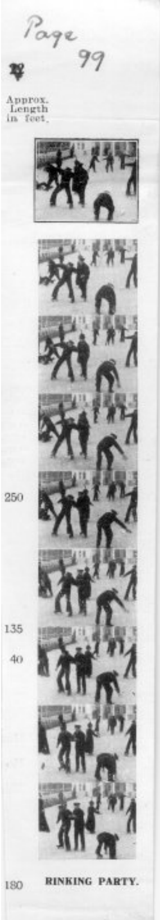
[7] The original typescript has 'people', which is crossed through with the word 'boys' written over the top instead.

“Now then, all together boys! Off she goes! Full speed ahead!”



Some started with the right foot, and some with the left, so that they did not get very far, and when one slipped they all went down one after another like a row of wooden soldiers. Just as they were picking themselves up a young lady came gracefully along, and they began to sit up and take notice. As she passed them, they tried to turn round and take further notice, but though they could turn their heads, they could not turn their bodies, and in their efforts to wriggle round, their feet refused to turn, and once again they crashed to the ground. The young lady came along again, and stopping where one was seated on the ground, offered to take him by the hand if he would like her to. What a question, would he like! In his eagerness to accept, he jumped up so quickly that he immediately fell backwards on to the concrete again. Getting on his hands and knees he caught hold of the proffered hand, and managed to stand up fairly steadily while she explained to him what to do and how to do it. They went along, he scuffling alongside and the others trying to follow; so the game went on.

I found some difficulty in turning the handle of the camera for laughing, and when the film was shown, it caused as much hilarity amongst the audience as it had on Southsea Pier, and proved one of my most successful pictures.

Another very amusing incident depicting what Jack does with his shore leave was filmed off Southsea beach. It is strange, but just like the legendary busman who spent his holiday riding in a bus, the sailor on leave is often to be found walking along the seafront or hiring a boat to go for a row, with someone else seated in the stern. I thought that a film showing some little incident in which could be introduced a dash of comedy would make a good film, and chose the subject of Jack taking his best girl for a row. I found a couple suitable for the parts, and the following is a synopsis of the action :-

Seated under the lee of a boat, a sailor and the girl were leaning lovingly towards one another and looking out to sea.

Jack. (Pointing out to Spithead) That’s my ship out there.

Nancy. Which one?

Jack. That big one, the leader of the line. She’s the flagship.

Nancy. What’s the name of it?

Jack. The ‘Rodney’, can’t you see the name on the ribbon round my cap?

Nancy. Why, of course, how silly of me! Isn’t it a big one? How many of you are there on board?

Jack. Oh! Somewhere over a thousand.

Nancy. A thousand: Good gracious! What a lot! Wherever do they put you all, and what on earth is there for you to do all day?

Jack. Oh, there is plenty of room, you see we sleep in hammocks slung between the decks.

Nancy. How uncomfortable for you, haven’t you got any bedrooms?

Jack. Good Lor, No! But the officers have, they’re called cabins, and their beds are called bunks.

Nancy. How funny!

Jack. Well then you see, it’s like this; at 6 o’clock in the morning, the bugle sounds and the ship’s corporal comes along and shouts “Rouse up. Rouse up! Show a leg”

Nancy. How rude of him! And then what do you do?

Jack. Well, we got to jolly well hurry up, wash dress and stow hammocks, get up on deck, and start cleaning ship, scrubbing and polishing all metalwork, that keeps us going till breakfast time, and then – Hallo! Who’s this?

BOATMAN. Like to go for a row? Nice day to take the lady out!

Jack. What about it, Nancy, would you like to go ?

Nancy. Yes, I think I should, will it be safe? Are you sure you understand boats? I’ve never been in one before.

Jack. Then come along, I’ll show you what I understand.

He lifts her up, and then helps the boatman to push the boat down the beach and into the water. He hands her over the Gun’le, but she trips over the first thwart and goes sprawling.

Jack. What are you doing?

Nancy. I fell down over that beastly seat.

Jack. Fell down, did you? Go on like that and you’ll knock a hole in the bottom of the man’s boat.

She steps carefully over the two other seats, and flops down on the one astern. Jack gives the boat a push, and jumps in making it rock.

Nancy. I don’t think I want to go, Jack; I really don’t think I want to go! The horrid boat’s wobbling all over the place.

Jack. Be quiet! Its all right I tell you, why the sea is as calm as a mill pond!

Seating himself, he gets the oars out, backing both to get away from the beach.

Jack. Now then! Back starboard, pull port.

Nancy. Whatever are you talking about?

Jack. That’s how we turns the boat round, now pull both together and away we go. There, how do you like it now?

Nancy. Oh, its lovely, Jack dear, I can see that you do really understand all about boats; aren’t we getting a long way from the shore! Oh, I say. Look out! There’s a steamer coming.

Jack. Don’t you worry, its quite alright, it won’t come near us.

The wash of the steamer sends a wave that makes the boat roll

Nancy. Oh, I say, Jack, this is awful, I’m beginning to feel sick!

Jack. No you ain’t, its only that ice-cream that you had. There, its all smooth water again!

Nancy. I say, Jack!

Jack. Hullo, what is it?

Nancy. Are you going to sit there all the time pushing and pulling those silly oars about?

Jack. Why, what would you like me to do?

Nancy. Oh, just come and sit beside me and make a fuss.

He puts the oars inboard and sits down beside her, putting his arm round her waist. She lifts her arm to place it round his neck, and in doing so knocks off his cap, which falls into the sea. He makes a grab for it and tumbles overboard.

Nancy. (Shrieking) Oh! Oh! You’ll be drownded! Here catch hold of my sunshade! You poor dear!

She leans over to help him, the boat turns turtle, and Nancy joins Jack in the briny. She swallows a mouthful and gasps for air as she clutches hold of the boat, choking and coughing.

Nancy. Oh, Jack, I’m drowning!

Jack. No you’re not! Hang on to me and let go the boat!

Nancy. I’m all wet, and look at my hat! Oh, this is dreadful!

Jack. Never mind your hat, hold on to me. Keep your head up and kick out.

Nancy. I can’t kick, my dress is all tangled up round my legs.

Jack. Well lie still then. I’ll tow you ashore alright, we ain’t far off.

Nancy. You won’t catch me going out in a boat again. Never! Never, as long as I live! I’m soaked to the skin!

Jack. Well, here we are, safe ashore, now you’re alright, run up to the boat house and dry yourself.

People came running down the beach, thinking that it was a real accident, but seeing the ‘girl’ running up to the boathouse with tucked up dress revealing a pair of dark trousers, and the camera mounted near the water’s edge, they realised that it had all been done for a film. I had found it difficult to find a girl willing to take the part of Nancy, and so had arranged with a sailor to dress up for the purposes of the film. He and the other sailor were from the Royal Yacht, and the girl’s dress was a masterly piece of make up which they made themselves. The dress was made of some flowery material akin to cretonne, a bit long, but all the better for hiding the trousers beneath. The hat was quite an artistic piece of work, with a wide brim covered all round with flowers and lashed under the chin with a blue ribbon. The wig was a bit fluffy, it was made of oakum and was neither straight nor curly. A dainty sunshade completed the outfit. He made a capital girl, and took the part well.

The film was very successful and caused great merriment when shown: loud exclamations accompanied the sailor’s fall into the water; followed by shrieks of laughter at the sudden immersion of the girl; and the accompanying dialogue spoken from behind the screen greatly enhanced the realism, making it a talkie.

CHAPTER XII. ADVENTURE IN A TALL SHIP

Until the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth, Britain was thought of as just a little island off the coast of France. Then, when Portugal, Spain and Holland were scouring the world for colonies, we were fired to follow their example. The British Empire covers one fifth of the habitable globe, and the territory it comprises contains over 400 million souls. Between the Mother country and the Colonies exist bonds unbreakable, for we have a common ancestry, a common freedom in religious thought and worship, the same ideals and the same wholehearted devotion to the King-Emperor. All our energies and resources are devoted to the arts of peace, and the fostering of goodwill among the nations, but we must be prepared at the same time to defend our shores and our commerce. Our trade routes must be kept free from molestation at all costs, so that our mercantile fleet can carry our imports and exports freely over the seas, for it is through these that as a nation we live and move and have our being.

The late Lord Brassey once invited me aboard his Yacht “Sunbeam” for the purpose of discussing his favourite policy, the slogan of which was “British seamen for British ships”. He asked me whether scenes of life in the Mercantile Marine could be included in the programme of “Our Navy”, and pointed out how desirable such films were, so that the public might appreciate the true state of affairs. He told me that at that time there were 40,000 aliens serving in British merchant vessels, and that whilst establishments supported by charity existed for the training of boys for almost every walk of life, yet, though the very existence of Great Britain depends upon the sea, no public institution is maintained where normal boys are brought up to a nautical life. It is true that there are training ships or schools where boys of good character can be received, but all of them have been founded, and maintained, by private benevolence. They all suffer from chronic lack of funds, and labour under disheartening circumstances. Apart from these, no training ship or nautical school is open to any boy unless he is sent there under a Magistrate’s order, or has committed some crime, in which case the training ships are reformatories.

So in spite of the vital interests which the sea and all that pertains to it has for our people, there is no career more difficult for a British boy to enter upon than that of a sailor. Lord Brassey spoke with strong feeling, and suggested to me that as he was going aboard the training ship “Warspite” to address 100 of the boys about to take a sea voyage to Australia in the four masted sailing ship “Port Jackson”, it would be a good idea if I could also come and bring the camera along. I promised to do so, and said that I should be pleased to accompany the boys in the “Port Jackson” down Channel going ashore with the pilot off Start Point.

Films were obtained of Lord Brassey addressing the boys before leaving the “Warspite” - their arrival aboard the “Port Jackson” - leaving the dock - setting sail - and incidents of life aboard. The boys were full of enthusiasm at the prospects of the voyage, and they sailed down Channel in a steady head wind.

Just after the ship had gone about off Selsey, and was on the starboard tack, a dense fog came down. I went up on the poop with the Captain and gave a hand at turning the handle of the fog-horn. In the distance we could hear another horn gradually growing nearer.

“There she is!” I called out to the Captain, pointing to starboard where, some 300 yards away, the bow of a steamship loomed up out of the fog.

“Sound the horn again!” called the Captain, “that bally ship don’t seem to know we’re here!”

The horn was again sounded, but the steamship took no notice and came on without slacking speed or altering course. There seemed to be no one on her bridge, nor anyone on the look out.

“Good God!” cried our Captain, “she’ll run us down!” I dived below for my camera, and arrived on deck just as the crash came. I set to work photographing the scene, and could not help admiring the behaviour of the juvenile crew. They had seen and heard the crash of the collision and the fearful grinding of iron and wood; they felt the heeling of the ship as she reeled with the impact, and were inclined to get a little excited. Chief instructor Glynn gave the bugler the order to sound the “Still”. There was no quiver in the blast, It sounded as loud and strong as if the ship had been lying quietly at anchor. Directly the boys heard it, they became silent, awaiting the next order, which was “Divisions", fall in on the deck house"; never was discipline better typified. Then came the order "On lifebelts". No one knew the extent of the damage, and it might have meant a matter of minutes only before the ship sank, but here were these boys picking up their lifebelts and lashing them round their little bodies just as If they were at drill, and lining up on parade with stolid determined looks that reminded one forcibly of the story of the "Birkenhead". They were British boys, and behaved as such. The order was given to cut away and provision boats, whilst the Captain went forward to ascertain the damage done. His report was sufficiently satisfactory, there was no immediate danger, though a gaping hole had been forced in the starboard bow just abaft the collision bulkhead, within a foot of the water's edge.

It was a mercy that both ships had clipper bows, for had they had straight stems, our ship would have been holed below the water line, with disastrous results. It was also providential that she was not struck further aft, in which case she would have been cut in two and gone down like a stone. As it was the heavy cat-head and anchor were first struck, which acted somewhat as a buffer and fended off the blow, the anchor being forced into the topgallant forecastle, the seamen's quarters. The bunks of the starboard watch were entirely demolished by the anchor and the steamer's cutwater, but there was fortunately only one man asleep at the time, and he had a marvellous escape.

It was a unique opportunity for securing films, and I was too busy to trouble about eventualities. One of the instructors fitted me with a lifebelt, which slipped down whilst I was busy turning the handle of my camera, and had I gone overboard, the first part to appear above the waves would have been my feet.

That no lives were lost was entirely due to the promptness of the Captain and the coolness of the whole crew, particularly of the boys. One man had his ear half torn off, but he treated that very lightly; another's face was streaming with blood and after they had been treated by the Medical Officer, Dr. Beale, the two men heartily shook hands. One boy "didn't want no lifebelt", and preferred to strip ready to make a dive and swim for it. Just before the collision one boy had been given an imposition sum by the Chaplain, the Rev. Starr, who had lent him a pencil, saying he was very sorry but he had not had time to finish the sum because he had been very seasick; one humorously described the collision as a splendid cure,

In the evening as the ship was being towed back up Channel, the whole ship's company mustered on the deck house, and in the dimming twilight, with caps off, all repeated after the Chaplain the beautiful prayer of "General thanksgiving". The Captain then said that he would like to say a few words and told the boys how thankful they ought to be for their escape, and how that he considered that they had acted in a manner which was an example to all. They had shown true British pluck and he was proud of them. Their experience went to show that sea life was not all fair weather sailing, but if they always behaved with the courage they had shown that day, he, for one, would be proud to be their Captain. He hoped the repairing of the damage would not take long, and that they might soon be sailing together again with a fair wind and no fog, to reach Australia and return again in safety. The Captain's heart was full, he could say no more; the buglers sounded the "Admiral's salute", and with ringing enthusiasm three cheers were given for the Captain, whose kindness, fatherly manner and promptitude in the hour of danger had endeared him to them all.

The position where the collision took place seemed to be the vortex of Channel traffic, for shortly after no fewer than four other big steamships passed almost within a cable's length. They loomed out of the fog, passing into the impenetrable mist which hung around like a shroud. The "Port Jackson" was towed into Dover, where press representatives and others came aboard and we discovered that the ship which had collided with us was a German tramp named the "Pyrgos" of Hamburg. From Dover the ship was towed to the Thames, and whilst passing the "Warspite", the boys of both ships manned the rigging and cheered each other, one shouting out

"Are we downhearted?"

"NO!!!" was yelled back the reply.

Whilst the ship was being repaired, I invited the boys to the Polytechnic to see the films that had been obtained, and took the opportunity of telling them how proud I was to have been one of their shipmates.

Repairs made good, the “Port Jackson” again started on her voyage. Sailing down Channel with a fair wind, she arrived in Australia, and returned safely home again.

What Lord Brassey spoke about 25 years ago is as true today as it was then. A correspondent in a London newspaper recently wrote : -

> *20,000 BRITISH SEAMEN IDLE. FOREIGNERS SAIL OUR SHIPS.*
>
> *“I spend most of the week visiting ships in the docks of London and the southern ports. I visited more than thirty ships and discovered that the number of foreigners employed in them reached the astounding total of more than 2,000. In one British liner I was told that out of a total crew of 350 more than 250 were foreigners. Another British liner has just signed on 25 men of nationalities other than British.”*
>
> *“Why this scandalous state of affairs? The Ministry of Labour Gazette states that last month there were 7,500 British Merchant seamen out of berths, but this is a very conservative figure. The number of idle seamen in this country, actually, is nearer 20,000. One port official suggested that there were as many as 50,000 foreign seamen employed in British ships.”*

CHAPTER XIII. SOLDIERS OF THE KING

The future of our Empire depends on the rising generation, and I was never happier than when I had a number of its representatives to see my films; to hear their applause and enthusiasm was a lesson in patriotism. The boys from the Greenwich Royal Hospital School frequently came to the Polytechnic by invitation, and I always had a few words to say to them after they had given the usual rousing cheers at the close of the programme. Boys from the Duke of York’s Military School were also invited, and, like their compatriots, they marched through London to the Polytechnic headed by their band. These little “Dukies” watched the naval films with keen interest and enthusiasm, and on their first visit I expressed my regret that I had no films of Army life to show them, but that I hoped to remedy that by the time they paid the show another visit. My promise to visit their School and obtain films of them was greeted with loud cheers, there being some feeling of competition between them and the Greenwich Hospital boys. Both schools are for the sons of men who have served and fought for their country, and the Duke of York’s was founded in 1801 by Frederick, Duke of York, son of George III. Since its foundation, there has not been a battle of importance in which former boys from the School have not borne their part, upheld the honour of the School and justified their proud title of “Sons of the Brave”.

Permission was readily given for me to fulfil my promise, and I visited the School on the occasion of its inspection by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught. Various evolutions illustrative of stages in training were given, such as Marching past – a gymnastic display - Bayonet contests - Field gun battery in action - and sports, showing a featherweight boxing match for the Championship and Shield. Two little “Dukies”, eleven years of age, boxed with scientific earnestness, one being particularly smart and quick. This contest was looked upon with keen interest, not only by the whole school, but also by the critical eyes of the old veterans from Chelsea Hospital close by. One of these old veterans was filmed with a group of the boys around him, who watched him demonstrate how he wielded his sword against the enemy, using his stick for the purpose. Sitting down, they listen intently while

“He fights his battles o’er again
And tells how fields were won”.

The Duke of Connaught takes great interest in the School, and before leaving presented the prizes; on his departure he was sped on his way with resounding cheers.

On Empire Day, 1909, King Edward VII, accompanied by Queen Alexandra and the Prince and Princess of Wales, inspected the Old Boys of the School. Exclusive permission was given to me to obtain films of this visit. All regiments were represented, and all wore their medals. The King and the Royal party walked slowly between the two lines that had been drawn up, and when close to the camera, the King stopped to take special notice of a white-haired Veteran who had been a Duke of York’s boy 70 years before. Then came the march past and a display of drill, after which the Royal party formed a group at the entrance of the School for a final film to commemorate their visit. The Old Boys as well as the youngsters and the guests, sent up cheer upon cheer as they drove away.

It was inspiring to hear the enthusiasm of these “Dukies” the next time they came to the Polytechnic and saw themselves on the screen. They almost raised the roof with their applause and happy laughter, which reached a climax when a portrait of the King was shown, all joining in the singing of the National Anthem. After this three cheers were given, and I told them I was glad to have had such opportunities of redeeming the promise I had made to them on their previous visit.

Sir Edward Ward, Secretary to the Army Council, expressed a desire that I should show films of Army life after the same style as those of “Our Navy”, and gave me a letter of introduction to Brigadier General Eyre Crabbe, at Aldershot. This officer at once dictated letters to the general officers commanding each Division, asking them to grant me facilities, and a special pass gave me a roving commission to inspect the Camps and select those subjects I considered of special interest for filming. On leaving, we shook hands, and the General wished me all success.

One of the first films I took at Aldershot was of a special Cavalry display in the Long Valley, by detachments from the Dragoons, Hussars and Lancers, before General French. They went through various evolutions, at one time spread out fan-wise until they covered the whole plain. Then, closed once more to mass formation, they began to trot, to quicken into a gallop, and on the bugle sounding the “Charge”, the whole brigade swooped past, the riders crouching over the heads of their horses, the foremost rank with lances lowered. In clouds of dust they swept past and were soon far in the distance; a stirring sight, giving one some small idea of what the Balaclava charge must have looked like.

Probably one of the most stirring pageants that can be witnessed is a Royal Review of the fighting forces. In 1905, King Edward, Queen Alexandra, the Prince and Princess of Wales, the King of Spain and his bride (Princess Ena), inspected the cream of the British Army at Aldershot. A point of vantage was allotted to my film camera close to the Royal party, and Lord Roberts’ carriage was moved back to make room for it.

Led by the Naval Brigade with their battery of guns, the flower of British manhood marched past, in wave upon wave, between the Royal dais and the massed bands of the Aldershot Command. After the Naval Brigade came a detachment of the Royal Marines, rifles at the slope with fixed bayonets glistening in the sun’s rays. In contrast the Household Brigades in scarlet and gold, with shining helmets and waving plumes following behind added a splash of vivid colour to the scene.

Behind them came the Brigade of Guards, followed by the Royal Artillery, the muzzles of their guns in perfect alignment. The massed bands changed to the regimental march of each detachment as it marched by and the regular step of the foot soldiers as Battalion after Battalion followed in succession was a sight not easily forgotten. But the best was yet to come; the Cavalry, Dragoons, Hussars, Lancers and Royal Army Service and Medical Corps waggons had all passed, and the massed bands became silent. Then from the far side of the arena, the skirling of bagpipes was heard; all eyes in the vast concourse of people were turned to watch the Highlanders advance towards the saluting base. With even step, kilts and sporrans swinging with even rhythm, and rifles with fixed bayonets in perfect line, they presented such a grand sight that the spectators set up a roar of cheering.

Each detachment, as it passed, turned their eyes as one man towards the King. Colours were lowered, and the officers waved their swords to the salute. The King, seated on his horse in the uniform of a Field Marshal, acknowledged by raising his gloved hand to his cocked hat; behind him the Prince of Wales, the rest of the Royal party, and officers of the General Staff watched the proceedings intently.

After the march past came a thrilling spectacle, the dash past of the Cavalry and Royal Horse Artillery at full gallop, which increased the enthusiasm of the spectators to the highest pitch. Such a sight thousands flock to see, but they are few compared with the great numbers of the British public who are unable to do so, so that my films taken on this occasion were able to convey to many thousands some idea of the impressiveness of this memorable spectacle. Lord Roberts paid a visit to the Polytechnic, and I was afterwards proud to receive a letter from him, of which the following is an extract :-

> *“I have for a long time past noticed with the greatest pleasure the splendid work you are doing in putting before audiences in a popular and attractive form the valuable training which British youths receive in our Navy and Army.”*

The Press comments were also very encouraging, the “Times” said :-

> *“There are few entertainments in London which, while affording amusement, are so calculated to stimulate patriotic sentiment.”*

The “Daily Telegraph” :-

> *“For twelve years Mr. Alfred West’s exhibition at the Polytechnic. Regent St., has occupied a unique position in the world of amusement in the Metropolis. No other combines in so marked a degree the elements of entertainment and usefulness”.*

Including life in the Army in my programmes made the pictures still more interesting, as the Army offered innumerable subjects from which to make films, indeed I had some difficulty in making a selection. The Naval and Military Tournament held each year in London gives the public the opportunity of witnessing some of the activities of the Services, but in comparison with what can be seen in the training centres both ashore and afloat, these are only a picked few.

On one occasion when King Edward VII visited the Tournament in London, he expressed a wish to see a wrestling match on horseback between the Army and the Navy. A party of Bluejackets were selected to try their skill against the New South Wales Lancers, and what then took place provoked roars of laughter. The sailors took off shoes and socks, tucked up their trousers, and away they went for one another, amid the enthusiastic cheers of the audience. One sailor was unseated, but he clung round his horse’s neck by his legs and arms like grim death. In this position he stuck, and could not be moved by the opposing Australians; how he got aboard again and once more right way up on the Horse’s back, no one knew but he. King Edward thoroughly enjoyed the contest, joining in with his people in their laughter; everyone got excited, the uproar as the wrestling proceeded becoming increasingly great. Although the sailors were aboard a craft they knew little about they nevertheless managed to win, two of them being left on deck when all their opponents had been pushed overboard. This incident was recounted in an amusing poem written by Sub.Lieut.G.C.Bowles, R.N. In his interesting book ‘The Gun Room Ditty Box’ under the title of ‘The Naval Mounted ‘orse’, which was illustrated by a film I obtained at Portsmouth, where a reproduction of the contest was specially arranged, and to the delight of the audience it was shown as the poem was recited from behind the screen.

A Tournament held at Government House, Aldershot, gave me the opportunity of obtaining such scenes as Tent pegging in sections and double sections - Lemon cutting - and Revolver shooting at the gallop. In the latter evolution, the horses were made to jump an obstacle to which was fastened a bladder, which the rider had to fire at and burst at the moment of jumping. Other items included a musical ride by the lst King’s Dragoon Guards and the Field and Horse Artillery. A pushball contest on horseback, which the horses appeared to enjoy as much as the riders, caused great amusement. Six took part, three a side, and the huge ball was rolled to remote parts of the arena in the endeavours of both sides to score a goal. There were many other features, including a display by the gymnastic instructors, which proved to be well worth filming, as was a Ju-jitsu contest that followed between one of.1hese instructors and a Japanese.

Most regiments have a pet animal of some sort, and once when stationed at Portsmouth the Middlesex Regiment had as a pet a huge baboon named “Don”, captured at Elandsberg during General French’s drive in the Eastern Transvaal during the Boer War. This baboon was the source of much amusement, and formed the subject of a very humorous film. First, he was given a bottle of ginger beer, which he examined very closely. Shaking it about, and seeing that the contents were something to drink, he tried all manner of dodges to get at the liquid. The little glass ball forming the stopper puzzled him, but he seemed to understand that therein lay the secret, for pressing it hard with one finger he gave sufficient pressure to force it in, and out burst the frothing liquid all over his face. Some went into his mouth, and liking the taste, he up-ended the bottle. With the neck in his mouth the fizzling of the gingerbeer tickled his throat and made him choke, which upset his temper and caused him to bang the bottle on the ground and smash it.

A cigarette was then handed to the animal, which made another puzzle for him to solve. After smelling at it and thoroughly examining it, he bit a piece off and seemed to enjoy it, for the rest went the same way, though he made several grimaces before finally swallowing it. A plate of dainty scraps was then placed before him, but just out of reach. Straining at the full length of his chain, and stretching forth his paws, the plate was still a few inches too far away. Then he sat down and looked at the plate, apparently in deep thought as to what was the best thing to do. Suddenly he had a brainwave, and turning round found that the extra length of his body enabled him to reach the plate with his hind foot and draw it towards him. The film ended with a shot of “Don” eating with a look of placid contentment, and caused great amusement when shown, especially, of course, to the youngsters.

Each year, Army manoeuvres take place in which two sides represent attacking and defending forces, and one year I was able to obtain a series of films which, together with other scenes secured at various times, made a realistic presentation of our army in time of war. This all took place before such now indispensable units of modern warfare, as tanks, aircraft or even motor transport, had been invented, and the main factors were infantry, Cavalry and Artillery. For the purposes of the tactical scheme, it is presumed that the enemy has landed a large force on the South Coast, and the country roads and lanes are full of the defending army, infantry marching forward, cavalry and artillery all hastening to take up their positions. Scouts have been sent forward to locate the enemy, and the Royal Engineers drive up with their wagons containing a kite balloon, which is spread out on the ground and inflated from gas cylinders. When filled the basket is attached, into which climb the observation officers. The guy ropes released, the balloon soars into the air, checked by a rope secured to the ground; the officers report the position of the enemy by heliograph. The field telegraph is laid by the Signallers on horseback at the gallop, the wire unrolling from a drum, followed immediately behind by another on horseback who guides the wire over hedges and obstacles by means of a pole, at the end of which is a steel loop, through which runs the wire.

The Artillery opens fire with long range guns and howitzers, and the infantry push forward, scattered in skirmishing order, taking cover where possible, firing volleys and rushing forward again. A stream has to be crossed, and a section of the Royal Engineers gallop up with wagons containing pontoons and planks, which are quickly placed in position, thus enabling the troops to pass across. Another wide stream lies in the way of the Cavalry, and a rope is taken across and secured to the other side. To this is attached a tackle, to which, one after another, the horses are secured and hauled over. By this means the entire unit and its equipment are quickly taken over to the other side, the men crossing in punts.

The enemy have taken up a commanding position on rising ground and dig themselves in, but the fierce fire from the Defenders' Artillery causes great havoc. The Royal Army Medical Corps have quickly erected their tents in the rear, and are ready to receive the wounded. The Royal Army Service Corps is kept busy organising the food supply. The battle rages; the left wing of the enemy looks like giving way, and our Horse Artillery gallop forward to take up an advanced position. Opening fire, the enemy's position is soon made untenable by the belching guns, and the infantry is ordered to storm the heights. The Highlanders rush forward, climbing with shouts and yells, and the Cavalry, up till now held in leash, are let loose, swooping after the enemy, who are put in full retreat. Roars of cheers are sent up as the defenders of our hearths and homes stand victors on the summit.

So realistic was this film's effect that it was difficult to realise that it was not a real battle, and the effects given from behind the screen greatly enhanced this.

CHAPTER XIV OUR OLDEST ALLY.

So completely has the Great War eclipsed all previous campaigns, that we are apt to forget the battles of the past and the heroes who fought them, though we should always remember that it is owing mainly to the victories they won that the British Empire holds its supreme position. Amongst the military leaders whose names stand foremost in the history of the army is the Duke of Wellington, for as we all know it was he who defeated the French Armies in the Iberian Peninsula and subsequently vanquished Napoleon after his escape from Elba in 1815. The colours of many British regiments proudly bear the names of these glorious victories of his.

With the object of reminding the British people of what took place three years after Trafalgar, I accepted an invitation from the “Propaganda Society of Portugal” to visit that country and the battlefields of the Peninsular War. For 5 weeks I made a tour with a guide kindly lent me by the Booth Steamship Line, visiting the various places where famous battles took place, and obtaining films which were afterwards included in the programme and explained by expert lecturers.

Professor Oman, at that time Regius Professor of History at Oxford, sent me a book he had written on this war, containing particulars of the campaign, and charts of the battlefields showing the positions of both British and French forces. It is interesting to note that a derivative cause of the war was a treaty between England and Portugal made in the fourteenth century and welded by a marriage between King John of Portugal and a daughter of John of Gaunt. From their union sprang such famous princes as Henry the Navigator, who discovered India and was responsible for most of the other great discoveries in the early days of exploration, besides giving early training to Columbus, Drake, Frobisher and Hawkins. Portugal, faithfully adhering to the Methuen Treaty of 1703, refused to comply with Napoleon’s edict ordering a Continental blockade of all English trade. As a result, Portugal was invaded by Napoleon’s armies, and realising that without help she could do little, she appealed to England for aid. This was readily forthcoming, an expeditionary force being organised and placed under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley, afterwards the Duke of Wellington. On arriving at the mouth of the River Mondego on August lst 1808) Sir Arthur gave his first order to his new command, which was for the amputation of the pig-tails then worn by the soldiers. It is interesting to note that the Welsh Fusiliers to this day wear a black bow behind the collar of their tunics to mark the fact that, when they were still known as the 25th Foot, pig-tails were part of their uniform.

On landing, Sir Arthur Wellesley had 14,000 men under his command, but in the meanwhile the French had concentrated at Rolica (So named in Wellesley’s dispatches due to the similarity of his letters E and C, the real name is Roliea), and here the 60th and 95th Rifles had their first brush with the enemy. Close to the old Moorish castle at Obidos is the windmill (still standing) where an English gun was placed and where the first shot in the war was fired.

From this point the English infantry were formed into three columns, driving back the enemy, who formed up again on the almost precipitous hills of Columbeira. The 29th (now the Worcester Regt.) and the 9th Foot then led the attack and gallantly stormed the heights up a gully so steep that when I visited the battlefield I experienced great difficulty in climbing it. After terrible hand to hand fighting, they succeeded in driving back the enemy, and the remnant of the 29th stood victors on the summit. The loss was great, 479 officers and men were killed and wounded, one of the victims being the gallant leader, Colonel Lake. This officer was afterwards buried on the summit and a stone cross erected over his grave, enclosed behind railings. This brave man is still remembered by his old regiment, for on the cross I found the inscription “Renovated by the Officers of the Worcester Regiment 1903.”

The land on which this battle was fought is under cultivation, and when I was there it belonged to a farmer who was also the mayor of the little town of Columbeira. He accompanied me and my guide over the battlefield, and remarked that he was constantly ploughing up various relics of the fight. Inviting us to his house, he showed us quite a museum of pistols, swords, bayonets, rifles and all manner of different types of shot, which he told us he had accumulated from time to time as a result of his accidental excavations.

Whilst in the neighbourhood, I met the owner of a large vineyard nearby, an Englishman who had married a Portuguese lady. He invited us to lunch at his house, and on arriving asked us to inspect his wine vaults and select what wine we would like to have with our meal. The vaults were in a large building, and all along one side were huge vats containing many hogsheads of the finest Portuguese wine. Bringing a good sized wine glass filled with dark amber liquid, our host asked me to try it and see what I thought of it. I proceeded to sample it, and being very thirsty began to drink it up, but when more than three parts of the glass were empty, my host told me not to drink any more but to try another glass containing a slightly darker liquid. I was feeling I had had enough, but he was so insistent that I sampled another glass to please him. It was certainly a delicious wine, and made me begin to spin some yarns; eventually I found myself holding an empty glass. My host then brought yet another glass of wine, which he held up to me. “And now.” he said, “I want you to try this.” “Sorry,” I replied, “thanks very much, but, really, I have had quite enough. “

“Oh, but you must,” he insisted, “this is a special vintage.”

He would take no refusal, and seemed to be quite hurt, so I sipped the glass and exclaimed,

“Ye Gods! What a wine!”

“Go on,” he said, “it won’t hurt you!”

I complied, and “went on”, by this time feeling reckless and ready for anything. However, my host’s next remark took me fairly unawares :-

“And now,” said he, “which would you like to have with your lunch ?”

“My dear ole boy,” said I, “they are all very good, but,” putting my hand on his arm, “that last was wonderful!” Then away we went into the house, arm in arm, laughing and chatting in merry mood. Entering the room we found his wife waiting, a most charming lady and very beautiful. I was shown to a seat by her side, and though my Portuguese was limited to the two words “Si, Senora” and she knew no English, yet it did not seem to matter a bit, for I was in a conversational mood.

My host and the guide laughed uproariously, as did my hostess, especially when it was explained to her what I was talking about. What a lunch it was! The vegetables tasted totally different from anything we have at home, being cooked in oil in the Portuguese way. I was very hungry and enjoyed very thoroughly everything set before me, but partook very carefully of the wine. We then adjourned to the verandah for coffee and cigars, my host being very interested in all I had to tell him about England in general and London in particular. He told me that the wine trade from Portugal to England had gone down very considerably since whiskey had become the popular drink, and the days of the 1 and 2 bottle men were past. He said that it was a pity that I was not there at harvest time, for as it was then the end of March the vines were only just beginning to sprout. However, he offered to show me round his estate, and I gladly accepted. The concrete tanks for crushing measured about 10 feet by 6 and were 3 feet deep. They are filled with grapes passed through a hole in the wall from carts laden from the vineyards standing outside the building in which the tanks were housed. Men with bare feet then jump in and stamp backwards and forwards, crushing out the juice, which at first is icy cold, though it later warms up considerably. The bung is then removed from the base of the tank and the grape juice is decanted along a gutterway into one of the huge vats. The grape skins are then put beneath a press in the centre of the tank, which is squeezed down hard, squeezing out all the remaining juice. This is run into another vat, being of inferior quality owing to the amount of tannin present. Having obtained films and snapshots of the battlefields around Rolica, where the British had left the Union Jack flying wherever the tricolour had been before, my guide and I drove westwards towards the coast by the same route which our victorlous soldiers had traversed 100 years before. Fifteen miles away lay the village of Vimiero, situated in a valley where, in 1808, a fierce battle had taken place. Warships with reinforcements and stores had been sent out from England, and the new draft camped with the army already assembled on the rising ground. The British Commander in Chief was now Sir Hugh Dalrymple, and Wellesley was his subordinate. During the night the French approached from the opposite side of the valley, so that at daybreak the two armies found themselves facing each other. A fierce encounter took place lasting only three hours, though during that time 14,000 of the best French troops were defeated and put to rout. I obtained films from many positions, vizualising in my mind the terrible hand to hand conflict that took place, and wishing that it were possible for me to have been there to film it when it happened.

So disheartened were the enemy after this reverse, that it all probability the war would have ended at this point, had it not been for that unaccountable Convention of Cintra which was then made. It was signed by Sir Hugh Dalrymple, and allowed the French army to leave Portugal with bag and baggage, while the French Marshal Junot and his staff with .over 20,000 of his men were taken in British ships to the French port of La Rochelle.

The story of the Peninsular War has been written by many historians, but I do not think that a photographic record has ever been made of the places where these great battles were fought, certainly I was the first to do so. It is not necessary for me to record what has already been done, but a short explanation may help in vizualising the actual scenes I portrayed in the films and snapshots which I obtained. It was fortunate that the British remained in Portugal after the Vimiero conflict, for although peace had been proclaimed, Napoleon again invaded Spain, his vast armies hounding the little British force of 14,000 under the command of Sir John Moore. Moore made a masterly retreat through the mountainous country of Galicia, in North Spain, taking a month to reach Corunna, the most northerly port in the Peninsula, where he arrived in the second week of January 1809. Although the army was fatigued and broken after its forced marches, Moore nevertheless turned and fought the French, defeating them and beating them back thoroughly crestfallen, though at great cost to his small force, amongst whose slain was the gallant General himself. His burial by the light of a lantern at Corunna is perpetuated in Wolfe's famous poem.

England, fired with admiration for the army that had done so much with a hungry host ever in its rear, and with grief at the loss of so many of her brave sons, sent a new expedition to the Peninsula, commanded by Sir Arthur Wellesley, who arrived in Lisbon on April 22nd 1809. At this time the French Marshal Soult was still in Portugal, but after making a hasty retreat, and eluding the British by crossing the River Douro, he occupied the city of Oporto. Knowing Wellesley and his army were in hot pursuit, he made his position secure, as he thought, by burning the massive wooden bridge that was the only means of crossing the river. He then made his headquarters in the convent above the bend in the river, from which he was unable to watch the arrival of Wellesley and his army who had marched 80 miles in four days, outstripping their baggage and supplies. Luckily for the British troops a peasant was found who was able to show them a place where there were some barges, by means of which they were able to cross with great caution. Before Soult could realise what had happened, he found himself fiercely attacked, and had to beat so hasty a retreat that Wellesley and his staff were able to sit down to the dinner that had been prepared for the French officers.

A fine bridge spans the river just below the spot where this crossing took place, and placing my cine camera in the centre of it I was able to take a panorama of this historical part of the river, showing the banks on each side and the bend in the river higher up, where the convent still stands.

With the loss of only 23 killed and 132 wounded, Wellesley thus recovered Oporto, the second city of Portugal, whilst Soult and his fugitive army sought refuge in the mountainous country of Galicia, through which Moore and his column,,.had retreated only a few months before.

During my stay in this picturesque and interesting city, I was made very welcome and obtained several films and snapshots, including one of the peculiar mosaic paving in the Square, which is made in the form of wave pattern, and has the extraordinary effect of making one feel that one has dined not wisely but too well. I may here mention that water is not drunk in Portugal, at least I never saw anyone using it for that purpose, for unfortified wine is plentiful and costs only a penny for a large glass full. One of the large wine merchants invited me to lunch with him, and as usual there was a large bottle of wine on the table, not only fortified, but old and of a special quality. My host would not hear of any being left, keeping my glass constantly filled, and I thought that he would take offence if I did not drink it all up. I am a very moderate drinker, and not accustomed to more than one glass of wine at dinner, so that as we sat on the verandah overlooking the river after lunch, I found myself feeling very mellow and sleepy and heard my host's voice asking me whether I knew how to steer a boat.

"Steer a what?" I enquired, feeling a bit befogged and surprised at such a question.

"A boat", he repeated.

"I have been doing that all my life," I replied.

"That's splendid, you're just the one we want, there are four of us who always have a spin on the river every Saturday in a four oared gig, so if you will take the tiller we will go along right away."

My host’s friends were already at the boathouse when we arrived, and I sat down in the stern and took hold of the yoke lines; soon we were out on the river and spanking along at a good speed. Steering under an arch of the bridge, we turned upstream, but the effect of the wine had not passed off, and my vision was still a little uncertain. Seeing two wine boats sailing abreast towards me, I made to steer between them, as there was not enough time to get clear. As we approached, however, my vision cleared and I saw that the two vessels were only one!

“Thought you knew the way to steer!” was my host’s caustic comment.

“I thought there were two boats,” I said, “I’ve got your wine to thank for that!”

At this, all four oarsmen burst into laughter.

My guide took me to a very magnificent abbey, but I visited so many abbeys and monasteries that I forget whether this particular one was in Oporto. At all events, it had the feature of being two in one, and the smaller gave me quite a shock when I entered it, as the whole of the walls and pillars were covered with mosaics of various patterns made entirely from human bones, the borders of the frieze containing rows of grinning skulls. I stayed only long enough get some pictures, and then hurried out as I was beginning to feel creepy. To add to my horror, my guide drew my attention to an inscription above the door, which when translated read “We bones that are here are waiting for yours.” This finished me off, and I got a move on out of it quick and lively, telling my guide to let ‘em wait. This took place 28 years ago, so that they must be getting a little tired of waiting by now.

in the middle of June 1809, Wellesley headed for the South, reaching the valley of the Tagus with 20,000 men and three score pieces of artillery. General Crawford was undoubtedly the most brilliant subordinate officer Wellesley ever had, and the record of his famous march to Talavera is still unbroken, his light division marching 62 miles in 26 hours. His arrival was a welcome sight to Wellesley’s troops, but the battle that then took place was one of the bloodiest in the campaign, and was won by the British only after terrible slaughter on both sides.Sir Arthur Wellesley retired to the fortified city of Badajoz, and whilst there was officially informed that for his glorious victory at Talavera the King had been pleased to raise him to the Peerage as Baron Douro and Viscount Wellington. I did not visit the scene of this historic fight, the name of which is on the colours of those regiments that took part, as it was not in my itinerary, which was confined to Portugal.

CHAPTER XV BATTLES OF THE PAST.

Napoleon continued to pour his armies into the Peninsula, and when Wellington saw that he could do nothing to save Spain, he retreated across the Tagus into Portugal, leading his troops to the healthier coastline about Coimbra. Here the weary and those stricken by illness and wounds were greatly revived, and the whole force benefitted by the supplies of clothing and wholesome food sent from England. Meantime, in the southern province of historic Leon, Crawford and his division of three thousand men were on the watch for Marshal Ney and his force of thirty thousand, endeavouring to hinder his advance. The town of Ciudad Rodrigo was still held by the Spaniards, and Crawford kept his light division employed in harassing the French lines. Where a stand could do no good, he retreated slowly, fighting the while, retiring to the strongly fortified town of Almeida.

I arrived at this town in the evening of Good Friday, and put up at a hostel with my guide, where some Portuguese officers were also staying. They made us very welcome when they learned the purpose of my visit, procuring bottles of champagne, making and replying to toasts, and altogether making it a very pleasant evening. The next morning we walked along the same road by which Crawford had made his masterly retreat to the River Coa, which flows at the bottom of a deep ravine. Crawford had held in check the infuriated French army, vastly superior in numbers, and fought all the while as he retreated towards this rapid flowing and turbulent river. The only means of crossing was by a small stone bridge, and over this the British flung themselves, lining up on the steep bank on the other side and shooting down the French as they dashed forward in full cry. Very soon the Bridge became impassable, choked with piles of dead and wounded French troops. Crawford thus turned his retreat into a victory, and the “Combat of Coa” ranks as one of the great events in military history. There is an inscription on the bridge recording this terrible conflict. I climbed the steep bank from which the British troops had made their stand, and obtained films showing the bridge and the opposite side of the river, which was only about 20 feet in width. It was a peaceful spot as I saw it, and nothing to be heard except the rushing of the water, but from the photographs I obtained one could easily see into what a trap Crawford had led the French, who lost over a thousand in killed and wounded.

Wellington was then a march or two away, but was joined by Crawford and his Light Division soon after the engagement, and the feeling with which his Lordship exclaimed “I am glad to see you, Crawford!” may be imagined. On llth July 1809 the plucky garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo was forced to surrender, and Almeida was invested and finally won after the exploding of the magazine. Thus the last of the obstacles lying between the main bodies of the British and French were removed.

On my way back to Almeida from the Coa, a gun was fired, and the porter who was carrying my cameras put them down, and removing his cap ejaculated “Hallelujah!” Lent was over and the festival of Easter had begun. The following morning being Easter Sunday, a procession issued from the church, which was on the opposite side of the Square, and headed by the band of the Portuguese regiment stationed there, commenced to walk slowly round carrying an image of the Virgin, which gave me a good subject for a film.

I then proceeded to the scene of the next great battle. After reducing Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, Massena, the French Marshal, had entered Portugal but found in his path “the British Leopards”, to use another of Bonaparte’s expressions. Wellington had taken up a strong position on the heights of Bussaco, confident, as ever, alike in himself and his men, and knowing quite well that he was right in the selection of his position, because it was in a healthy neighbourhood and one from which it would be easy to defy the greatly superior forces of the Continental Dictator. At the highest point of the ridge Is the convent and gardens of Bussaco. As I stood on this summit, I looked over one of the finest and most extensive views I have ever seen, consisting of hills and ravines, through which had poured on that sunny day a hundred years before the vast hosts of the French, the gaily accoutred cavalry of Massena, Ney and Regsiner, the infantry in their highly coloured regimentals and the gunners in darker uniform, the ammunition waggons and the baggage carts, the blue, white and red Tricolours of France, and the massed bands playing stirring music to inspirit the men about to go into battle. This thrilling sight was watched from the Bussaco Ridge by fifty thousand British soldiers, who could not but admire this display, though given by foemen with whom they were about to come into deadly conflict. All was ready for their reception, however, and “Battle magnificent’s stern array" was complete. Wellington had waited nearly 12 months for this crucial day, and though he disliked it, he had made desolate the country North of Bussaco, so that the French might find nothing to subsist on.

From the foot of the ridge to the summit was a very steep goat climb, in fact I had some difficulty in.getting up, it being a rise of about 1,000 feet. To the credit of the French troops be it said that in the face of devastating fire some succeeded in reaching the top and capturing a British standard, which, however, was quickly retaken. The French continued to storm the height with fierce determination, but were shot down in hundreds and obliged to retreat and be again defeated.

I walked along the summit, where there is now a fine golf course, securing panoramic films, including the monument that has been erected to commemorate this battle. There is also a museum on the walls of which are plans and charts to explain the conflict and the position of the troops, and there is quite an armoury of weapons left from the field of battle. Close by is a picturesque convent built of flint stones by Trappist monks, standing in 40 acres of sloping ground, which these monks have converted into the most lovely garden imaginable. In front of the entrance stands a large flint cross and a cascade of water flowing over a succession of terraces covered with moss and ferns. In one of the cells of this convent, Wellington slept the night before the battle which took place so near it. A winding path of flints leads through beautiful thickly-growing palms, ferns, trees and plants, sent by the fraternity from all parts of the world. At each bend of the path as it leads upwards are grottoes representing the stations of the Cross, the pantile red roofs being smothered with maiden hair ferns. At the end of this wonderfully picturesque pathway, which finished on the summit, was "Calvary", from which one could obtain a wonderful view of transcendent beauty, overlooking the whole of this wooded garden, in the midst of which is the convent, whilst immediately alongside stands a magnificent building in pure white stone beautifully carved with delicate tracery both exterior and interior, which the Portuguese government had built for a Royal residence. It was never occupied by Royalty, and was afterwards converted into an hotel, and here I stayed with my guide for five days, finding plenty to feast on with my cameras, what with the scene of the battle, the glorious woods, the -picturesque convent and this marvellous hotel. The luxury with which we were able to surround ourselves was especially acceptable after some of the out of the way hostelries in which we had stayed, which were all primitive and often insanitary, and which no Englishman, except Professor Oman himself, had visited since the Peninsular War, which the peasants all seemed to regard as of recent occurrence. Surrounding this heavenly spot was a high wall with four gates, and when it had been in exclusive possession of the monks the Pope had issued a Bull that the woods were to be preserved intact and that nature should have its sway, nothing was to be cut down or removed, and where anything fell, there it was to lie. Another bull proclaimed that no women were to be allowed within its walls.

After this great battle of Bussaco, Wellington retreated still further towards Lisbon, and Massena fully believed he was making for his ships, but the British Commander had yet his trump card to play. By purposely allowing Massena to gain the upper hand in minor skirmishes, Wellington lured him on to the most stupendous line of fortifications ever up to that date conceived by man - the famous lines of Torres Vedras - a range of hills like a miniature Switzerland, spreading fan-ways across the country just north of Lisbon from the town of Torres Vedras near the west coast to the town of Alhandra on the upper reaches of the Tagus on the east. On the top of these hills had been erected 50 miles of fortifications, comprising 126 closed works and mounting 247 guns. These had been planned by Wellington as his line of defence, behind which he entrenched his 60,000 troops, having in his rear the harbour of Lisbon and the maritime power of England to support him. I drove through these lines, and amongst the heights which I climbed was the one at Sobral, which is 750 feet high, and so steep that I had to negotiate it upon a donkey; how the British hauled their guns to the summit was to me a mystery. I found the fortifications just as they had been left, and except for the ravages of time the gun emplacements were still intact. From the top of Sobral I was able to obtain a wonderful panorama of the surrounding country which it predominates.

To the credit of the people of Portugal, be it said that though for eleven months thousands were employed in constructing these defences, yet out of the suffering millions of Portuguese, homeless, destitute and starving, not a spy had been found to warn the invader of these impregnable works, and only too late did the French General realise that he had been trapped. There was nothing for Massena to do but retreat, and so the second and last invasion of Portugal came to an inglorious end.

Wellington’s star was in the ascendant, and with the exception of the retreat from Moscow, that from the lines of Torres Vedras was the greatest disaster that ever overtook the armies of Napoleon. British arms had triumphed over veterans of a hundred battles, veterans who had all but conquered Europe, and British soldiers, “Dogs,” as Napoleon called them “who never knew when they were beaten but still fought on and on”, were supreme.

I confined my visit to the principal battlefields of Portugal, but whilst near the frontier town of Elvas I thought I would like to visit it. Standing on the flat roof of the factory where the noted Elvas preserved plums are produced, and looking across the frontier (which was only five miles distant across a level plain) into Spain, I could see the strongly fortified city of Badjoz, historical for the great siege that took place. The starving French army retreated from the lines of Torres Vedras, and pursued hotly by the British, fled into Spain, where the battles of Albuera, Ciudad Rodrigo, Fuentes D’Onoro and Salamanca were won by the British after terrific fighting. In recognition of these captures, Wellington was made an Earl, the Portuguese created him Marquis of Torres Vedras, and by the Spaniards he was raised to the dignity of Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo.

Accompanied by my guide, we drove over and called on the Governor, who, on learning the purpose of my visit, wanted me to return the next day so that he could make arrangements for a special reception. What this implied I do not know, but when my guide explained that time did not permit of the delay, he placed a military escort to the fortifications around the city, upon whose defences, glaces, redoubts, bastions, counterscarps, entrenchments and emplacements Moors, Spaniards, Portuguese and French had worked hard in succeeding ages. Guns and magazines had been provided with bridges and covered passages wherever needed, shafts and mines had been dug and filled with explosives, ready for any emergency. The main citadel was in the form of an almost impregnable castle. The principal outworks were the Picurina, the San Roque and San Christoval. Fort Pluorina was the first to receive Wellington’s attention, and on April 5th 1812 the siege began, a day ever memorable in the history of warfare; a day of horrors, of blood, of the most violent and awful passions; a day, or rather night, when the great Wellington, to be known to posterity as “The Iron Duke”, burst into tears because of the frightful carnage and loss of life in the taking of Badajoz.

1 walked around the outside of the high walls, and saw clearly where the breaches in the walls had been made, for all that they had been repaired during the Carlist rising. Cannon balls had been built into the brickwork to form the figures “1812”, the year of the siege. Other parts of the wall were still in the ruin to which they had been reduced by the British artillery. I obtained films and snaps of all the important redoubts, including the Trinidad gateway and bastion, which were at the centre of the fiercest fighting. I should have liked to have stayed longer, as Badajoz offered so much that was full of interest, but my visit was drawing to a close.

I had spent five weeks in the country of our oldest ally, where I had found subjects for photography not only in the old battlefields, but also in far more peaceful scenes. There are many wonderful monasteries and abbeys in this land, amongst them the Jeronomite monastery at Belem, in Lisbon, and the Chapel of Christ Templars at Thomar, but the most beautiful to my mind was the Abbey of Batalia, which was the wonder and envy of ecclesiastical architects for six centuries. It was founded by Phillipa of Lancaster, daughter of John of Gaunt, and in order that the abbey should be structurally perfect, the King invited many renowned architects to help in its construction. amongst them Steven Stevenson from England, who designed the Lady Chapel behind the High Altar, with its delicate lacework carving. It was never finished for the architect died without divulging his plans, and it still stands as he left it, open to the sky. The whole abbey is a vision of beauty, but the cloisters with their exquisite arches and pillars, each of a different design, appealed to me as forming an ideal subject for a panorama with my cine camera. Training it slowly round, the two sides of the cloisters were brought into view, and the contrast of light and shade gave a very beautiful effect, heightened by tinting the film blue, which Save the scene a moonlight effect, bringing murmurs of admiration from my audiences.

Other places visited which added greatly to my list of interesting and historical subjects were the Pena Palace, and the Moorish castle near the mouth of the Tagus, built on a rocky eminence that seemed like a bubble that had burst out of the earth. On one of the windows of the Palace was an autograph Byron had made with his diamond ring on his visit to this glorious spot. Other films were taken of the Portuguese 5th Cascadres at bayonet drill; this is one of the regiments that fought with Wellington’s force. Before leaving Portugal I was informed that King Manoel wished me to be presented to him at his palace at Lisbon. He received me very graciously, and was most interested on hearing the purpose of my visit to his country, and said that he hoped that I had not only been successful but that I had been pleased with all I had seen. I told him that I was certain the series of films and still photographs would prove very interesting to British audiences, and asked whether he would honour me by accepting an album of photographs I had obtained of the principal places of interest, and also if he would permit me to obtain films of himself, without which my series would not be complete. He expressed himself very pleased to do so, and his favourite horse was brought out, also a huge boarhound, which made very interesting pictures. My interview lasted over half an hour, and on leaving we shook hands and His Majesty expressed his good wishes for my success. It was with great regret that I learned about six months later that he had been dethroned and came in exile to England. On one occasion he came to the Polytechnic, and I was pleased to be able to show him the result of my five weeks' tour in his country.

CHAPTER XVI.“AND IT’S WESTWARD HO FOR TRINIDAD!”

It was surprising to find how apathetic the people in some parts of the country were about matters of imperial importance. Requests were often received for “Our Navy” to be taken to their towns and wake them up, but the apathy was mainly due to the fact that, particularly in the Midlands, the inhabitants had had little or no opportunity of seeing anything of either their Navy or their Army, and out of sight was out of mind. It was this lack of interest in the Colonies that brought forth that stirring remark from King George when, as Duke of York, he returned from his cruise in the “Ophir”

“WAKE UP, ENGLAND!”

Having dealt with the Royal Navy, the Army and the Mercantile Marine, I felt that scenes of Greater Britain beyond the seas would be opportune and prove a very appropriate addition to the programme, since the Dominions were not so well known as they should have been, and in the words of Kipling :-

“What can they know of England, who only England know?”

This quotation was effectively illustrated by a little incident that occurred years later when I was in a cinema, seated behind an elderly couple. A film of Melbourne racecourse was being shown, and the old lady remarked to her husband :-

“Why, they’re all quite respectably dressed, ain’t they?” Heaven knows what she expected to see, possibly aborigines.

I decided to visit the West indies first in my tour of the Colonies, since as a whole they rank second to Newfoundland as our oldest possessions. Quite apart from this, the islands are closely associated with both our Navy and our Army, and one remembers in connection with them such famous names as Drake, Rodney, Benbow, Abercrombie and Moore. From the time of their discovery by Columbus there has been a constant struggle for their possession, and the Caribbean Sea which they encircle has been the centre of operations for many a pirate and buccaneer such as the infamous Sir Henry Morgan. Many are the stories that have been written about these desperate characters and as a boy I, like countless others, used to read them with the utmost interest and excitement.

Sir Reginald Aspinall of the West India Committee, and also the Royal Mall Steam Packet Company Limited, offered me every facility for exploring not only the islands but also British Guiana, and I spent two winters in this region of historical interest and tropical beauty, On my first outward voyage, two of my fellow-passengers were Sir Henry Hozier and a Colonel in the Royal Engineers, both of whom were going to the Isthmus of Panama to inspect the Canal, which the Government of the United States had just begun.

Our first call was at Barbados, where we dropped anchor off Bridgetown, the capital. This city has a Trafalgar Square, in the centre of which is a statue of Nelson painted green, probably due to the natives’ love of-colour. There is also a large barracks which has not been used since the withdrawal of troops from the West Indies. During my stay at Bridgetown, I was the guest of the Hon. Forster Alleyne, who drove me round the island, thus enabling me to obtain films of its many interesting features. These included Codrington College, which is affiliated to the University of Durham, and where many of the clergy in the West Indies receive special training. It is situated amidst delightful scenery, and overlooks the Windward coast. The names “Windward” and “Leeward” have their origin as regards the groups of islands bearing these names, in the fact that the wind always blows from the Westward, and the Eastern group or inner Antilles are given the name of “Leeward Islands”.

Leaving Barbados, we sailed for Trinidad, so named in 1498 by Columbus, who was reminded of the Holy Trinity by the three mountains that predominate the island. Covering the same area as Hampshire it remained a Spanish possession until 1797, when it capitulated to Sir Ralph Abercrombie. In the Gulf of Para lies the capital, Port au Spain, a fortified coaling station. The island is very fertile, producing sugar and cocoa in large quantities, but a peculiar and valuable source of wealth is the famous Pitch Lake, which was first discovered by Sir Walter Raleigh, who used the pitch for caulking his ships. To look at, it is a desolate expanse of black, blistering bitumen, and though it is possible to walk upon it, this is not altogether advisable, for if one stands still one begins to sink, and some parts are softer than others. As fast as it is dug out, the holes so left in the surface of the lake are filled in again with pitch welling up from below; the supply seems inexhaustible. Around the edge runs a narrow gauge railway, along which a string of trolleys are driven by a running cable, and which are filled by negroes who dig out the pitch with pickaxes. Then travelling round the rails to a lift, which transfers them to an overhead cable, they run down to a pier about half a mile distant, where the contents are automatically tipped down a chute and into the hold of a waiting ship. Here it settles down once more into a solid mass, and has to be dug out on the arrival of the ship at her destination, though since my visit they have taken to placing the pitch in barrels, thus saving the extra digging. We should remember when walking through our streets that some of the asphalt lying under our feet has come from this pitch lake at Trinidad.

I secured several films of this geological phenomenon, and whilst chatting to the overseer, I said,

“Surely you have something here besides pitch?”

“Yes,” he replied, we have.”

Taking me into his office, he held up a glass cylinder containing a crystal clear liquid, yellow in colour.

“What is it ?” I enquired.

“Oil,” he replied.

“What do you propose doing with it?” I asked.

“A company is being formed to exploit it,” he answered.

This was done with a nominal capital of £15,000, but soon after it was converted into another with a capital of £500,000. Thus was started the famous oil wells of Trinidad, amongst the most important in the world.

During my stay in this island, H.M.S. “Dreadnought” arrived off Port au Spain on the first cruise of her new commission. She had been built in Portsmouth Dockyard in great secrecy. The keel plate was laid down on October 2nd 1900, she was launched by the late King Edward VII on the 10th of February 1902, and completed in the following December, a record time for the building of a battleship. Displacing 17,900 tons, she was the first big ship of the British Navy to be propelled by steam turbines, which had advanced considerably since the “Turbinia” was produced in 1898. With a speed of 25 knots and carrying 10 12 inch guns, she outclassed every existing capital ship, whether in our navy or those of foreign countries for no other warship could equal her speed or boast more than four of the 12 inch guns. Thus was started a new standard of naval strength, placing Britain a long way ahead.

Ninety miles north of Trinidad lies Grenada, perhaps the most beautiful of the Windward group, being very mountainous and covered with vegetation. Snuggled within a harbour which one does not know is there until one gets to it, lies Georgetown, the Capital. The harbour of this port is called the “Carenage”, from the fact that it used to be a great place for pirates, who careened their ships there to scrub the bottoms. This island is noted for the cultivation of cocoa, and a cocoa dance by the natives was specially given for the purpose of obtaining a film. Immediately to the North of Grenada lies a group of small fertile islands called the Grenadines, and beyond is the island of St. Vincent, about half the size of Middlesex. Like Grenada, St. Vincent has thickly wooded mountains running from North to South, and in the North is Soufriere, a volcano 3,500 feet in height, an eruption of which, in 1902, devastated nearly one third of the island, causing the loss of over 2,000 lives. The island was given its name by Columbus, who reached it on St. Vincent’s day, January 22nd, 1498. It was then inhabited by Caribs, who acknowledged themselves in 1668 to be subjects of King Charles II of England. In 1779, during the American War of Independence, it was surrendered to the French, but was restored to England by the Treaty of Versailles.

The most Northerly of the Windward group and exceptionally beautiful and fertile, is the island of St. Lucia. Its chief possession is a magnificent harbour, on which stands the town of Castries, a strongly fortified coaling station. At the entrance to the harbour are two hills, Vigie to the North being 400 feet in height, whilst Morne Fortune to the South is over 800 feet high. On the tops of both these are built barracks and fortifications which have never been used, because when completed all troops were withdrawn from the islands. They were all built with glazed bricks sent out from home, and it was estimated that each brick cost 7d by the time it was laid. Exploring Morne Fortune, I was amazed to see not only long rows of barrack buildings for the men, but also a church with altar, pulpit and pews in which no service had been held, a large school for the children, complete with desks and seats which had never been used, and several bungalows dotted around for the officers, from the windows of which the dabs of whitewash had never been removed. Close by were two graveyards containing tombstones on which were engraved the names of both the British and the French soldiers who had been killed fighting for the possession of this island, over which there has been more bloodshed than for any other in the West Indies.

On the hill of Vigie opposite there were the officers' quarters in a long palatial building with carved fascia over the entrance. On the headland towards the entrance of the harbour was built the hospital, a very fine structure ready for the invalids who were never to materialise. Another long barrack building was being partitioned off into separate apartments by an enterprising Castrian for accommodating tourists. Facing the sea was a sunken fort in which were mounted several camouflaged 9.2 inch guns; one lying on the grass suggested that the troops had been withdrawn in a hurry and had no time in which to mount it. Altogether it is computed that the cost of these extensive military quarters and fortifications was somewhere near three million pounds sterling. Whether they will ever be wanted is for the future to decide.

On the North corner is the little fishing village of Gros Islet, claimed to be the birthplace of Napoleon's Empress Josephine, though some claim is laid by the French island of Martinique. Opposite Gros Islet is Pigeon island, famous for being Admiral Rodney's look-out, from which he could watch the movements of the French Warships as they sailed round Martinique and into the harbour of Fort de France, the capital of that island. About two miles south of Martinique, rising out of the sea like a huge haystack, is the famous "Diamond Rock", the history of which makes interesting reading. In the end of the year 1803 the British 74 gun ship "Centaur" was cruising off Fort Royal Bay to watch the port and to intercept the French warships bound in and out of it. Finding that many vessels escaped capture by cruising inside the Diamond Rock, which had deep water all round it, Captain Hood determined to take possession of it and erect fortifications, thus making it a stationary ship of war. Overcoming incredible difficulties, five of the "Centaur's" guns were mounted on different parts of the stupendous rock, and with 120 men under his command, Lt. J. Wilkes Maurice hoisted his pennan 'on board' the 'British sloop of war H.M.S. "Diamond Rock". It thus became connected with one of the most famous events in British history, for in order to reduce it the French fleet, which Nelson was then pursuing, was delayed for many days, thus enabling Nelson's fleet to get back to the northward in time to bar the passage of the combined French and Spanish fleets, and to save England from invasion by their destruction in the glorious fight at Trafalgar. Ever since this incident there has always been a ship in the British Navy named H.M.S. "Diamond" the present holder of the title being a "D" class destroyer of 1,450 tons. Though the rock lies out of the way of steamship traffic, the Captain of the vessel in which I was travelling altered course to enable me to obtain photographs of it.

The island of Martinique is 20 miles North of St. Lucia, and belongs to France. The town of St. Pierre, which was the chief commercial centre was completely effaced during the eruption of Mont Pele on the 8th of May 1902, in which it was computed that over 40,000 lives were lost. When I went ashore, I found the beach covered with debris, amongst which I found a fork and a bottle, both twisted by the intense heat.

Thirty miles to the North lies the island of Dominica, the largest and most beautiful of the Leeward islands, discovered by Columbus on November 3rd 1493. All the islands encircling the Caribbean Sea are of volcanic origin and mountainous; it is very difficult to say which is the most beautiful, but I think Dominica lays a strong claim. Roseau, the capital, lies on the West side, and even in those days was lighted by electricity. The botanical gardens are well worth a visit, and I revelled amidst the luxurious palms, ferns, orchids and various other tropical plants and flowers of marvellous colourings. On my way back to the hotel one day, I passed a school of black children in white frocks. As I entered their classroom, they immediately rose and stood to attention. The Schoolmistress was as black as her pupils, and but for their colour, they might have been children in a village school at home. I photographed them around a blackboard, on which was chalked an addition sum. I was snapped in my turn, holding a naked piccaninny, who seemed very frightened at being held by a white man.

Passing a rapid-flowing, shallow river, I noticed several native women washing clothes; judging by the way they were banging them on the stones, they must have been made of strong material. They laughed and chattered together, apparently much amused at seeing me turn the handle of my cine camera to take a film, which, apart from their actions was well worth securing for the bubbling water rushing over the stones and the picturesque banks. Arriving back in the town, I had lunch with a doctor, who was an enthusiastic horticulturist, and took a great pride in his garden. At the end of it was a withered tree at the foot of which he had found several human bones, which he explained to me were gruesome relies from the days of the original Caribs, who were cannibals, and used to hold their awful feasts there. He also pointed out two tall trees growing side by side, of very luxuriant growth with huge pyramidal clusters of white blooms towering above the grass-like leaves and hanging down. The whole strength and vigour of the tree spent itself, as it died after the production of these blooms, apparently exhausted by the effort needed to produce such an enormous flower.

Climbing a foot path up the mountain side, I saw amidst the vegetation clouds of steam rising out of the earth. On approaching it, I stood close to what looked like a huge bowl of bubbling porridge; and obtained a film of this agitated piece of the earth’s crust. I was told afterwards that it was a very risky thing to do, as I might have sunk into the treacherous soil and disappeared altogether. Before leaving this wonderful island, I was given a piece of tree bark, on which was an orchid of peculiar growth, I was told that if I could grow it at home it would prove to be very valuable, since it was very rare, though it would need hothouse treatment. I am sorry that I did not send it to Kew, for one winter my conservatory was not hot enough, and it withered and died.

I had not time to visit the other side of the island, where descendants of the original Caribs still have a reservation where they live by fishing and making baskets, one of which I bought from a Carib girl in the town.

From Dominica we went on to Jamaica, and going ashore at Kingstown I was able to take several films of native life and of scenes in the sugar plantations. However, I intended to .make a further visit the next year and obtain some more, though I little dreamed then of the sudden blow that was to be dealt to this sunny island before that visit would be paid. We then sailed for La Guayra in Venezuela, calling on the way at Colon, the western entrance to the Panama Canal, which was then being constructed. I did not have time on this occasion to see much of the work that had been done, and intended making further investigations the next year.

After leaving Colon, we steamed Eastward along the Spanish Main to Puerto Columbia, which consists of a cluster of huts and a pier, on which runs a railway that connects with the interior. The ship moored alongside, and stayed long enough for to take the train to Savanilla, about 30 miles inland. This town is thoroughly Spanish in its aspect, as well for the architecture of its church as for its dirt, squalor and general insanitary conditions. Passing the open door of one of the shops in the principal street, I paused to look in, attracted by the excited crowd whom I could see gathered round a roulette table. Judging from their appearance they were poor people, but to my great surprise I found on entering the saloon that they seemed, nevertheless, to be able to afford to gamble in hundreds of dollars. The reason for this apparent wealth was explained to me by an American with whom I got in conversation. His hat was blown off, and a native boy ran after it, picked it up, and returned it to him. As a reward the American gave him two pence and remarked to me as he did so :-

“There goes four dollars!”

It appeared that the value of the Columbian dollar had depreciated to a halfpenny. He invited me to join him in a cup of coffee at a cafe, and for change of the American dollar he tendered in payment, he received a pocketful of dirty notes. He told me that a friend of his went around boasting that he once gave a luncheon party that had cost him $20,000, and could display a receipt to prove his statement.

Our next port of call was La Guayra in Venezuela, and we entered the port on the Saturday following Good Friday. All the ships had their flags at half mast, but at 3 o’clock a gun was fired from the fort, and all flags were hauled to full mast, to denote that Easter had begun. Time did not permit me to visit the wonderful city of Caracas, but I saw the train leave and watched it circle round the high conical hill whence it descends into this city. I was attracted by a native boy on the Jetty who had a spider monkey for sale, a very tame, playful little animal, which I thereupon bought to amuse my children. My attention was next drawn by paroxysms of laughter, and wondering what the little crowd further along the quay could have found to thus provoke their mirth, I went along to investigate and found them grouped around a pair of green parrots that a man was offering for sale. These parrots had suddenly started to giggle, and as the laughter of those around increased, they commenced to shriek as if carried away in convulsions of mirth, So contagious was this laughter that soon all were simply roaring, and some of the ladies were almost in hysterics. I could not help joining in too, for it was without doubt the funniest spectacle I have ever seen. I very much wished to buy these birds, but was too late, for they had already been bought by one of the ladies, who had paid only £2 for them.

A little incident that occurred on the return voyage is perhaps worthy of note, if only to show the attitude of a British Merchant Captain towards the navigation of his ship. We were steaming along so far out that the coast was scarcely discernible, when we were all surprised to find the ship being turned round and headed back in the direction we had come. It was evident that we had overstepped the mark somewhere, and that the Captain was not altogether sure of his bearings. One of the second class passengers, a missionary, came up to me and asked whether I would inform the Captain that he knew the coast thoroughly and could tell exactly the direction in which the ship should be steered. I was on very friendly terms with the skipper, and thinking that he might be glad to accept the guidance offered, went and told him what the missionary had said. He looked at me with a very stern expression, and said :-

“Tell that missionary that he may come and tell me after I have got the ship alongside.” Before leaving the West Indies for home, we put again into Barbados, and I had thus encircled the Caribbean Sea.

CHAPTER XVII A FURTHER CRUISE.

In 1907, I made another trip to the West Indies, and as before the first port of call was Barbados. Whilst waiting for the intercolonial steamer to take me to Georgetown, Demerara, a telegram was received telling the terrible news of a disastrous earthquake at Kingston Jamaica, in which Captain Constantine, the Superintendent of the R.M.S.P.Co. was one of the many killed. I would have liked to hasten at once to Jamaica, but since there was no means of getting there immediately, I went on to Georgetown in British Guiana.

The Guiana coast is split up into almost equal shares between Britain, France and Holland; the British portion was acquired in 1803. The Georgetown cathedral is a fine structure, and a film was obtained of the native choir in procession. Other subjects for films were the beautiful botanical gardens and the 7,000 acres “Diamond” sugar estate, on which the sugar cane is grown, refined and packed with the aid of electric machinery; the annual output from this estate alone is over 16,000 tons of the familiar Demerara or “Brown” sugar.

Steaming up the River Demerara on my way to Wismar, a distance of 90 miles from Georgetown, I left the steamer to visit a wayside church standing in a clearing on the bank, where a triple wedding of Arawak Indians was about to take place. These Indians arrived in their canoes, bringing with them all the accessories generally associated with a ceremony of this sort; the trousseaux were brought in tin cans. The river is the only highway, for on both sides there is impenetrable bush of tropical plants and climbing orchids of every hue. The party dressed in adjoining huts, and for the ceremony the church was quite full of the Indian people, all of whom arrived wither by canoe, dug-out or coracle. The brides were dressed in white in the English style, complete with bridal veils and orange blossoms, in strange contrast to their black faces. Staying the night with the Superintendent at Wismar, I asked him if he would arrange a regatta amongst the native craft when I returned, telling him that I had brought a quantity of trinkets suitable for prizes. The Superintendent readily agreed, and the next morning I left early in the little railway train that connects Wismar with Rockstone on the Essequibo River, where a steamboat was waiting to take me up into the interior of British Guiana. Steaming through the Tigeri Rapids required skilful navigation, but the skipper was evidently used to this tricky stretch. By an oversight no lunch had been put on board, but I saw two niggers consuming with great relish a stewed substance which they extracted from a huge pot. They also had a large bunch of bananas, and I exchanged a cigarette for a dozen of them, further augmenting my meal with a luscious pineapple which I bought from them for two pence. After a journey of about 100 miles, we arrived in the evening at Crab Falls, and moored alongside the bank. Close by was an Indian encampment; one of the natives was shooting fish with a bow and arrow with results just as satisfactory as those obtained with the more orthodox rod and line.

Although a hammock was rigged for me, it was impossible to get any sleep during the night, owing to the very persistent mosquitoes.

The next morning, a stern wheel paddle steamer arrived to take me on about another 90 miles to the Tumatumari Falls, at which point I found the Warden ready to receive me. It Is here that the glorious scenery of British Guiana begins to unfold for, commencing from the Falls themselves, where the Potario River plunges over rocks into the Essequibo, the scenery changes into hills and valleys covered with a dense growth of tropical plants. Above the falls stood the Warden’s bungalow, and cut off as he was from civilisation, he was naturally very pleased to see me, greeting me with a hearty handshake, glad to meet a brother white man, especially one straight from the home country. As I stood on the verandah, lost in admiration of the wonderful scenery, the sky became overcast and down came what seemed to me to be almost a cloudburst, one of those tropical rains of perennial occurrence. It passed over, and as soon as the sun shone out again there arose from the bush a steamy vapour like a fog, which made me understand the cause of malaria.

The Warden had with him his daughter, who though only 16, made a charming hostess. A more beautiful girl I do not think I have ever seen, with large dark liquid eyes, a marvellous complexion, perfectly shaped mouth, and black hair hanging down her back in a long thick plait tied with red ribbon, while an orchid was entwined in her hair at the side. Wearing a dress of white muslin, tied at the waist with a band of red ribbon tied at the side in a knot from which hung two streamers, she was rather reserved, but spoke well in a sweet toned voice. When she smiled she showed a magnificent display of pearly teeth of a perfect, regular shape. She had been educated at the High School in Georgetown, which probably accounted for her charming personality. She had only lately joined her father, with whom she intended to live and keep him company in his loneliness. The only link with civilisation was a gramophone that beguiled us with good music, including selections rendered by the band of His Majesty's Grenadier Guards and songs sung by great celebrities. I listened with great interest whilst lying in a hammock after our dinner, and marvelled to think that one could listen to these items whilst so deeply buried in the wilds of' British Guiana. "When I first had that," remarked the Warden, "it was amusing to see the Indians come and look all round it, wondering where the sound came from, and deciding at last that it must contain spirits from, the other world."

"I think you have a lovely daughter," said I, "indeed I don't think I have ever seen such a beautiful girl. By the way, where is her mother?"

"Ah!" he replied sadly, "there is the tragedy. I married a buck Indian woman."

"But where is she?" I asked again.

"I insisted on my daughter being sent to the High School at Georgetown," he explained, "which was much against her mother's wishes, in fact, we had a quarrel about it, as a result of which she left me and went back to her tribe."

Here came an interruption, he was called away, but returned shortly afterwards with a box.

"Whatever are you people in England thinking about!" he exclaimed.

"what's wrong ?" I asked.

"Guess what's in this box?"

"impossible!" I replied.

"Gold," said he, "there is any amount of it, and the niggers are getting it."

"Is it far off ?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "only about a couple of days' tramp to Tiger Creek, where this came from, and there are other creeks where it is being found. This is 'place' gold," he went on. "and gets washed down from somewhere, only wants prospecting for."

"What do you do with it?" was my next query.

"Oh, I send it down to the Lands and Mines Office in Georgetown."

"But could white men stand the climate?" I asked remembering the hot vapour I had seen arise after the rain.

"Ah!" he replied, "That's the snag, malaria, I get it and I don't think I can stand it much longer."

The next morning I took my leave of him and went aboard the steamboat which was to take me back. One of the passengers was an enormous negro standing well over six feet in height, and wearing half leg boots. From his watch chain dangled a gold nugget about the size of a walnut, and there were plain gold rings on his fingers.

"Come round the corner," I said, "You look worth robbing!"

A broad grin came over his black face.

"Tell me," I asked him, "where did you find that gold, was it in Tiger Creek?"

"Yaas," he replied.

"How long have you been there?"

" 'bout three months."

"What is the most you got in one day?"

"Aw, 'bout 30 ounces."

"Great Scott!" I exclaimed, "and what was the least?"

"Somewhere 'bout five ounces," he answered casually.

"You seem to have done very well," I told him, "have you left any behind?"

He laughed and said,

"Aw, yaas, dere's plenty dere if yo know where to look for it."

"Well, what are you going to do with all your wealth?"

"Going back to Georgetown to enjoy myself," was the answer.

This confirmed what the Warden had told me the previous evening. All the Guianas are highly mineralised, as is indeed the whole of the the "Spanish Main". I rather regretted that time did not permit me to visit this Tiger Creek or the famous Kaiteur Falls further on, the highest in the world. In recent years I notice that it has been proposed to exploit this region, and that a roadway is being built to these Creeks at Tumatumari, which is likely to prove the richest gold-bearing district in the world.

On my arrival at Wismar, I found it looking very festive with flags and other decorations. A crowd of natives had collected with their canoes, dug-outs and coracles, ready for the races I had asked the Superintendent to arrange. There was great variety in the nature of the contests, single canoes paddled by girls, 4 paddle coracles and dug-outs for the boys, and the events in this strange regatta made very interesting films. The prizes were presented by the wife of the Superintendent on the jetty amidst considerable excitement. Amidst cheers, and expressions of hope that I would come again, I left for Georgetown, where I found my ship alongside the quay. My arms were by this time so badly swollen by mosquito bites that as soon as I got aboard the doctor attended to them and wrapped them in boracic lint.

The steamer then took us to Trinidad again, and then north to the island of Tobago, about 60 miles distant. Its beautiful scenery is specially interesting in view of the fact that it is the island Defoe describes as where his famous character Robinson Crusoe was wrecked. Knowing that I would be visiting it I took with me a "Robinson Crusoe" dress obtained from Clarkson's, and secured a series of films to illustrate the story. The man who I got to take the part of Crusoe declared that he was quite certain that no castaway would have chosen such a raiment, for in his opinion it was far better suited for the Arctic than a tropical climate.

Moving up the islands we came to Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Antigua, and Nevis, of which the last two figure very prominently in British History. Antigua is the seat of Government for the Leeward Islands, and it is here that in English Harbour stands the old naval dockyard where Nelson refitted his ships during his memorable pursuit of Villeneuve. During my first visit to the West Indies, I bought a quantity of curios in Port au Spain, including necklaces made from seeds and shells, and so great was the demand for them amongst my friends on my return, that I resolved on my next visit to obtain a lot more. The Purser of the ship in which I made my second outward trip advised me to wait until we reached Antigua before making any purchases, because there would be a greater selection there and the articles would be much cheaper. A number of the natives came aboard on our arrival to sell their wares, amongst them was a very large black woman with an exceptionally fine selection in a huge basket. I was so much taken with them that I bought the lot, and there were enough trinkets to fill quite a large champagne case. So delighted was she at having disposed of her stock, that she insisted on placing around my neck a specially beautiful necklace. Whilst doing so one of the passengers called out :-

"Now kiss him!"

This she endeavoured to do. I ran for my life, amidst roars of laughter from the passengers standing nearby.

Nevis is perhaps the most interesting of this group of islands for it was here that, on the Montpellier Estate, Nelson was married to Mrs. Nesbitt. In the vestry of the little Fig Tree Church can be seen the marriage register, and to the right of the altar is a white, oval tablet, on which is the following Inscription:

WILLIAM WOODWARD
of this island Esqr
died the 18th February
1799
Aged 53 years
He married Mary, the Daughter of
Thomas Herbert Esqr
To whose joint memory
This tablet is erected
by their only daughter
Frances Herbert
who was first married to
Josiah Nesbitt M.D.
and since to
Rear Admiral Nelson
who for his very distinguished services
has been successfully created
A Knight of the Bath
and a Peer of Great Britain
by the title of Baron Nelson of the Nile

The Duke of Clarence, afterwards King William IV, was the best man at the wedding.

Nevis has also special attractions for Americans, for here was born Alexander Hamilton, who formed the Constitution of the United States. About 15 miles from Nevis is the island of St. Kitts, or as Columbus named it, St. Christopher, because it is said he saw in its configuration a resemblance to that Saint carrying 0ur Saviour. To the West of this island is the famous Brimstone Hill, which is a mass of volcanic rock with a base of sulphur. On the top are some strong fortifications which caused it to be called the Gibraltar of the West Indies.

From here the steamer took me to St. Thomas in the Virgin islands, which belong to Denmark, and where the famous toilet requisite of Bay Rum is produced. It is also named Buccaneers Retreat, and Bluebeard’s and Blackbeard’s Castles are supposed to have been the headquarters of the two celebrated buccaneers.

Near this island there are a number of coral islands, and attracted by a very beautiful piece of spray coral, I bought it to take home with me. A passenger on the boat returning home bet me £5 that I would not get it home intact, and I accepted. It just fitted into a tin case I had with me, and I packed it very carefully with straw. When I arrived home I found the coral still whole, and my wife expressed delight at its beauty. However, just as I was taking it from the tin, my arm touched the little chain that held the lid back, and down it crashed on the coral smashing it to fragments.

On the homeward journey the steamer called in at San Domingo at the east end of the island of Haiti. There is an old tree here to which it is said Columbus tied his ship, also a castle in which he was imprisoned. In the square adjoining the Cathedral there is a very fine statue of the famous pioneer, and just inside the Cathedral itself is a magnificent monument, at the base of which is a casket in which the body of Columbus was once laid.

From here the steamer proceeds to the island of Jamaica, and passing along the coast of the Palisades we noticed two German liners gone ashore with the waves dashing over them. It was understood that they had attempted to navigate into Kingston Harbour without a pilot, with dire results. The previous year, Kingston had been a very busy and crowded seaport, full of life and animation. Now it was a scene of desolation, in fact there was no Kingston, and the population was living in tents. All the buildings were shattered heaps on the ground, and, curiously enough, almost the only stone work left standing was a statue of Queen Victoria, which had been turned round on its pedestal, and left facing in the opposite direction, towards the Church. I climbed up inside the spire of this Church to photograph a general view of the wreckage, though the Dean strongly urged me not to do so as it might fall down at any moment. There had been three distinct quakes, the first being an undulating roll like an advancing wave, the second a shiver, or a gigantic shake, and the third a series of sudden bumps rising and falling on the ground. Numbers were buried beneath the crashing buildings, but the most terrible havoc of all was caused by the fire that followed, and which consumed the wrecked houses, which were nearly all of wood. Numbers of inhabitants pinned down by wreckage and unable to escape were burnt alive. Rescue parties were formed, led by the Governor, and many lives were saved by this means. I obtained films of this scene of disaster and sent them home at once, thus enabling the people at home to realise the magnitude of the catastrophe. Because there was no accommodation to be had ashore, I remained on board and went for a coastal trip. The Governor was also on board, intending to inspect the damage done elsewhere, though it was soon discovered that the rest of the island was quite intact, the full force of the earthquake having been concentrated on Kingston. I obtained pictures round the coast, such as Port Antonio where, in the Titchfield Hotel, there was a large number of sightseeing Americans, and also at Montego Bay. After sailing round the island, we returned to Kingston, and the ship then left for Colon, the Caribbean entrance to the Panama Canal. Three years before (Nov. 18th 1903) the United States had made a treaty with the Republic of Columbia by which a zone in Panama, ten miles wide was granted in perpetuity to the U.S.A. for building a canal to connect the Atlantic with the Pacific.

Before starting their gigantic task, the Americans sprayed the whole of the zone with oil, using over 150,000 barrels in the process. Thus the malignant mosquito was not able to breed, and being destroyed precluded a recurrence of the yellow fever plague which was one of the principal causes for the failure of the famous French engineer, De Lesseps, in his previous attempt to construct the Canal.

Labour was supplied from the various islands of the West Indies, and on my first visit to Kingston, Jamaica, in 1905, about 200 negroes embarked on the R.M.S.P. vessel in which I and many other white passengers were travelling. A weird, villainous-looking crowd these black fellows seemed as they came up the gangway. They carried their boxes and chairs with them and dumped them in the well of the fore part of the ship and along the alley ways where they were to remain during the voyage across the Caribbean Sea. A quarrelsome lot some of them were, judging from a scuffle and fight which took place whilst we were having lunch on the first day out from Kingston.

The following evening after dinner I strolled along to the Doctor’s cabin for a chat and a smoke. Just inside was his chest of drawers, and lying in the open top drawer I saw a shining, plated revolver.

“Hullo!” I exclaimed, taking hold of it, “What’s this for?”

“Put it down!” cried the Doctor, “Don’t touch it, it’s loaded!”

“Whatever for?” I asked, replacing it carefully.

“Look what we’ve got aboard,” he replied. “All the officers are armed.”

“You don’t mean those niggers ?” I said.

“I most certainly do,” he answered, “if they took it into their heads to play up rough with all these saloon passengers aboard, things might become serious. Anyhow, it is as well to be prepared.”

That night, my cabin being rather too warm, I went up on deck and sat down in a comfy chair. It was a glorious moonlight night, and the sky was covered with fleecy clouds. The sea had just sufficient swell to give the ship a slight lazy rolling motion. The deck was dimly lit, and as I sat there alone, my thoughts went back to the days when this sea used to be infested with pirates and buccaneers, the terrible fights which took place between these bloodthirsty sea rovers and the yarns I used to read about them. I then thought of what the Doctor had said about these niggers that were aboard, wondering whether such a thing as he had suggested could really happen; judging by the look of them they struck me as being capable of any kind of devilry.

From where I sat I could see right along the deck. All was still, and everyone was apparently asleep except the watch on the bridge. As I gazed with drowsy eyes down the promenade I thought I saw moving, just above the deck line, something black, which looked like a nigger’s head. Presently another appeared, and soon there was a whole row of them. At a given signal they climbed over the side, and jumping over the taffrail they pounced upon the deck; some were carrying long murderous looking knives which made my blood run cold.

“Great Scott!” I thought to myself, “the Doctor was right, those niggers have taken charge.”

I yelled out “Pirates!!” and was knocked down in the rush. All around me revolvers were being fired amidst blood-curdling yells and shrieks. I was just being taken to the side of the ship to be thrown to the sharks, when …………… I was rudely awakened from my troubled slumber by my chair being roughly shaken and a gruff voice yelled at me :-

“Hi! What’s all the row about? You’re disturbing everybody. Wake up.!!”

Though the steward had given my chair a severe shaking, I nevertheless felt gratified to him and told him, to his amazement, that he had arrived just in time to save me from being thrown overboard and eaten alive.

On arriving at Colon I was surprised at the amount of work that had been done since I was there twelve months before. Taking the train to the Culebra Cut, where the greatest obstacle was being dealt with, I found that in comparison to the bucketful of the French, the Americans were removing the soil by the ton. However, as fast as it was dug out, the soil silted down and undid the work that had been done. Meeting one of the Superintendents, I got in conversation with him.

“You seem to be up against it here,” I said.

“Yes,” he said, “the more we shift, the more there is to be moved.”

“What are you going to do about it?” I enquired.

“Well. There’s talk of shifting the mountain,” he said, “that’s not what’s bothering us, though, we can shift it all right, but the trouble is to know where to put it.”

The Colonel of Engineers with whom I had previously come out, came aboard my ship to return home. Sir Henry Hozier was remaining behind to locate a Lloyd’s station near Panama. The Colonel had a chart of the Canal with him, and was very enthusiastic over this stupendous engineering feat, stating that the Americans were up against the most gigantic problems the world had ever known. They had to decide whether the Canal was to be tidal or to incorporate a system of gigantic locks. The former course would necessitate an enormous amount of digging, and the outflow of the Chagres River had to be considered, whilst with the alternative scheme the question of foundations for the locks was a difficulty owing to the great depth of alluvial soil. It was not until six months later that the Senate decided on the locks scheme.

I hope some day to sail over the ground where I once walked dry-foot, and to see for myself in its completed state the gigantic undertaking of which I saw the commencement. I then returned safely home to receive a great welcome from my family and staff, and was glad to find that all had gone well during my absence of four months. The films I had secured, including those taken on my previous visit, made a good addition to my programme and proved to be of great public interest, enabling those at home to get in closer touch with such a valuable and historical part of the Empire.

CHAPTER XVIII THE LAND OF’ THE FREE.

The company that was sent to tour Canada in July 1902 were to give their first show in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at the Empress theatre. I decided to cross over with the staff and start them on their way, and sailed with them in the Furness liner “Loyalist”. I had had a huge flag made of blue bunting measuring 36 x 35 feet, on which were the words “Our Navy” in white letters. The voyage across was a rough one, and a few icebergs were encountered off the Banks. The Captain, a dour Scotsman, became very friendly when I told him the purpose of our visit. Without stating its size, I asked him for permission to fly my flag when the quarantine flag was hoisted; he readily complied and told me to inform the first officer. When this officer saw the big roll of bunting run a1ong the deck, he exclaimed at its size.

“Can’t send that up,” he said at once.

“Why not? “I asked.

“The halyards won’t stand it,” he replied.

“Bend some that will” I said.

“That means sending up a man to reeve ‘em,” he answered.

“Give him ten shillings,” I said.

“Does the Captain know the size of it?” he asked with a grin.

“No,” I replied, “that’s where the joke’s coming in.”

He then laughed and said that the flag would be hoisted all right.

When the ship was about 8 miles from Halifax, my flag was hoisted above the yellow quarantine flag and the fresh breeze blew it out straight. The Captain, coming on the bridge just after it had gone aloft, had a bit of a shock, but said nothing. After a little while a destroyer came dashing out and, after circling the liner a few times, returned to harbour. As we approached a four oared gig came to meet us, and seated in the stern was a Naval officer in full dress. Obviously puzzled, he called out :

“What have you got aboard, a draft?”

In reply he was asked whether ‘De Wett has been captured yet’.

This referred to the Boer general who was being chased at the time we left home. Finding he had made a mistake, the officer In the went away again. The next to arrive was a steam launch, in which was the medical officer of the port. With him was my publicity agent, who was full of the effect the flag had been causing, saying that the jetty was crowded with people wondering what on earth it could mean. His statement made me wonder why the population should not already know too well what “Our Navy” meant, so I asked him :

“Havn’t you got the advertising bills out yet, then?”

“They are being put up today,” he replied.

I was content to leave it at that, as the size of the audiences at the performances showed that nothing had been lost by this delay in advertisement.

The North American and West Indies Cruiser Squadron was in the harbour at the time, and I went aboard the flagship, H.M.S. “Crescent”, the same ship that had been commanded by the late King when Duke of York. She was now commanded by Capt. Colville to whom I gave an invitation for the fleet men to be present at the opening night of the show. This was accepted, and a signal was made to the ships of the Squadron to that effect. The officers also intended to come, and I was pleased to accept their offer to send the flagship’s band to play at the opening performance.

A difficulty arose over the voltage of the electric current, which was not sufficient for the lantern and projector. However, the operator was an ex-C.P.O. from H.M.S. “Vernon”, and was equal to the occasion. A cable was run along trees to the tram lines, the voltage of which was, however, too powerful for my resistance to break down. Other means for stepping it down had, therefore, to be used, and three barrels of water were utilised. The leads were hung over them on a broom handle and when the water reached in the first barrel near boiling point they were removed and placed in the next. Of course, the hotter the water became the brighter grew the light in the lantern, so that just before shifting the leads from the very hot water to the next barrel of cold, the light on the screen on which the pictures were being projected, was of dazzling brilliancy.

All the reserved seats had been booked, and the theatre was crowded. The first film to be shown was of the flagship of the squadron then in port (H.MS “Crescent”) steaming out of Portsmouth Harbour to the tune of “The Girl I left Behind Me”.

This brought rounds of applause and cheers from the fleetmen, and from first to last the audience were full of enthusiasm.

During the interval I heard one bluejacket ask another :-

“What do you think of it ?”

“It’s all so bally correct!” was the reply.

I felt that this was one of the best compliments I had been paid.

At the conclusion of the performance, a portrait of the King was shown as usual, and the band struck up the National Anthem. The whole audience immediately rose and stood to attention, but a little contretemps occurred, for someone in the reserved seats put his hat on. The Bishop of Halifax, who was behind him, immediately knocked it off. The gentleman apologised, saying that he had been so carried away that he had forgotten to keep his head uncovered. This incident subsequently found its way into the London papers.

Bidding my staff farewell and wishing them good luck, I returned in the same steamer by which I had gone over, feeling very satisfied at the reception “Our Navy” had been given. As the ship steamed out of harbour, my last view of the city of Halifax was predominated by the large flag I had brought out with me, which was then flying from the staff above the roof of the theatre. The tour through Canada was very successful, and so greatly was it appreciated in Montreal that it had to make a second visit.

There was little time to obtain films during my short stay in Halifax and there was no occasion to do so as some were being sent over to London from various parts of this vast Dominion of ours. One of them attracted much attention, and was greatly appreciated by my audiences, the title of it being “Logging in Canada”. This was a scene in the pine forests, showing the cutting down of one of these great giants. The men started cutting a cleft at the base with long axes, and then plied with a cross cut saw until an ominous cracking sound was heard, when it started to break away and gradually leaned over until it fell with a loud crash and hit the ground, scattering in its fall limbs and leaves from other surrounding trees. All the branches are lopped off, leaving a bare trunk, which is sawn into lengths and hauled to the railway trolleys. They are then conveyed through the forest to the head of a timber chute, down which they rapidly slide, rumbling along to the jetty, where they plunge with a big splash into the river, and drift down to the mills. This film was greatly enhanced by the effects made behind the screen, and by the orchestra playing that haunting melody “Down South”.

This film went very well with another that was obtained during the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York, of a log rolling contest that was specially arranged for them. It was marvellous to see how the sure footed backwoodsmen kept their balance and made the logs roll round and round in the water at terrific speed.

During the journey of the Duke and Duchess across the Dominion, a very enthusiastic welcome was given at every place where the Royal train stopped. During the tour a panoramic film was obtained from the observation car, giving a wonderful view of the country as the train sped along, diving through the tunnels and out again, sweeping round bends and over bridges and bringing ever-changing scenes of magnificent scenery. C.P.O. McGregor, who was working the camera, told me of an incident that happened during the run. The Duke was leaning against the door of the observation car smoking and watching him take a film, when the Duchess brought him a letter from Queen Alexandra, In whose care they had left their children, and who had written with news of them. Taking it from her, the Duke accidentally let it slip from his hand, and it disappeared over the rail behind the fast moving train. This caused the Duchess so much distress that she burst into tears. The Duke was greatly concerned and offered to have the train stopped, but it was going very fast, and by the time it could be brought to a halt he thought the letter would be so far away that it would take a longer time to look for it than they could spare. He went with the Duchess into the saloon car, evidently with the intention of trying to console her on the loss of the letter. film taken by McGregor ended with a view taken on the side of the track as the train rushed out of the tunnel of the Kicking Horse Canyon, tearing past at great speed.

The Niagara Falls made a magnificent subject, and when the first films were shown, taken from various view-points on the American and Canadian sides, and showing Goat island, the Horseshoe Falls and the Whirlpool Rapids (where Captain Webb lost his life in an attempt to swim across), exclamations of admiration were drawn forth from the audience at the majestic spectacle of immense volumes of water flowing over into the lake a hundred feet below, sending up clouds of spray reaching as high as the falls themselves. The effects men behind the screen used quantities of coarse sandpaper and frequent rumblings on the big drum to represent the sound of the roaring and rushing waters.

The miles and miles of prairies now cultivated for the growing of wheat were also photographed, together with the horse teams used for ploughing and harvesting, which opened the eyes of some of the farmers at home who were accustomed to a single plough drawn by a mere two horses. Without this vital supply of wheat from Canada and other parts of the world, England would starve, so that the importance of maintaining a strong navy can be plainly seen.

CHAPTER XIX THE COMING OF THE CINEMAS.

The first films I obtained early in 1897, 12 months after Lumière showed his first films at the Polytechnic, were of an experimental nature and were manipulated in a crude way. The developing was loosely done in a pan, and the films were hung over a line to dry like so much washing, while at first there were no spools and the film was wound into reels by hand. At that time I had not heard of acetone for joining together different lengths of film, so each subject was run through the projector separately, slides being shown during the threading process. The officers of H.M.S. "Vernon" the torpedo depot ship, heard of what I was doing, and becoming interested invited me to take films of the explosion of mines and the firing of a Whitehead, an enlargement from which latter was framed and hung on board for many years, serving the very useful purpose of showing the angle at which the torpedo enters the water. Other subjects obtained included the Diamond Jubilee procession of Queen Victoria through London, which were shown on board at a children's party, my first show.

Knowledge, however, came quickly, and progress was rapid. I then realised that there were considerable possibilities ahead, and built an annexe to my house at Southsea to which I gave the name "The Anchorage". It was fitted with what was necessary to turn out films on a fairly large scale, with developing, printing and drying rooms and spacious offices. I made this my headquarters, from whence everything was supplied to my various companies and where all business could be transacted, including the bookings of the various towns on the tours, which themselves involved a good deal of work.

The films were dried after developing by being wound round a drum made of slats, being dried by a row of gas jets in the axle as the drum slowly revolved. I believe that this method of drying was later extensively adopted, and is still in use to a great extent at the present time.

When I was away from headquarters obtaining fresh films, I left the business in the hands of an experienced general manager. I could thus go safely on a tour of inspection of the different companies, who never knew when I might turn up, in fact I was often in the hall watching the show without any of them knowing it. One of the most successful runs in the provinces was at the West Pier, Brighton, one March, which is considered the slack season, matinee performances only being usually given. However, I insisted on two evening shows being given on Saturday and Wednesday the first week as a trial to see whether they would be as well attended as the matinees. I also arranged that should the evening shows prove successful, performances should be given every night the next week in addition to the matinees, and the same for the two weeks following that. Thus the show was booked for four weeks in the 'off' season, when others seldom stayed for longer than a week. It was arranged that my proportion of the net takings should rise in ratio to the receipts, but the manager of the Pier did not share my optimism as to the success of the run. However, it turned out to be so successful the first week, that during the second week performances were given each evening as well as each afternoon, and at each the pavilion was packed. Each week the attendances rose higher and higher, until on the last Saturday the demands for admission were so great that an extra show had to be provided in the morning. Despite heavy falls of snow, on all occasions the audiences were most enthusiastic, and the manager told me that It was the most successful run he had ever known on the Pier.

No less enthusiastic and patriotic was the population of the East End of London. Since the show was given at the Polytechnic in the afternoons only, the staff were free in the evening for bookings elsewhere, such as at the old People's Palace in Mile End Road and East Ham Town Hall (which was usually filled by those admitted through the early door), and also at Ilford, Bermondsey and many other places. Thus "Our Navy" became famous throughout the country and also my name as its organiser. A few years after I started, I was surprised to receive letters from people in a provincial town asking why I did not show the same pictures there as were shown in London.

I subsequently found that a film show had been organised under the title of "West's Pictures" by a Mr. T.J.West, who had previously run a "Modern Marvel Co.", and his programmes were made up from films obtained from film dealers. This caused considerable confusion as far as my show was concerned, and even at the present time he is sometimes credited with having been the founder of "Our Navy". Mistakes sometimes arise, and I think that it is only fair to myself that I should mention this.

As I have mentioned before, at the time when I first started to exhibit films as a commercial proposition, films were considered only worthy of being the last items on the programme at Music Halls, and notice was seldom taken of them because the audience was too busy getting together their hats and coats preparatory to leaving. It was only when “Our Navy” had been established that the possibilities in the film industry became evident, and as it was the only cinematograph entertainment of public interest then in existence, demands for it to be shown all over the country and the Empire soon came thick and fast. It was not possible to accept the numerous requests I was receiving for “Our Navy” to be taken to various parts of the world, and though a company was sent to Australia in 1901 and another to Canada in 1902 I was not able to send one to South Africa owing to the difficulty of finding a competent and reliable staff. Enquiries also came from France, Germany and Scandinavia, while in 1908 a responsible firm in India offered me very satisfactory terms, which I decided to accept. Everything in connection with the tour was arranged by the Indian concern, and all they wanted were the pictures, the necessary projector and appliances, and an operator to work them. I had a good operator at the Polytechnic whom I could spare, and as my son, who had accompanied me on my first voyage to the West Indies in 1905, wanted to go, I decided he should do so and take a camera with him so that he could film any subjects he considered interesting.

I was glad I made this decision, for he was very successful in adding to my collection, and while showing at Calcutta he filmed the Gordon Highlanders stationed there at Fort William, the subjects being - March past in review order - Pipes and drums beating retreat - Dancing the reel. When at Jubbalpore, the native Indian Cavalry gave a display of horse riding, including Tent pegging and other items, and he was asked if he thought his nerve was good enough to stand in front of a cavalry charge with his camera and take a film of them. He was warned that there would be no indication of any opening appearing in their ranks as they bore down on him at the charge until the very last moment. He agreed to try, and I could not but admire his pluck for I am a bit doubtful whether I should have done it myself, and felt amused as he described the incident to me afterwards, which in his own words was as follows:

“I stuck up the camera and awaited events. As they trotted past me to take up their positions in the distance, they were a fierce looking lot with murderous looking lances and swords, and I was beginning to wonder what I had let myself in for, but whatever happened I was determined to keep the handle of the camera turning. They came along slowly at first, and then getting faster and faster they quickened into a gallop. My hair began to rise when, within about 100 yards they swooped down towards me at the charge, yelling like demons. There was certainly no sign of any opening in their ranks, and how they were going to pass me without bowling me over was more than I could tell, so I shut my eyes, and went on turning and hoped for the best, but I felt my hair was on end. It was only a matter of seconds, what exactly happened I don’t quite know, but I heard the panting of the horses, the sound of their hooves, the clatter of accoutrements, and the yells of the riders as they tore past me so close that I could almost feel them, and leaving me smothered in the dust cloud into which they had disappeared. When I opened my eyes again and turned round to look, mopping the dust and perspiration from my forehead, two of the officers rode up, laughing, and congratulated me on the way I had stuck it. Then I joined them in a good laugh, the relief was so great!”

I felt very proud of my son’s achievement, and happy to say the film was a great success. Before leaving India he obtained other scenes of native life, making altogether a very interesting series.

On the way home, my son and the operator left the ship at Malta, where the show was booked for a run. Then leaving the operator to carry on with the show by himself, my son returned overland. I was not expecting his arrival so soon, and I was just returning home from buying some Christmas presents when I heard his voice behind me in the street saying, “Hello, Dad! Merry Christmas! How’s Mother?”

Four days later came the news of the terrible earthquake at Messina, which my son had missed by an even narrower margin than I had missed the earthquake at Jamaica.

My operator was still at Malta, and cabled :-

“Shall I proceed Messina and obtain films of earthquake?”

I replied :-

“Yes be first with results if possible.”

Large sums of money were offered for the first films of the earthquake to reach London, and I was naturally keen that the reward should be mine, however, I was just too late after all, being forestalled by another whose films reached London half an hour before mine.

My son had been a great help to me in the running of the show, but his heart was not in the work, and he was very keen to go out to Australia and go in for farming. I was reluctant to let him go, but finally persuaded myself that it was best for him. Eighteen months later he was joined by his younger brother, so that I was left to carry on alone.

The success attending my efforts drew the attention of others who argued that if I could show a two hours programme of films and make money from doing so, they could do the same. Then on all sides cinemas began to spring up, and the public demand for films gave great impetus to the activities of the film producing companies and saw the beginnings of the careers of such prominent figures in the film industry as Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin. However, all the films produced in the great pre-war boom were not of the same lighthearted character, and because so many were sordid and unfit for showing, it was found necessary to set up the British Board of Film Censors.

In the first stages of the cinema boom, most people thought it would only be a nine days' wonder and the early picture houses were usually converted shops or old warehouses and the like, but as the new form of entertainment grew more and more popular, buildings specially constructed for the projection of films sprang up all over the country, and "Continuous Performances" were soon the rule. As these great developments took place, there was a change in the system of distribution of films, for whereas previously it had been impossible to hire them, and any prospective exhibitor or proprietor of a picture house had to buy them outright from the film agents, a hiring organisation was built up to meet the great demand. I had always kept my films to myself, because there were a great number of "pirates" who used to buy a positive copy of some film and print others from it, thus depreciating the value of the original and I most certainly did not want this to happen. On tour, my show was given in halls, but under new regulations which came in in 1912, it was made compulsory to have the operating box right away from the auditorium, and as I was not in a position to comply with these regulations at all the places where my films were shown, I saw that my best course in future would be to concentrate on hiring out my films to the new cinema concerns. Accordingly I produced an illustrated synopsis of the films I had taken, indexing all the films for reference purposes, and sent copies of it to the exhibitors with the films. At the request of the Librarian, a copy of this synopsis was placed in the Admiralty Library.

The response to this hiring scheme of mine was quite beyond my most sanguine expectations, and I was flooded out with orders for film from hundreds of applicants, not only in England but in the Dominions as well, one Australian firm asking for 20,000 feet of film on hire for 12 months. It was quite impossible for me to deal with all these orders at my headquarters, so I arranged for the printing to be done by a London firm. It was not long before began to feel that the business was becoming too involved for me to tackle by myself, and I was badly in need of a good rest, so that when a Glasgow firm asked my terms for letting them have the sole rights of hiring the films in Scotland and the Northern Counties, I replied that for a certain sum I was prepared to let them have the rights for the whole world, in other words to let them take over the whole business, lock, stock and barrel. This was agreed to, and I was paid a deposit on the total purchase sum, which was to be paid by means of instalments over a period of two years. In the meantime I kept the negatives and only let the Glasgow firm have the positives they needed for showing.

Free from the worry which fourteen years of strenuous work had entailed, I made a trip out to Australia to visit my sons' farm, a relaxation from such a long period of mental activity. Little could we guess then that within two years not only would "Our Navy" be a thing of the past, but that all other peace time activities would be overshadowed by the great catastrophe that was to burst on the world in the autumn of 1914. In this respect one of my coloured posters had proved prophetic, for it showed a figure of Britannia holding aloft a Union Jack, while in front three buglers, representing the Army, Navy and Colonial forces, sounded the call to arms: the whole of the rest of the picture was filled with British warships and troops rushing to the defence of the Motherland. The purchase of my work was completed, and it passed from my hands. Thus the organisation which for so long entertained the British public in illustrating the preparations made for their defence, became submerged in the gigantic conflict that was to shake the world, and when peace was again restored nothing remained of it but pleasing memories.

EPILOGUE.

Although this book has been concerned chiefly with the inception, growth and fruition of “Our Navy” as a popular entertainment, a few of my experiences subsequent to relinquishing control of the show in 1913 may prove interesting. As already indicated I was in need of a holiday after the unremitting strain of the previous fourteen years, and I decided that I could not do better than visit my sons on their farm in Western Australia. There can be nothing equal to a sea voyage for a thorough mental rest; being rocked in the cradle of the deep is a great tonic for mind and body, and above all one is not troubled with letters, telegrams and business worries.

The first three weeks I spent mostly asleep, but four days after leaving Capetown we encountered a violent storm which carried away some of the boats, one breaking from its davits and crashing on the deck above my cabin just as I was trying to get asleep. The following morning the Captain told me that a big wave had caught the ship during the night and he had quite thought for a moment that she would not rise before another enveloped her. Had, she been caught in the trough of the preceding wave, the chances were that she would have turned turtle and sunk, repeating the tragedy of the “Waratah”, which is believed to have been caught in just such a storm as this in ’18 whilst on her way from Capetown to Durban, I was invited on to the bridge to obtain a film of the raging sea, two men being sent to help bring the camera. By hanging on to the life line, I managed to clamber up; whilst the men held on to the stand I fixed the camera with great difficulty and began turning the handle. It was, I think, the biggest sea I have ever been in, and the film I obtained of it was enough to give nasty qualms to even the hardiest sailors who saw it afterwards. Owing to our encountering this terrific gale, the speed of the ship had to be reduced to about four knots, which delayed us in reaching Albany.

On our arrival, I found that H.M.A.S. “Australia”, which had left Portsmouth a few days before I sailed, had already departed for Sydney. This was rather a pity, for the Commander had invited me to take passage in her should I reach there in time. However, had I done so it would have been a great disappointment to my sons, who were waiting to give me a hearty welcome. We spent some time in looking round this pretty watering place and admiring the Princess Harbour, capable of holding the whole of the British pre-war Fleet, and of great potential use as a port of call. We then took train for Tambelup, where horses and carriage were waiting to take us on to my sons’ farm. After a somewhat bumpy journey along bush tracks, we arrived just at twilight at the farm, forty miles from the nearest little town, fifteen from the nearest neighbour and seven from a railway halt, where the weekly train dropped mails and stores.

Sitting around the camp-fire under the sparkling lights of the Southern Cross shining down with stereoscopic clearness, and eating the simple meal the bush-man had prepared, we smoked and chatted to a very late hour, for there was much to talk about, and I was happy to be again with my sons. I had no conception that the Australian bush was so beautiful, and as we rode out the following morning, I could not help stopping to admire some of the flowers, all quite different from any I had seen before. The whole bush was a galaxy of colour, and seemed like a fairyland in which there was as much mystery as beauty. Coming to one of the creeks that lie near the farm, my son drew my attention to a strange geological phenomenon which had been too much of a puzzle for anyone to solve up till that time. In the midst of the creek was a large flat bed of rock in the centre of which was a small circular opening beneath which was a deep hole filled right to the brim with water and called locally ‘the night well’, because the water only collected there at night time. Year in, year out, in hot weather and in cold, and with the regularity of clockwork, all the water in the well would disappear at sun-up and refill itself at sundown. Another strange feature was that whereas the surrounding water of the creek was of a dirty brown colour and salt, yet in this well it was clear, fresh and cool and besides being used by travellers passing along the nearby track, it came in useful for watering the sheep. It was most certainly not a dewpond, because the hole at the top was only a few feet across and the well was of condiderable depth. No one could solve the mystery, not even the Government Surveyor who thought he could do so some years later by blowing it up with dynamite. This only added to the mystery, because the night well disappeared for good and was never seen again.

The bush swarms with flies and ants of all kinds, ants Varying in size from that of a pin’s head to the bull-dog breed of about an inch long, white ants which make havoc of any soft wood, and flying ants that migrate and shed their wings where they decide to stay. Their elaborately built nests are like huge earth heaps, and in many respects the little communities are almost human in their organisation. With the flies the arts are the scavengers, disposing of dead objects in a very short time. One day I saw a farmer sinking holes for fence posts at regular intervals along a line he had marked out, but a huge ant-heap was in his way, and I wondered what he was going to do about it, for to dig a hole in the heap was out of the question. I watched him with great interest as he proceeded to overcome the difficulty; his method was certainly simple and effective, but seemed very cruel, for gathering a lot of dried wood, he made a bonfire on the heap, which very soon burnt up all the little inmates and enabled him to carry on his work without fear of interruption.

The ways of ants are worth studying, and I used to watch their movements, which were a certain way of foretelling the weather, and one could always tell when rain was coming. A neighbouring farmer who had dropped in to see us on one occasion, was complaining of the lack of rain, and I rather surprised him by promising some within 24 hours. There was then no indication of any so far as one could judge from the sky, which at the time was cloudless, but, nevertheless, the rain came alright. Some weeks after, he called again, remarking :

"You were quite right about that rain coming, but how on earth did you know ?"

"Quite simple" I replied, "Want any more?"

"Well, yes," he said in a mystified sort of a way, "could do with a drop more."

"Very good," I told him, "You will get some in about two days' time."

Sure enough rain came, and a regular deluge it was, too. This puzzled the farmer, and when he called again he wanted to know how it was that I could tell.

"Have you any ants on your ground ?" I enquired.

"Plenty," he replied.

"Watch their movements, and you will be able to tell as easily as I can," I told him.

Then I explained what I had found, that when the rain was coming the ants start making a rampart around their little holes in the ground, bringing up specks of mud from below and depositing them to form a semi-circular wall to prevent the water from running into their front door. When the ground is on a slope, the rampart on the upper side is built higher to guide the running water away from the entrance. The length of time that is likely to elapse before the rain comes is judged from the rapidity with which the ants work, if it is coming soon, they work with feverish haste, but if a longer time is to lapse they work more leisurely.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" said the farmer when I had finished "all these years I've been farming, and I never knew that."

I was cautioned not to wander too far away from the farm alone, as it was quite easy for a new chum to get lost in the bush, and I found some difficulty in boxing my compass owing to the sun shining from the northern sector instead of in the south which I had always been used to at home. My own experience of being "bushed" on one occasion made me think I could make an effective film about a man lost in the bush, and I got one of the bushmen to take the part, which he did with great realism. It was perhaps a little harrowing, but illustrated an occurrence which is, unhappily, all too frequent.

The bush fires are commenced on the 15th of February each year, well after the last of the harvest has been taken in. In order to clear away the timber that has to be cut down to make arable land, it is necessary to burn it, for besides removing all the unwanted and valueless vegetation, the ash of the burnt material is of great use as a fertiliser. The hundreds of acres of virgin bush my son had cut down the previous year had dried during the hot summer, and was as combustible as tinder, and the straw left standing after the harvester had out off only the ears of wheat was also ready to flare up as soon as a light was put to it. Starting on the windward side of the straw, the conflagration commenced, devouring it with astonishing rapidity and making a sound as of the crackling of a "feu de joie". The bush on fire is a wonderful sight, and I got my camera to work on it amidst the leaping flames and great volumes of smoke. It made an interesting subject for a film, but I nearly got caught myself, for I found myself encircled by the flames, though fortunately I saw an opening and picked up the camera and made a dash for it, getting through just in time.

I then left my sons for a tour round other parts of West Australia, visiting some of the large fruit farms, also the wonderful Kauri forest, where the State mills were sawing up these enormous trees into sleepers for the intercolonial railway. I do not think the people at home realise the size of Australia, but to give some idea, if it were placed in the North Atlantic Ocean, Perth on the west coast would touch New York, while Brisbane on the east could touch Bantry in Ireland. The Western State alone is seven times the size of the British Isles, and of course I was only able to visit little bits of it, but what I saw showed me very clearly that with a larger population and greater capital there are great potentialities.

I took passage from Albany for the Eastern States in the same ship I came out in, which had, in the meantime, made the voyage home and out again, and renewed acquaintance with the Captain. I had several relatives living in and around Adelaide, and when I arrived they made me very welcome, showing me round this delightful city with its broad streets and beautiful avenues. I always got into conversation with anyone I came across, as I was out for information, and I think this is the best way to obtain it. In travelling in the train from Adelaide to Melbourne, a fellow passenger remarked to me as we were climbing the Lofty mountain range that there was any amount of gold in these hills if only one knew where to lay hands on it. He also told me various stories of gold being found in unforeseen places, and one was about two ‘sun downers’ (bush tramps) who had camped out for the night; on awakening in the morning, one complained of the hardness of the place where he had rested, calling it the hardest b!!!!!!! pillow he had ever put his head on. Giving it a vicious kick, he howled with pain, and hopped about on one foot, holding his stubbed toe with his hands. Then moving a little of the mould away with his foot to see what it could be, his chum saw the glitter of gold, and with frantic haste the two of them removed more earth, and disclosed to their eager eyes lay a large nugget.

The capacity of the British for colonising is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in Australia, with its cities of magnificent building rivalling those in any other parts of the world, and its big industries for which wool and wheat, both produced in the country, are the chief raw materials. This new centre of civilisation has developed in little over a century, and if the next hundred years brings as much revolutionary change to the Dominion, further expansion will be rapid and far reaching in its effect. One has a feeling of pride of race in visiting such a country and in the knowledge that it is absolutely and entirely British.

Walking along Collins Street, Melbourne, with a friend, I was attracted by a very splendid building, a bank, situated on a corner site. For a long time the piece of ground on which it was built was lying vacant, and although the owner was widely advertised for, he could not be found anywhere. Eventually it was assumed that he had died leaving no relatives or anyone who could make a claim to the land, so that this building was erected on it. Some years later, miles up country in the back of the beyond, in the bush, two men were together in a “Humpy” having a yarn when one of them noticed an old tin box on a shelf above his chum’s head and asked what was in it.

“Oh, I don’t know!” said the owner who could neither read nor write, “Only some papers my old dad left, don’t know what they are about.”

“Let’s have a look at ‘em,” said his chum.

The box was handed down. In it were various papers and receipts amongst which was a deed relating to this piece of land in Melbourne.

“If I was you, Jim,” his chum suggested, “I should take this ‘ere box just as it is with the papers to some lawyer in Melbourne, and see if ‘e thinks they are of any value.”

Jim thought he would, and did. The lawyer on whom he called looked over the papers and started with surprise when he came across the one referring to the piece of land.

“Here!” he exclaimed,” they’ve been hunting for you!

“Who ‘as ?” asked Jim.

“Why, Good Lord man, where have you been that you havn’t seen the advertisements?” “Up country all my life. Never been in Melbourne before,” replied Jim.

“Well,” went on the lawyer, “this paper I am holding means that you are the owner of a piece of land here on which a bank has been built.”

“What’ll I do about it then ?” enquired Jim.

The lawyer thought for a bit, and then told him to go to the bank the next morning before the doors opened, and to stop anyone from going in. Jim smiled; it was a kind of a job that tickled him.

He was there in good time the next morning, and sat down on the steps at the entrance to the bank, pulling out his pipe to have a smoke whilst waiting and feeling rather pleased with himself in anticipation of possibilities. When the doors were opened, he put his pipe away and stood by. He did not have to wait long before customers began to arrive.

“Can’t come in ‘ere!” said Jim, and prepared to push them back. This of course did not last long, for the police arrived and marched him off for obstruction. However, this was just what the lawyer wanted, and when the case came up in the police court he defended, stating that the man was within his rights, as he was standing on his own land. The Directors of the bank offered £10,000 compensation, which was accepted, thus avoiding expensive litigation.

It was early on Sunday morning when I left for Sydney in a coastal steamer, and we had hardly weighed anchor before most of the passengers started playing the popular Australian gambling game of “Two Up”, which they kept going throughout the entire voyage. I watched with considerable interest as considerable sums of money changed hands, and the remarks of the players, very much in the vernacular, were most emphatic. One had lost £20, and had to give up as he was broke, and I was told that hundreds of pounds are lost and won over this simple gambling game.

I was looking forward to seeing Sydney Harbour, but no photographs I had seen could do adequate justice to this magnificent expanse of water, for passing the Heads at the entrance, one is lost in admiration at the succession of bays with charming residences dotted about the high banks covered with green trees and glorious flowers. As the ship steamed towards the Quay, we passed H.M.A.S “Australia” and numbers of other ships at anchor, whilst I counted no less than twelve passenger steamers plying from Circular Quay and bustling on their way to various parts of the Harbour.

On the morning after my arrival I was up early, and as soon as it was open I went into the General Post Office opposite my Hotel. Then going up to the clerk at the counter I asked what must have sounded a rather curious question :-

“If I send a cable to London right now, will it reach there yesterday?”

The clerk looked a bit puzzled and said he’d go and enquire. Then coming back he told me it would! I had certainly arrived Down Under!

There is so much to see in this gloriously situated city and its surroundings, so wonderfully endowed by nature, that time passed all too quickly, but I was able to include a visit to the Blue Mountains in my tour, also Manlyy Beach, where I had my first experience of surf bathing, the foamy waves rolling in and carrying me along in a fizzling froth and laying me on the warm sandy beach; I never experienced anything more delightful and exhilarating. A fellow bather remarkd that he could see I was a new chum, and when I told him that I was from the Old Country on a visit, he cautioned me to be careful not to be caught in the undertow of the receding waves, as that is how many lose their lives.

Although I very much regretted it, time did not permit my going on one of the cruises to New Zealand which I saw widely advertised in Sydney. My wife also wanting me to return, and at first I intended to go round via the East coast so that I could steam through that inner barrier reef I had heard so much about, but an urgent appeal of my sons to visit them again altered my plans, and I went back to Perth for a few days before leaving by Orient liner at Freemantle. Perth is another delightful city, situated on the Swan River, and whilst there I was introduced to the Minister of Defence, with whom I had lunch at Parliament House. He expressed himself as pleased to learn that I had enjoyed my visit to the Commonwealth, and he told me of matters of great interest to me. I told him that my impression was that there were too many workers idle in the cities whilst there was a shortage of labour on the land. It is a vast country only waiting development, and whilst there was plenty to do for the bees of the community, it was no place for drones. I told him that if my wife was willing I should be happy to come and live in such a sunny climate, and hoped that the films I was taking back with me might help to persuade her to do so, besides giving people at home some idea of what it is like.

Steaming across the Indian Ocean, we caught the tail of the Monsoons, and had a rather stormy passage, though escaping any serious damage. On the arrival of the ship at Colombo, I went ashore with two other passengers, engaging a motor car to drive us around. By the side of one road, we came across a native performing conjuring tricks, and stopped the car to watch. I asked him if he could do the mango trick, and with a nod of his head he said that if we gave him 2/- each he would. This we agreed to, and after we had handed him the 6/- he brought out of his tunic a withered looking mango stone for us to examine, which we did very closely, and for identification I scratched marks on it with my pen-knife. He then commenced operations, and stooping down scooped up some of the loose soil, making a mound on which he poured some water from a tin can. He then inserted the stone, placing half a coconut shell over it, after which he took two pipes from his tunic and began to play some weird tunes and to dance round and round the heap of mould. Then stooping down again, he waved his hands above the coconut shell and muttered incantations. This lasted about five minutes, and when he raised the shell from the mango stone, we saw to our amazement a little plant with four young leaves shooting out of the soil. We were watching very keenly from about six feet off, and the sight of this little plant of lusty growth made us open our eyes wide, but there was more to follow. He next covered the little plant with a cloth, brought out his pipes again, and repeated the same performance as before. Then putting his hands beneath the cloth he suddenly whisked it off and there was a plant of about 18 inches in height with about 30 green leaves of vigorous growth. I called out to the native to pull it up, as I wanted to see the root. This he did, bringing the plant for close examination, and I found the stone now had fibrous roots spreading out for about 6 inches on each side, and I could still plainly distinguish the marks I had scratched on it for identification. I knew something of horticulture, but this was quite beyond me, and I broke off one of the leaves, measuring 9 inches in length by 21 inches broad, which I still have, though it is now dried and cracked in halves.

Leaving Ceylon, we sailed on towards home, and as we passed through the Red Sea there was no wind and the water was like a mirror. Sighting a becalmed dhow making signals for assistance, the Skipper stopped to see what they wanted, and soon it became obvious that they had no food or water, fresh supplies were passed over to them. In addition to cans of water and loaves of bread, many of the passengers threw down packets of cigarettes. Judging from the frantic way in which the water, was drunk and the bread devoured, the Arabs must have been without both for some time and almost ravenously hungry. After performing this act of charity so truly British, we steamed on our way, leaving behind happy faces and grateful hearts.

The passage through the Suez Canal was all the more interesting to me as I was able to compare this great engineering, feat with the much greater one the Americans were at work upon at the Panama, of which I had witnessed the commencement.

Arriving at Gibraltar, we were more than startled to learn that war between Great Britain and Germany was imminent and might break out at any moment, and it was seriously suggested that we might not get home before it did so, However, on August 1st I arrived in London, where I rejoined my wife and received a hearty welcome from all my friends. The outbreak of war put an end to all my ideas of returning to Australia, besides which. I had a letter from my eldest son saying that he had left the farm In charge of his brother and had joined up with the first contingent of the Australian Field Artillery.

When the great struggle that lasted for four weary years had at last ended, I found myself no longer eager to conquer fresh fields in photographic discovery, but content to spend the rest of days in quiet retirement, sitting back and watching others make new discoveries along the path where I had been the pioneer.

FINIS