

Extracts from:

BEATTY, JELlicOE, SIMS
AND RODMAN

Yankee Gobs and British
Tars,
as Seen by an
“Anglomaniac”

BY

LIEUT. FRANCIS T. HUNTER

United States Navy

(Hunter served on the USS New York with the Grand Fleet)

UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET

U. S. S. New York flagship

April 15, 1919.

Dear Mr. Hunter:

It will be a pleasure to comply with the request contained in your letter of April 13th for an expression of my views, which you are privileged to use.

In reference to the cordial relations which existed between the British and American naval forces I was surprised to learn that there had ever been but one idea on the subject on the part of any one, in or out of the service, for surely to those of us whose work during the war was always in close contact with the British navy in the war zone, no such question ever arose. On the other hand, I wish to state most positively and without the slightest reservation, that no happier or more cordial relations could possibly have existed than those which obtained between our two navies which performed war service together. I served directly under the command of Sir David Beatty, than whom no better or more gallant and efficient leader ever trod the deck of a battleship.

I have sometimes thought that the close, homogeneous, and brotherly cooperation in the Grand Fleet was an example of what two nations could do that had a common cause, whose hearts were in the right place and in their work, and was an example and possibly the incentive which first prompted the Allies to place all of their armies under the command of Marshal Foch, and which, as was proved, was the most logical way in which to win the war.

There can be no question that our destroyer force did valiant service against the Hun submarine; that our heavy artillery force—manned by naval gunners with its 14-inch guns mounted on railway carriages, each throwing a shell that weighed 1,400 pounds, and which operated with the army at the front—made their presence a dread to Hun strongholds which could not otherwise have been poached by gunfire; that our mining force in the North Sea, by laying a barrage or string of mines from the Norwegian coast to the Orkney Islands across the North Sea, aided materially by adding to the danger of any Hun submarine or surface craft that might attempt to gain the open sea.

We have every reason to be proud of, and no reason to regret, the part our navy played in its work during the war, and, taking a retrospective view, had we to do it again, we would not change one iota, which is the strongest proof that the work has

been well done. When I add that I sometimes commanded a force with British admirals under me, sometimes they commanded me, and that no thought of jealousy, no thought of nationality, no thought of any misunderstanding ever arose, you will understand how extremely close and brotherly were our relations.

There has been a good deal of advocacy and discussion of the policy of furthering our bond of union with the British navy by bringing together a part or all of the two fleets for a time at certain occasions. I have felt from the first that this would be an excellent and most beneficial enterprise, navally and nationally, and that such an opportunity for national gain should not be neglected. I am sure that His Majesty King George of Great Britain shares this feeling, for when the matter was broached to him he acquiesced very strongly and expressed the hope that our fleets may meet again yearly in friendly visits, not by a written agreement, but by a national and friendly desire to perpetuate the deep-rooted, and if I may use the word, affectionate relations which have obtained between our naval forces.

Should the time ever come again in the future, as it has done in this war, there is no question in my mind but that we shall stand together through thick and thin, fight together and win together.

I consider it an honour to have served under such a worthy chief as Admiral Sir David Beatty Commander in Chief of the Grand Fleet.

Very sincerely,

Hugh Rodman,

Rear Admiral, United States Navy

Lieutenant F. T. Hunter, U.S.N.
New Rochelle, N. Y.

CHAPTER XI

THE SURRENDER OF THE GERMAN FLEET

*Their dull hulks loom against the gloom
Of the fog bank's dismal grey.
Their pace so slow we scarcely know
The ships are under way.*

*The smoke, dead black, creeps from the stack
And hangs in a listless pall;
Black standards drape like funeral crepe
And death lies over all.*

*The silent guns of the sullen Huns
No more their voices use:
Yet mute, acclaim the burning shame
Of the High Sea Fleet's last cruise.*

—E. E. Wilson

ON THE first day of June, 1813, the American frigate Chesapeake sailed out of Boston Harbour under command of Captain James Lawrence. The more powerful British frigate Shannon under Captain Broke, lay just outside. Lawrence at once engaged Broke and the ships fell aboard shortly after opening fire. Lawrence fell, mortally wounded. As he was carried below those clarion words were on his lips that have resounded through the years— 'Don't give up the ship!'

Spain heard them. Her Admiral Montojo, against overwhelming odds, fought Admiral Dewey at Manila Bay until the last Spanish ship had been sunk or destroyed.

Russia heard them. Admiral Makarov, commanding the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, took his ships to sea in pursuit of the Japanese Cruiser Squadron, daring a field of electro-mechanical mines which, on his return to port, effectively destroyed him.

England heard them. Admiral Cradock, with three miserable cruisers, ran across Von Spee's squadron of five ships off Coronel on the coast of Chile. Despite every disadvantage Cradock signalled: "I am going to engage the enemy now." Von Spee's Victory was complete, but he captured not a ship!

What German knows the dying words of Lawrence?

On the twenty-first day of November, 1918, at 10:38 A. M., there flashed by wireless from Sir David Beatty's flagship Queen Elizabeth a signal:

“To Admiralty, from Commander-in-chief, Grand Fleet, The Grand Fleet met this morning at 9:20, five battle cruisers, nine battleships, seven light cruisers, and forty-nine destroyers of the High Seas Fleet which surrendered for internment and are being brought to Firth of Forth.”

Four years had passed. Some hundred thousand men had waited in vain. Waited, watched, served, and striven—in vain. Day after day their incessant drills, studies, toils, had brought their finished product up to heights un hoped for in the days of peace. Time after time the long lines of grey monsters had slipped hopefully out, had searched, had tempted, and save once, had cruised in vain.

Small wonder that four a.m. of November 21, 1918, found few asleep in all the fleet. This was the day! No secrecy; no doubt. The world knew. The King himself had come but yesterday to acclaim the triumph that must be ours to-day. Too vast a situation well to comprehend—the German High Seas Fleet had sailed from Kiel! And the King had come. Hundreds of strangers were aboard our ships. A flush of excitement covered every face, held back by a forbidding silence that seemed to suspend the motion of the very earth.

From early evening long lines of destroyers had preceded us to sea, hours and hours of them, out of the misty Firth of Forth, followed by envious eyes. Every official ship that could turn a screw would follow shortly. Shortly! The hours were ages long. It was not until two a. m. that the greatest day of our lives began. The day of a thousand dreams. We seemed to be living within a highly inflated bubble, about to burst. The American flagship New York broke moor, swung slowly with the tide, felt the throbbing of her screws, fell into line to lead the Sixth Battle Squadron to sea.

Out of the firth; out of the fog. Grey ships in a grey dawn. Ships and ships and ships, as far as the eye could see, ahead or astern. Great monsters rising and falling on the incoming swells, by their very stateliness acclaiming victory. At four a. m. our general alarm clanged harshly against the quiet dawn producing on the great ship the same effect as a club on a quiet beehive in the summer sun. All hands to battle stations! A few moments bustling rush—then quiet again. Quite different now. Each gun is manned. Every man is at his post. The powder bins are filled and shells are up. Range finders scan the horizon, and lookouts swing their glasses in wide arcs for smoke. Three decks below the water line men sit with 'phones, tubes, boards, pencils, and strange instruments, connected with the conning tower. The plotting room. The

centre of control of fire. No "Wooden Horse of Troy," for Admiral Beatty. Not the slightest chance for Hunnish trickery. The destiny of nations is at stake. He has the German guaranties—but he treats them as the German would, "Mere scraps of paper." Perhaps they seek to take the Grand Fleet unawares? They will find them firing deadly salvos thirty seconds after the first sign of treachery. The Grand Fleet steams on.

At last dawn comes, blazing red. A low haze cuts the visibility to five short miles, but the rising sun reveals a new disposition of our forces. Admiral Beatty has divided his ships into two great lines—the northern and the southern. These two lines, proceeding on parallel courses, about two miles apart, will permit the German fleet to pass down their centre. A "Ships right and left about" will then bring both lines steaming in inverted order toward the Firth of Forth, the German line between. Either of our lines, without the other, could engage the surrendering German fleet successfully.

On we steam at twelve knots to point "X" in the North Sea. Eight bells strikes clearly. We know the great moment is not far distant now, and by the imposing spectacle are reassured. At last:

"Sail ho!"—from the foretop lookout. "Where away?"—from the bridge. "One point off the starboard bow," in reply. "Can you make it out?" "Dense smoke, sir, seems to be approaching."

Twenty-five minutes later the tiny light cruiser Cardiff, towing a kite balloon, leads the great German battle cruiser *Seydlitz*, at the head of her column, between our lines. On they pass — *Derfflinger*, *Von der Tann*, *Hindenburg*, *Moltke* — as if in review. The low sun glances from their shabby sides. Their huge guns, motionless, are trained fore and aft. It is the sight of our dreams— a sight for kings! Those long, low, sleek-looking monsters which we had pictured ablaze with spouting flame and fury—steaming like peaceful merchantmen on a calm sea. Then the long line of battleships, led by *Friedrich der Grosse*, flying the flag of Admiral von Renter who is in command of the whole force. *Koenig Albert*, *Kaiser*, *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, *Kaiserin*, *Bayern*, *Markgraf*, *Prinz Regent Luitpold*, and *Grosser Kurfurst* followed in formation—powerful to look at, dangerous in battle, pitiful in surrender.

We gaze with wonder on this spectacle—the end of four years' vigil; the banishment of Germany's sinister dream of sea power. This, then, is the end for which the Kaiser has lavished his millions on his "incomparable" navy! A navy powerful enough to conquer all the navies of the world combined—bar the British. But when the British

combined with all the others against him that tolled his doom. For sea power, slow in its working, must ultimately prevail.

Strangely enough the German surrender lacked the thrill of victory. There was the gaping wonder of it, the inconceivable that was happening before our very eyes—the great German fleet steaming helplessly there at our side—conquered. Conquered, but not in the spectacular way that we would so gladly have given our lives to see. The one prevalent emotion, so far as I could ascertain, was pity. It carried even to our great Commander-in-Chief, who I believe was the least thrilled and most disappointed person present. In speaking to us after the surrender he remarked: "It was a most disappointing day. It was a pitiful day, to see those great ships coming in like sheep being herded by dogs to their fold, without an effort on anybody's part." And no one of his audience dissented. They were as helpless as sheep. About two hours' vigil satisfied our commanders that such was the case, and we secured battle stations. Later investigation showed that all our precautions were quite unnecessary. Not only had the powder and ammunition been removed from the German ships, but their range finders, gun sights, fire control, and very breech blocks as well. They came mere skeletons of their former fighting selves in a miserable state of equipment, upkeep, and repair. For example, in passing May Island, at the entrance of the Firth of Forth, Admiral Beatty signalled one of the German squadrons to put on 17 knots and close up in formation. The reply came to him, "We cannot do better than 12 knots. Lack lubricating oil." What chance, then of a modern engagement where a speed of at least 18 knots is sustained? Apparently they were no better off for food. Hardly had they anchored when the crews turned-to with hook and line to catch what they might for dinner!

Guarded on every side, the German ships entered the firth at about three o'clock quietly to drop anchor outside the nets. We stood in past them, as they rode peacefully to the tide, and on to our berths, squadron after squadron, type after type until their German eyes must have bulged in awe at such a vast array of power.

Last of all came the Queen Elizabeth, flagship of the Grand Fleet, with Admiral Beatty. Passing the German flagship he made that now-famous signal:

"The German flag will be hauled down at sunset to-day, Thursday, and will not be hoisted again without permission."

The message was accepted and obeyed by seventy warships of the German navy. It was over. In the sunset the Queen Elizabeth with the victorious Beatty passed between our lines to her mooring. Three lusty cheers went up from each ship as he

passed, our colours dipped, our guards presenting arms, and our bands striking up the national airs. That was the real expression of victory. Tears filled the eyes of some. Smiles on the faces of others. Victory in the hearts of all. For we knew, and the British navy knew, and all the world knew, the truth which our great Commander-in-Chief so aptly expressed a few days later in reply to a message of sympathy.

We do not want sympathy—we want recognition! Recognition of the fact that the prestige of the Grand Fleet stood so high that it was sufficient to cause the enemy to surrender without striking a blow.