

THE MAKING OF A MAN-O'-WARSMAN

Just What Jack's Daily Life Is Aboard the Receiving Ship and While at Sea—Busy Days at the Various Navy Recruiting Stations.

From the Philadelphia Press.

The life of a sailor is hard even under the best conditions, but it is an interesting life; and every day good-looking, intelligent and well-dressed young men offer themselves as candidates for the blue uniform. Most of these applicants have been found unfit for service; 23,000 men and 2,600 boys were rejected for physical disability and other causes last year—more than four-fifths of the applications. The physical defects which are a bar to service in the navy in time of peace include impaired vision, impaired hearing, defective teeth, communicable diseases and a long catalogue of weaknesses or chronic ailments. For "Jackie" is required by the regulations to be "of robust frame, intelligent, and of perfectly sound and healthy constitution." It was 250 of this class of citizens, native and adopted, that went to death in Havana harbor.

At convenient points along the coast, where there are naval stations, are placed receiving ships—old hulks, once serviceable in the wooden navy, but worthless in these days of big guns. There are eleven of these ships at Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Washington, San Francisco, etc.

TAKING THE OATH.

It is an impressive scene when seven or eight young men gather in the captain's office, hat in hand, to take the oath which completes their enlistment. It is the last step which virtually cuts them off from freedom for three long years. However little they may like the service, once they have taken the oath, they stay aboard ship for thirty-six months or lose their citizenship and risk imprisonment at Boston. How irksome the privation of his independence may be to the sailor is shown by the fact that 1,149 men gave up their citizenship actual or prospective last year rather than serve out their enlistment. "You do solemnly swear—" says the captain, holding the Bible in both hands as he stands before the little group of recruits; and with right hand uplifted they take oath to the statements made in their applications. Before this, all of them have been stripped and examined by the surgeon to see if they are qualified physically. After the brief session with the captain they go to the lower deck of the old ship and draw their uniforms. Before night they have put aside their citizens clothes and are wearing the blue flannel uniform.

The ratings of the men who enlist are various. Apprentices, of course, are not actively in the service, though a large proportion of the 1,500 now at Newport, Mare Island, etc., can be used to man the ships even now, and many have been transferred for that purpose. The grades above apprenticeship for which men enlist are chiefly landsmen, ordinary seaman, seaman and coal passer. The pay of these is \$16, \$19, \$24 and \$22, respectively. Firemen, sailmakers, shipwrights, etc., receive more.

The landsman is a man who has no knowledge of sea life. He must be native born and between 18 and 25 years of age. The ordinary seaman must have been at sea at least two years and must pass an examination. The seaman must have had four years' experience and his examination is more rigorous. The "prentice," when he reaches the age of 21, is usually qualified for a seaman's rating. The landsman, after three years' if he enlists, becomes an ordinary seaman and may be promoted. He has no hope, as the soldier has, of earning a commission in time of peace; though in war anything is possible.

The man who enlists is usually without a dollar in the world. Within a few minutes after he has left the captain's office, he is in debt to the navy department \$40.03, the price of his outfit. This outfit is delivered to him by the pay-master's clerk or yeoman, after the recruit has been measured by the Bertillon system, and he proceeds immediately to put on his new togs. His blue uniform he lacks one feature. There is no ribbon around the cap showing in gilt letters the name of the ship to which he belongs. That will not come until he is assigned.

Meantime he need not worry about the figure he will cut with his friends, for he will not have shore leave. All he has worked out the price of his outfit. That may be in four months, and it may not be in five or six. Forty dollars is a big debt when your pay is only \$16 a month.

BREAKING 'EM IN.

Breaking the landsmen in to sea duty on a "receiving" ship is not a disagreeable business on either side. The men, as a rule, are enthusiastic about the service, and though the old-timers may guff them a little, no hazing is permitted. The fare they get is quite good—better in fact than they can expect to get when they are away from land.

The raw recruit has to earn his food and \$16 pay by cleaning the decks, polishing the brasses and doing other plain work about the ship, and by practicing the infantry drill and the setting-up drill every day. But for the most part, the period just after enlistment is a period of idleness. The landsman learns to sling his hammock and is educated in the language of the bells; the boatswain's whistle and the bugle; but beyond that, he is not kept very busy. If he is an enthusiast, though, as most raw recruits are, he welcomes the day when he is assigned to duty, and, slinging his "ditty" bag over his shoulder, he starts away, with a squad of blue-jackets, to take the train for Norfolk or whatever the point may be at which his ship is waiting. There he goes aboard, reports and is entered on the list of the ship's crew.

A fixed number of men is assigned to each ship—so many landsmen, so many ordinary seamen, so many seamen, and so on through all ratings.

There is always a small shortage, due to deaths and desertions. Each landsman when he resorts for duty, is assigned to one of the four or five divisions aboard the ship. He is taken below, shown where to find his hammock and where to sling it and the locker in which to stow his clothing. He gets a ribbon with the name of the ship which he puts on his cap and he is ready for his duties.

DUTIES ABOARD SHIP.

These are simple at first. He assists in coaling the ship. He is assigned to a place in a gun crew and he learns all the duties at the gun, but particularly those which are to fall to him. He is told to keep a certain part of the big gun clean, this being known as "brightening." He learns all the drills, including those with side-arms, pistols and broadswords. All this drilling and breaking-in is done by the petty officers, with the assistance of some of the older men who are quick at licking a new man into shape. It is not done very gently and the new man is made to feel the rigor of a severe discipline.

Then he is assigned to a boat in which he is to pull a specified oar; and he practices rowing until he can feather and pull a strong stroke without crab-catching. After a month or six weeks of studying the school of the sailor, the new man is fit for general duties aboard ship. But there is much about reefing, steering, knotting, splicing and the other details of sailor's work which he has to pick up in odd hours and he is fortunate if he understands enough of it to take an ordinary seaman's rating at the end of his three years' service.

ONE DAY'S ROUTINE.

The sailor's life is a busy one. Here is his day's routine: He turns out at 5.30 o'clock in the morning and lashes and stows his hammock in seven minutes. Then he eats a continental breakfast—a cup of coffee, a roll. After this he scrubs his clothing or he cleans ship—sometimes the former, but always the latter. The ship's deck must be kept as clean as sand and water will make it; and every day the paint must be scrubbed. Every day, too, a detail of "side-cleaners" goes over the paint on the outside of the ship and makes it clean.

At 8 o'clock the regular breakfast call is sounded. An hour is given to each meal and in what part of this hour he is not eating, Jack can do as he likes.

After breakfast, which is always a substantial meal, Jack, who has been working in his suit of white, puts on his blue uniform and appears in it at sick call. This call is for those who have slight ailments who are examined by the surgeon and prescribed for and sent to the hospital.

After sick call, the sailor has to polish the bright work of the big gun and the small arms until 9.30, when the whole crew is called to order for inspection by the captain. At this inspection any sailor who has a grievance may voice it to the captain and be sure of a hearing and of fair treatment.

After the inspection, there is drill for a half hour or more. It may run up to an hour and a half, and if the captain's breakfast disagrees with him, it is quite likely to be the longer period. Brutality in the navy now finds its vent in drilling the men until they are nearly dead from exhaustion; and a captain who overworks his men can usually be told by the number of desertions from his ship.

After gun drill, or drill with the small arms, the dinner call is sounded

at 12 o'clock. An hour later the men may be ordered to man the boats. Some of them may be put at repair work, which is always going on aboard ship, or at other duties. There is always plenty to keep them busy till 5 o'clock, when the supper call is sounded. At 6 the men are called to evening quarters when everything is examined to see that it is secure for the night.

AMUSEMENTS.

Then the sailors sling their hammocks and for the intervening time until 9 o'clock they may amuse themselves as they like. Some of them spend the time in playing cards, some in athletic games, some with concertina or violin, some in smoking and "yarrning." The sailor is a great talker and he seems to have as much to say at the end of his three years' terms as he had at the beginning. In this particular, he is different from the officers in the ward-room, who get heartily tired of each other before a cruise is ended.

Jack is not only a great talker, but a great eater and in many cases a good share of his \$16 a month goes for food to supplement his regular rations. The ration is reckoned at 30 cents a day and it consists of good, substantial food in what a landsman ashore would consider liberal quantity. Under the regulations, fresh meat and fruit cannot be served oftener than four times a week unless ordered by the surgeon; but this is no privation, for the old tar, accustomed to a diet of hard tack and salt junk, often complains if he is forced to eat soft bread and fresh meat.

On all ships some of the rations are commuted—that is, drawn in money. At one time it was in the discretion of the captain, to commute any of the sailors' rations, but the regulations now limit commutations to one-fourth of the whole number, and require that the fresh food bought with this commutation money shall be served to all. When the ship is in port, the sailor fares almost as well as the recruits on the receiving ship.

Men and Trees.

"Men are not like trees."
"Why, no."
"No. Now, the good reputation of most trees depends upon their shady character."

A Match.

"I've just been to a variegated wedding."
"What kind of wedding is that?"
"A negro wedding, of course—a combination of colors."

THE MAN WHO KNOWS IT ALL.

This world is full of misery
That ought not to exist.
Folks have no right to charge to Fate
The luck that they have missed.
We take the wrong road to the goal,
And stumble, trip and fall,
When right next door, perhaps, there lives
The man who knows it all.

He's ready, too, to give advice,
If you are indignant,
He'll tell you what you ought to do,
And not charge you a cent.
The fault is yours, if you go wrong,
And fall, and have to call
For help. You should have gone and
Asked the man who knows it all.

Oh, what a wretched, wretched place,
This erring world must be.
Without the constant help vouchsafed
By him and such as he!
So when you meet him anywhere,
Before him prostrate fall,
And worship, as you ought to do,
The man who knows it all!
—Somerville Journal.

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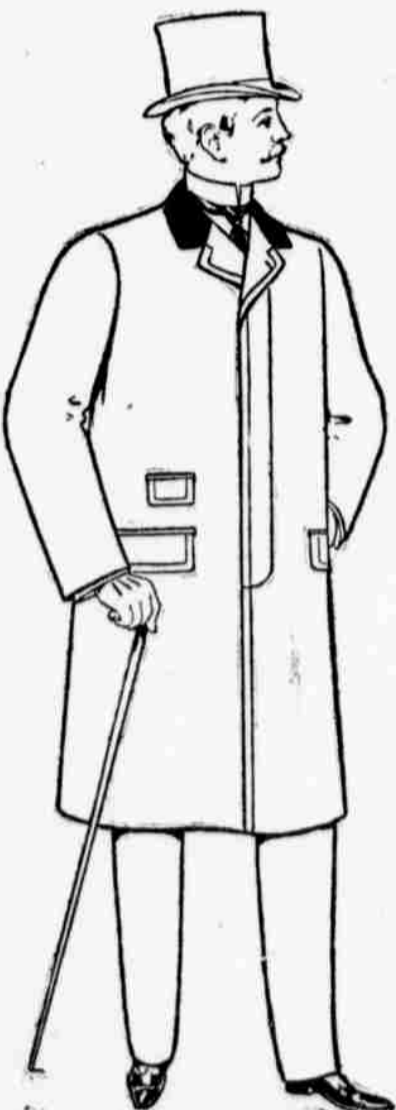
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