

CRUISE OF THE U.S.S. CHESTER

EUROPEAN WATERS

1917-18-19

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When the U. S. S. CHESTER, scout cruiser, left it's home port, Boston, Mass, Aug. 24, 1917, destination unknown, for the secrecy of war had already invaded the precincts of the Navy, no man among the 400 members of the crew had any preconception of the important part the ship would play in deciding the ultimate outcome of the war, nor was there any indication that the vessel would make naval history that would be remembered long after it's propellers had turned over for the last time. No ship in the United States Navy, dreadnaught or gunboat, can boast of a war record as brilliant as that of the "Queen of the Scouts". Nor has any ship of our Navy travelled the thousands of miles in submarine infested waters, which were often whipped into a fury by the fierceness of the gale, or the eccentricities of the various weathers. At the time this history was chronicled seventeen long and oft' times dreary months had been spent in the territory known as "European Waters" with no indication that our foreign cruise was near a culmination.

To have been the first American man-of-war to enter the three mile limit of the German coast since the United States entered into a state of war with Germany in April of 1917, is an honor that the CHESTER alone can claim, as Dec. 31, 1918 saw the ship anchored in the harbor of Sasanitz Germany, the Stars and Stripes, flaunting its proud colors for the world to gaze upon. The arrival at this port as well as the visit to several others will be narrated in their sequence.

Were that the sole source of gratification it would have been more than sufficient, but there is that matter of the successful engagement with an enemy submarine off the southern coast of England, early on the morning of Sept. 5th 1918. It is with intense delight that the crew, one and all, mention that engagement with considerable pride, and well they might, for it was an incident that reflected credit, not only on the officers and crew, but also on the Navy.

We will start from Boston again. Aug. 24th 1917, after being safely ensconced within the limits of Boston harbor for we left the Navy Yard, arriving at Provincetown, Mass., a few hours later. Aug. 25th, we were anchored in the harbor but there was no liberty. Early on the morning of Aug. 26th, we got underway passing several small French patrol boats and an American Sub, which we challenged as it entered the harbor. The trip across was uneventful, except for the fact that we engaged in target practice for two mornings.

On the seventh day at sea we sighted Fayal Island, on the Azora Islands group. Next day, at noon we entered the port of San Miguel, Azores, where the PANTHER, REID, and PRESTON, were lying in anchore. Later the YANKTON came in. Although we coaled for three days the crew got an opportunity to go ashore for sundown liberty. Santa Del ~~de~~ Garda, the town proved to be



picturesque, but decidedly unmodern. The houses, uniformly painted with flashy tints, were hardly habitable for one used to commodious and well kept surroundings, but the environment presented was in keeping with the people who were far from being on the same intellectual plane with the average American. The old Jesuit Church, the quaint architecture of the buildings, the curious customs of the people all assisted in the interesting of the liberty party. The natives, subjects of Portugal, which owns the islands, welcomed the sailors, as the town had been saved from a serious bombardment from a German Sub, July 4th, 1917, when the U.S.S. ORION, a collier, left the harbor in pursuit of the cowardly craft.

Sept 7th, the ship got underway and after two days of hard steaming, during which time the crew wore life belts owing to our entering the "Danger Zone", we arrived in Gibraltar, which was destined to be our base for future operations. Famous the world over as a fortification of immense strength the Rock was the object of curious attention on the part of the crew for some time.

The enthusiasm which pervaded the crew on reaching the first port on the European continent was considerably dimmed when word was passed on our first day in Gibraltar, Sept. 8th to rig ship for coaling. It was fate that found us coaling ship on Labor Day, rightfully named if one could judge from the talk of the crew on that day.

The BIRMINGHAM, OSSIPPEE, MACHIAS, and NASHVILLE, were in the harbor waiting sailing orders.

Our first liberty in Gibraltar will long be remembered. New scenes, new people, and new adventures greeted us at every corner. The people for the most part Spanish, with a substantial portion English soldiers, who formed the personnel strength of the Rock, were cordial to the Americans. Unusual activity marked the movements of the Indian Merchantmen who found in the sailors of the United States a veritable gold mine, and the prices were adjusted accordingly. Articles of two shillings value, became, overnight valued at double that amount and sometimes treble.

One theater, Theater Royal, was the sole source of public amusement but that was less than nothing for the "bill" was changed only as often as the seasons of the year. Naturally the bar-room or "pubs" found their patrons, but to the credit of the many "Gobs", at the town it must be said that the number was surprisingly small. Several other places of interest was visited by the men, but the sources of enjoyment were decidedly few and limited.

Sept 13th, the baseball team from the NASVILL inflicted a severe trimming on the CHESTER'S nine, 17 to 4, the the first game ever played on the Rock. Several games were played during the CHESTERS stay in port, but with little success to the team.

From then until we left Oct 12th, there was little worth recording. There was much conjecture as to our next destination with no one able to give the least bit of information or "advance dope". However, the afternoon of Oct. 12th, we left the Straits Of Gibraltar with a convey of 46 ships, the



largest convey to leave up to that time. Assisting us in escorting were two American ships, a gunboat and a revenue ~~cutting~~ cutter. Passing through the Straits, zig-zagging as we advanced before the several columns, we obtained an inspiring view of the black, repulsive looking mountains, lining the African coast on our port, and the verdant inviting hills of Sunny Spain on our starboard. The incongruity presented by either side lent charms to the surroundings and it was with reluctance that we departed from the beauties of nature only to enter upon the more dismal scenes with which we were associated for the next ten days.

Oct. 15th, the escort left us tossing and pitching in a restless sea. The next day, soon after day break, the monotony was broken when the port lifeboat was hastily manned and sent to the side of W. C. Schertz, a fireman, who had been pushed over the ship's side as the result of an accident. After commendable work by the lifeboat crew the man was brought back to the ship. As we neared the British Isles, bound on a northern course, the sea became almost unmanagable, making life miserable for the crew. Several times we received submaring warnings by wireless, and twice ships in the convoy reported suspicious objects near by, but there was little to disturb the daily routine, which called for four hours on watch and four hours off watch for the gun crews, as unwelcome hours for the lookouts, and strenuous work for the "Black Gang", or fireroom force.

At noon Oct. 22nd, we left the convoy in St. George's Channel, and shortly afterward steamed into the harbor of Milford Haven, South Wales, after being underway ten days and steaming 2875 miles. There we got the first view of the reknowned scenery made famous in many writings, but the impression was not deep set as the cold biting wind raised havoc with the natural beauty as presented by the symetry of the hills.

The next day a furlough party was shoved off for London, three hundred and fifty miles away, three days being allowed. For those who remained there was the alternative of libery at Pembroke Dock, a small town with but little to recommend it to the traveller or even a liberty party. The noted hospitality of the Welsh people was never better displayed then when the men came ashore. As the first American sailors to visit the town for many years, we were most cordially received into the homes of the townsfolk, while special effort was made to provide entertainment in Market Hall, a market place converted into a theater temporarily.

On three successive nights the harbor was so rough that our motor sailing launches could not buck the tide and the liberty parties were forced to remain and sleep in the cold mess hall of the Dockyard. There was 11 o'clock liberty in this port.

For four days, during which time the icy winds out there way through the harbor's docks. We coaled ship from an English collier.

Oct 31st, at noon, we got underway, with a 20 ship convoy bound south, there was little excitement to mar the usual serenity. At 2 p.m. Nov. 2nd, general quarters, calling all



hands to their battle stations were sounded, but the object sighted proved to be a dead shark. At night we lost the convoy and the next day when we took up duty escorting ship there was one ship missing. Nov. 3rd, two of the convoy collided, both ships being damaged. With the aid of collision mats and emergency stoppers they were able to make their way into port. Gun fire comitting from one of the stern ships caused the Captain to order the CHESTER to the rear of the convoy, but there was nothing sighted. Again Nov. 8th, a ship fired at an object, but like the first scare we were unable to discover anything. We arrived at Gibraltar Nov. 10th, nearly 3000 miles being covered in ten days at sea.

We immediately coaled. The torpedo boats from the Asiatic Station, the BARRY, BAINBRIDGE, DECATUR, DALE, and CHAUNCEY, which later met an unfortunate end as the result of a collision came into the harbor, later for transportation to England, thus giving us an indication that our next port was England.

Nov. 16th we got underway and picked up twelve ships. The next day one of the ships lagging behind reported that it had been missed by a torpedo but no evidence was presented to substantiate the fact. That night we barely missed collision with a British destroyer that was speeding at an unusual rate. Commendable work on the part of our officer of the deck alone prevented the collision. After the escort of British destroyers relieved us on the 22nd, we arrived at Plymouth, England, at noon on the 23rd. Immediately went up the harbor to Bevenport. Overnight liberty was given for the first time since leaving Boston. A five day London party was shoved off.

In Davenport and Plymouth an opportunity was presented for observing first hand the food conditions of England. At that time there was an alarming shortage of food but by no means were the people starving as hoped for by the Germans. Theaters, Skating Rinks, and other places of amusements attracted large quantities of the crew. As is characteristic of the English people they were slow to welcome the Americans but later they were more sociable, after the virile qualities of the Americans had been demonstrated.

Nov. 28th and 29th, the latter Thanksgiving Day we coaled. Hardly a man could utter a prayer of thanks on that day, at least not while on the business end of a shovel in a coal lighter. The next day we had our Thanksgiving Day dinner, of Turkey and the fixin's. Dec. 1st, the Captain's insepction was held. The next morning we got underway at 7 o'clock and next dropped the hook at Falmouth, forty miles distant. There we remained overnight and next morning left with a convoy of 20 ships, escorted by two British destroyers and eight trawlers.

The first real set back of our duty came when the S.S. FORFAR, a tanker, was torpedoed and sunk by the enemy one hundred miles off the English coast the next morning at 10.a.m. the destroyers instantly emitted smoke screens and dropped depth charge while the CHESTER'S increased speed and cruised around the convoy. The trawlers engaged themselves in rescuing the survivors from the unfortunate ship. Eleven men were lost and forty seven saved. Nothing was seen of the



submarine.

Escaped another collision with British destroyers the next night, but the vigilance of the lookouts prevented it. As we neared Spain the seas were whipped into a fury by the wind, and the ship did it's neatiest tricks of rolling and pitching. An alchol chest and several breakers were washed over the side. Several men narrowly escaped being swept overboard. On arriving at Gibraltar we learned that the JACOB JONES had been sunk with many casualties.

Admiral Niblack, commander of the United States Naval Squadrons, based on Gibraltar, inspected the ship and crew Saturday, December 15th. There was bag and hammock inspection Dec. 19th and Captain's inspection Dec. 22nd.

Christmas Eve we picked up a convoy of eight ships, zealously guarded by the U.S.S. YANKTON, a British Destroyer, and a Mystery Ship. The weather was miserable, adding nothing to the enjoyment of the holiday season. If ever the moral of the crew was at a low level it was at this time. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, several hundred miles from land, with none of the joys of the season which make it one of the merriest, we have. The ship rolled, and pitched and tossed so ~~lightly~~ badly that no mess tables could be set; our Christmas Dinner we ate while sitting on a greasy deck. In the Bay Of Biscay, and later in the English Channel, the mad rush of the sea tossed the vessel about like so much driftweed and it was a much relieved crew that arrived at Plymouth, Dec. 30th. The night before the ship sprang a leak in the steel plates below the water line and the increased volume of water in the flooded compartments became a menace.

Dec. 31st, we had turkey as the main dish for our mid-day meal as it was the Christmas Dinner carried along till we got into port. Usual routine prevailed until shortly before midnight when the crew ushered in the New Year by a noisy celebration, joining with the English in making the harbor sound like a boiler factory. Sunday, Jan. 2nd, we had the big New Year's dinner. This time getting chicken. A five day London party was shoved off. Jan. 7th and 8th we coaled, the second day bringing a sprinkler of snow. The first we had seen for many months.

Underway for Falmouth the 10th, a draft of English sailors on board. Lieut. H.H. Michaels, Executive Officer, was transferred to take command of a destroyer. Underway Jan. 11th, with 8 ships and an escort of two British Destroyers, eight trawlers, and two dirigables. Lost the convoy in dense fog but quickly rejoined it. One of the ships a Norwegian dropped behind. Norwegian vessels were uncertain and had the suspicious habit of dropping behind at night and catching up with the convoy in the morning. Arrived at Gibraltar Jan. 7th. having steamed 1827 miles.

Stay uneventful until Sunday morning, Jan. 20th, when orders were received to rig ship for coaling and coal without delay. It was rumored that enemy destroyers were loose in the Mediterranean and that we were to intercept them if possible. Scenting action, or at least excitement, the crew worked with more than usual avidity but as suddenly as the coaling started it was stopped, until the next day. Evidently the destroyers had been captured.



Jan. 25th, we got a draft of English sailors and soldiers and started off with a convoy of 19 ships, five of which left for the states after the first day out. Trip uneventful except at noon of the third day when a floating spar so resembled a periscope in the distance that general quarters were sounded. Going into Plymouth we followed the H.M.S. GLORIOUS, one of Englands best battle cruisers. After coaling ship another five day leave party was shoved off. Captain Philip Williams held his usual inspection Sunday morning, and two days later got underway for Falmouth. A British trawler exploded a mine by gunfire directly ahead of us near Falmouth.

Left Falmouth Feb. 12th, with 8 ships. Two days later sighted a suspicious object but no real excitement materialized. Next day was uneventful until 10:45 p.m. when all hands were summoned to their battle stations by the general quarters alarm. Exponents of naval battle efficiency would have been considerably slated to have seen the crew of the CHESTER on that night, first real test for us. A light streak several hundred yards away off the starboard quarter, between the CHESTER and the convoy, testified to the presence of the enemy, but owing to the position of the object no gunfire could have been used as the ships would be placed in danger. It is claimed that one or two torpedoes passed our bow but little credence is given the statement.

After more rough sea we arrived at Gibraltar, Feb. 19th Washington's Birthday, we had a "big feed", and half holiday. Went into dry dock on the 25th, and remained until Mar. 9th. Underway March 13th for target practice in sight of the Rock. Too much credit cannot be given the controlling officers and the gun crews, for their display of efficiency with the guns, the direct hits and near hits being sufficient evidence of the crews capabilities. A spent torpedo was found lying on the surface of the water and the fact reported to the Naval authorities at the Rock.

Underway next day with 30 ships, 14 of which left shortly for the states. Once on the trip a signal from the Commodore of the convoy was misinterpreted and general quarters was sounded but it was nothing but a scare. Tuesday, Mar. 19th we arrived at Plymouth, and coaled next day.

The next big event occurred when half of the ships company attended the boat at the Cosmopolitan, A.C. Plymouth, between George W. Richards, Cox., of the CHESTER, holder of the featherweight championship of New England and Young Kennedy, champion featherweight of Western England. It was a wonderful fight, Richards being deprived of the winner's end through a questionable decision.

Easter Sunday morning March 31, we got underway for Falmouth where we anchored till the next day, when we left with a convoy of 14 ships. An American newspaper correspondent was a passenger with the view of getting first hand information and observations of life in the war zone. The sea was rough but there was little excitement until the sixth day when one of the convoy dropped a smoke box. General quarters was sounded but nothing came of it. Arrived at Gibraltar on the eight, rigged ship for coaling and the next day took on 700 tons. A distance of 1852 miles was covered in the trip.



An entertainment was provided at the American Y.M.C.A. April 12th, by the crew of the ship, the participants being Bunnie Tighs and Bridges, boxers; Desrosier and Ventres, wrestlers: Webber, East and O'Neill, singer: McCleave, and Reader, and the Jazz Orchestra. Started plans for a dance to be held at Plymouth but they failed to materialize when the committee could not secure the Admiral's Band.

A departure from the regular monotonous routine was enjoyed when the ship put into Tangier Bay, off Tangier, Morocco, Africa, Sunday, April 14th, and liberty granted during the afternoon, radically different from anything we had yet visited. The town, dirty and unsanitary to a superlative degree, was never the less interesting. Morrs, Arabs, Turks, and other semi-civilized peoples comprized the main portion of the population. Underway next morning and picked up convoy of 28 ships near nightfall. Skinner, C.M. 1c, was placed under observation for Spinal Meningitis. Plymouth was reached without incident April 20th. Considerable doubt prevailed as to whether or not we would be quarantined owing to the presence of Spinal Meningitis but after examination by British Doctors, liberty parties were allowed to leave the ship.

At Nome Park, Devenport, Saturday, April 27th, the CHESTER took pleasure in defeating the bseball team from her sister ship BIRMINGHAM 6 to 1.

Underway again at daybreak Mar. 2nd, anchoring at Falmouth three hours later. Proceeded to sea with 20 ships in convoy. The trip was without incident, and we tied up at Gibralter May 10th, after steaming 1793 miles. For the next two days the crew's working ability was tested as we coaled ship, took on 60 ton of strip cork which was stowed in the double bottoms and took on several months stores, not to mention the usual field day. Mother's Day, May 12th, Sunday, we worked for 16 hours, leaving but little time to write to Mother as the notice on the bulletin board requested.

May 13th we picked up a convoy of 7 valuable ships. At that time the Spanish influenza was prevalant among the officer's and men. More than 100 men were turned into the sick bay and hammocks that day, seriously crippling the working personnel. All was quiet until the fifth day at 1 o'clock when two shots were fired from the foward heavy gun at a suspicious object on the horizon, which later proved to be the H-43, a British destroyer. There was no damage done. Friday, May 24th, we went into dry dock at Devenport for repairs, minesweepers and new guns. May 30th, Memorial Day, the CHESTER defeated the BIRMINGHAM in an athletic meet at Nome Park Devenport, 30 to 24 also winning the game 8 to 6. Tommy Fox, G.M. 3c, was highest scoreer in the track meet. Came out of dry dock June 8th, at 4 a.m. Took on ammunition, and coaled the next day on the port side. Next morning we moved to mid-stream and resumed coaling.

Left Plymouth for Falmouth, June 12th, the minesweepers being worked for the first time. During the tryout, a British naval officer who was demonstrating the working of the cables, was painfully injured when several fingers of his right hand were jammed when a cable slipped.



Underway same day with a convoy of 16 ships. After a monotonous trip of nearly six days, 1578 miles having been covered, the ship's baseball team was defeated by the U.S.S. YANKTON nine 14 to 13. Usual routine of coaling and field day and stores. On the evening previous to our departure on the 22nd, the crew of H. M. S. ROYAL SCOT, provided entertainment on board the CHESTER. Four men two of them Germans, one Scandinavian and one Russian aliens suspected of being spies for Germany, were received on board for transportation to England where they were to be tried for espionage. They were confined in the brig, guarded by armed sentries.

Underway Sat. June 22nd, at 4 a.m. with 36 ships. A large hospital ship prominently displaying the Red Cross painted on its sides passes us in the Straits. Two days at sea we received an emergency call from one of the ships requesting medical aid for an injured man. A life boat was manned and Dr. John Happer and assistants went to the ship. The man was in a critical condition and was brought back to the CHESTER where he was tenderly cared for and nursed back to health. Early on the morning of the third day, the presence of a periscope was reported as being half a mile away. A critical investigation failed to reveal anything. Rough sea and high wind combined to make the trip hardly conducive to happiness among the crew. Reached Plymouth on the 28th, after travelling 2002 miles. The usual routine of field day, Captain's inspection, coal ship and then another field day followed. Two drafts of American sailors, fresh from the training stations, totalling 100 men were received on board for transportation.

As usual the 4th of July was a day of celebration. The baseball team was defeated in the morning by the team of the U.S. Medical Corps, #27 in a town close by Plymouth. The team partook of dinner with the soldiers and in the afternoon defeated the BIRMINGHAM nine at Nome Park. There was a big geed on board and one o'clock liberty was granted. Unusual gayety was the rule among the crew, the English tolerating the good natured but noisy celebrating in view of the importance of the occasion.

Another break in the usual routine came when we came up anchor July 8th, entering the port of Brest, France in the afternoon. The BARON VON STEUBEN, American transport, came into port with several thousand marines, sailors, and soldiers, the Y.M.C.A. Hut, the Knights of Columbus quarters, a couple of Cabaret shws provided interest for the crew, most of whom had never been to France before. Liberty was granted from 1 p.m. till 9 p.m. The CHESTER'S baseball team suffered another defeat this time at the hands of the U.S.S. MC DOUGALL nine, 16 to 4.

Left the harbor July 12th, met convoy of 14 ships, American troop ships, and a dozen American destroyers coming into the harbor. The sea was rough to extremes and many a man in the crew suffered from sea sickness. Met our convoy of sixteen ships next morning, guarded by 10 trawlers, and two mystery ships. One of the ships had been lost before we took over the responsibility. Dead bodies and wreckage of ships passed us in abundance mute testimonial to the fiendishness of the enemy. On the second day out a lifeboat was



was sent to one of the ships and the Captain was brought back a sufferer from pneumonia. He was given medical attention for the remainder of the trip. Reached the Rock July 18th, having cruised 1731 miles. Coaled ship, took on stores, and got ready to come up anchor. We participated in target practice the afternoon of July 23rd, anchoring that night in the outer harbor at Gibraltar. Underway next morning for England, picked up our convoy of 32 ships.

Next day the forward engine room went out of commission and we steamed under eight boilers. Met escort on the 29th, and reached Plymouth on the 30th, usual coaling and field day. Conducted smoke talk on evening of Aug. 7th, and men from the BIRMINGHAM, OSSIFFEE, and SENECA being present. Aug. 12th, we started out with convoy of 23 ships, and a British Sub. Arrived at Gibraltar Aug. 19th, 1794 miles having been added to our cruising record. We held target practice on the 28th, With a draft of English soldiers, sailors and marines we left on the 29th, with 22 ships. One of the ships had a large hole in the bow, it having been hit some time before by a torpedo. Temporary patch which had been put on came off and the sea filled the firerooms. On the first of Sept, there was a scare early in the afternoon and several depth charges were dropped on suspicious objects. Next day tested smoke boxes, and provisioned an English yacht who had run short of stores. Met the escort on the 4th, shoved off at same rate of high speed for Plymouth.

Everything went smoothly until shortly after one o'clock in the morning, of Sept 5th, the night was dark, and the sea unusually phosphorescent which made it possible to distinguish objects moving in the water. The CHESTER was speeding at the time when a lookout reported a dark object port of starboard bow. The officer of the deck, Lt. N.M. Pigman, immediately sighted a submarine in the place indicated and ordered the Helmsman to ram. The submarine was on the surface evidently charging batteries, and we got close enough to distinguish two men on the deck. The sub got underway and barely managed to dodge our bow, but depth charges were dropped from our stern by an automatic contrivance on the bridge. After missing ramming the sub we took a "hard right" to get in position for another ram. For the space of a few moments the object of our search was lost to sight, only to reappear a few moments later two points on the port bow, about three hundred yards away. A bright streak in the water moving rapidly from the ship engaged the attention of all. General quarters had been sounded and the Captain had taken command on the bridge.

Orders were given to open fire with the guns, but owing to the too rapid changing of course there was little chance to bear. Suddenly the bright streak changed course and let go with a torpedo, evidently fired from the stern tubes. Then the race started. Headed directly for our stern with uncanny accuracy was a torpedo travelling at a fearful rate. Swinging rapidly to starboard was our stern and it was a race to see whether the stern would get around in time or not. The few seconds that passed our stern seemed like many minutes, but there was a sigh of relief when the danger was finally over. During the few moments depth charges were dropped frequently,



the last three directly over the spot where the hunted craft submerged. Dull rears followed each explosion of the charges but in the darkness of the night it was impossible to see any evidence of our having blown the sub out of the water. After scattering depth charges about the scene we shoved off, for Plymouth thankful that nothing serious had happened. All in all, it was an experience that few who witness it will ever forget. The next day British destroyers picked up wreckage in the vicinity of our encounter and it is supposed that the CHESTER accounted for one sea pirate.

Arrived at Plymouth on that morning, after travelling 1896 miles. Labor Day was a half holiday. On the afternoon of the holiday three British destroyers came in with three thousand American soldiers, survivors from the S.S. PERCY. During our stay in the port, Dennis Tighs, George W. Richards, and T. J. Fox, all members of the crew, participated in the boxing tournament at the National A.A. in London. Later Tommy Fox defeated Ben Crayer, champion of the British Grand Fleet in 10 rounds.

Underway Sept. 21, with 20 ships. The sea was terribly rough and all hands were sick. Once general quarters was sounded when a look-out discovered a towing spar astern of one of the ships. It was nothing but a false alarm. That night a ship in the convoy reported that a torpedo had missed her bow, but as usual we saw nothing after investigation. After covering 1865 miles we reached Gibraltar on the 28th.

Two depth charge racks were put on the stern. Liberty in a small town over the Spanish line was given to chief petty officers and first class petty officers. Underway Oct. 8th, with 23 ships. Trip uneventful and we tied up alongside the dock at Plymouth on the 14th. We covered 1842 miles. On the morning of Oct. 18th, we were lined up for inspection when all hands were marched aft and a letter from the Sec. of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, commending the action of William Oliva, seaman, in saving the ship from a collision, was read.

Left the harbor Oct. 24th and later picked up a convoy of 21 ships. Cruised 1679 miles and arrived at Gibraltar on the 29th. Made return trip to England starting Nov. 6th. There was a rumor of an Armistice with Germany and all hands were expectant. We relieved H.M.S. BRITANIA, second class battle-ship, which was sunk two days later while entering the Straits. On the morning of Nov. 11th, we received the good tidings that the Armistice had been signed and would go into effect that day. Later that morning when the escort relieved the CHESTER the good tidings were received from the Commander of a destroyer. There was little celebration on board. When we arrived at Plymouth most of the celebrating had also died down. We had handled our 23rd and last convoy, and had traveled 50,000 miles.

We remained in the harbor until Nov. 19th, when we headed east, with Lieut. Rubel, aid to Admiral Robison as a passenger. After a foggy trip through the English Channel we arrived at Sheerness, Isle of Sheppy, at the mouth of the River Thames on Nov. 21st. Liberty was granted and many of the men went to London on a short visit. Admiral Robisons flag was hoisted



on the 24th, the CHESTER becoming flagship of the Third Patrol Squadron, other ships being the U.S.S. HARVARD, and the U.S.S. CONSAIR, it was rumored that we were going to enter German ports with the Admiral to inspect ships. But after several delays, one occasioned by the bursting of a cylinder head, we left the harbor, after having spent Thanksgiving Day at Sheerness, on Dec. 7th. While in the harbor several German Submarines were tied up near us. After anchoring on two successive nights we arrived at Roeyth, Scotland, Mon, Dec 9th, and tied up near some of the finest ships England possesses. The majority of the North Sea Fleet was present including the QUEEN ELIZABETH, Admiral Beatty's Flagship at the surrender of the German ships, which were anchored where we were lying. On the 12th, we moved further up the stream, and passing under the famous Firth of Forth Bridge. Liberty was granted to one quarter of the ship's company and nearly all the men went to Edinburgh, a city closely resembling an up-to-date American city. The men were cordially received.

For the next few days the Deck Force held infantry drill in full marching order, so that a trained force would be ready in case there was necessity to use a landing party on arriving in a German port.

Dec. 20th, Admiral Robison returned on H.M.S. HERCULES on he had been inspecting German ports. He reported on board and later went to the London Headquarters. Later we learned that he had been detached and that Admiral Philip Andrews would fly his flag on the 26th, and that our next duty would be to visit German ports in the Baltic. Christmas was quietly observed, the usual spread gracing the tables, a liberty party was shoved off, while many attended entertainment on board H.M.S. FEARLESS.

Admiral Andrews came on board with staff on 26th, and we shoved off accompanied by the U.S.S. WICKE and the U.S.S. AWLYN two destroyers. Two submarine chasers could not weather the seas and they returned to Leith. The CHESTER has seldom been in greater danger than when crossing the North Sea, the presence of mines making the situation very uncertain. As night was coming on the second day the lookouts sighted a burning schooner and the destroyers were sent to pick up survivors, who, it was learned had been rescued previous. A pilot was taken on at the Dkaw, northern tip of Denmark, and we continued through the Skagger Back. On Sunday, Dec. 29th at 7 p.m. we anchored in the snug harbor of Copenhagen, Denmark.

On the 30th, members of the Danish Royal family, and high Danish Officials came on board. Liberty was granted to one half the ship's company from 1 p.m. till 7 p.m. The city of Copenhagen impressed the liberty party as being decidedly modern, while the people were friendly. A few German sailers in the city caused some curiosity among the Americans, but there was no trouble. For the first time since the war started we were able to see the German flag flying from a ship, as a German merchantman which passed the CHESTER, dipped its colors in salute.



On the 31st, we started a trip that places the CHESTER in a leading position for public attention. After leaving Copenhagen we passed through miles of mine fields, down through the coast of Swedon, and arrived in the harbor of Sasanitz, Germany about 4 o'clock, the first American man-of-war to enter German ports since we severed relations with Germany. Within the three mile limit of German coast line we turned machine guns on four floating mines which imperiled the lives of all on board. We anchored close to the shore but no one was allowed to go ashore except representatives of the Admiral. It is well to note that the CHESTER, still accompanied by the two destroyers entered their first German port before the close of 1918, Dec. 31st, the date of arrival. It was in the harbor of Sassnits that the new year was ushered in. There was a gathering of the "clansman" shortly before twelve and at the approach of the new year they gave vent to pent up feelings by raising a noise that must have travelled to the shore. Likewise was there a celebration on each of the destroyers.

Early the morning of the first day of the new year we got underway at 11 knots and arrived at Swindemunde, Germany, at noon. Snow covered the hillsides surrounding the harbor, and altogether a dreary downcast appearance was presented by the town. Two German Naval and Army officers came on board for consultation with the Admiral.

They were loud in their praise of the "Yanks" as fighters but remarked that the United States should have more than a couple of hundred thousand soldiers. When told that there were nearly 3,000,000 soldiers in France and about twice that number in the States they laughed and would not believe it. They expressed hatred for the English. Mention of the disposed Kaiser excited the men who declared that he had ruined the country and that he should be disposed of by death. New Year's dinner was enjoyed at Swinemunde, cigarettes and candy from the American Red Cross at Copenhagen being distributed at the tables.

At 7:15 a.m. on Jan. 2, we got underway for Wanermunde on a westerly course and after travelling along the coast we arrived at Wanermunde at 4:10 p.m. Nearing the harbor of this place the port minesweeper hit an object entirely ruining it for further service. A German officer came on board and took us into the harbor. As usual no one was allowed to go ashore except accredited representatives of the Admiral.

As we prepared to get underway ~~join with the dark~~ on the morning of the 3rd, the French Fleet of two cruisers and three destroyers came in. Up anchor at 7:15 p.m. later dropping it again at Travemunde, the port for Lubeck, and near the entrance to Keil Bay. This harbor presented the same uninviting appearance as the others. About two hours later we were underway again arriving at Wanermunde where we anchored for the night. We remained in the harbor during the next day.

At 7:30 a.m. on the 5th, we started out again headed for Copenhagen. A pilot came on board at noon and he guided us through the mine fields. When the ship came into the harbor of Copenhagen 15,000 people lined the long dock wall and greeted the ship, word having been received that we would be in.



As we were coming in to anchor a national salute of 21 guns was fired in honor of the CHESTER, the CHESTER returning the salute.

At night several Americans who were prisoners of war in a German prison camp came on board for a visit. The destroyers WICKS and AWYLN, which had left us to go to Danzig, Germany, returned bringing with them scores of Italian soldiers recently released from the prison camps of Germany. Left the harbor of Copenhagen at daybreak, Jan. 8th, for Rosyth, Scotland.