



R. ERIC SMYTHIES

AROUND
THE WORLD
IN
EIGHTY YEARS



R. E. SMYTHIES
*Life Member Engineering Institute of Canada
Formerly Electrical Lieut.-Commander R.C.N.V.R. (T)*

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Introduction

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IF THIS RECORD SEEMS TO RESEMBLE THAT OF A ROLLING stone I think it is the result of circumstances over which I had little control, and my first choice (so far as I had any choice) would have been for a more settled life with a better chance to gather moss. My early life was "unsettled" owing to the long state of political and economic chaos in Argentina where my parents (who were both English) had their home on an Estancia that was called "La Independencia," which did not save it from being engulfed in the general ruin of the 1890's, with a revolution in 1890 and another in 1893.

I just had time to grow up in England and be educated and trained as a mechanical engineer, emigrate to Canada and start in what could have been a promising business of my own, which I left to serve in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in the First World War. Picking up the threads again after being demobilized in 1919, I had the experience of feeling really prosperous for a time in the Big Boom of the 1920's, followed by the corresponding devastation of the Big Bust of the Great Depression in the 1930's, which was no more than over when the Hitler War was upon us and my uniform exhumed from mothballs before Canada had officially declared war on the Nazis. I had long planned to retire from high-pressure business at about 60 if possible, and I was 58 in 1946.

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There seemed little point in returning to business life for two years or so, and it seemed a better idea to my wife and I to set out in search of a retirement Utopia in a nice, warm, sunny climate, with reasonable cost of living, good medical and library facilities and an agreement with Canada about non-duplication of income taxes. This may seem a very simple specification but it proved surprisingly hard to find a place to fit it, and after living in Barbados, Mexico and Hawaii and exploring many Caribbean Islands, Florida and California, we finally returned to Victoria as being the best compromise we knew for ourselves, all things considered. Since our return in 1961 we have visited the Fiji Islands and, in 1967, South Africa where we have a number of relatives we had never met before. We both have relatives in Australia and hope to visit them soon unless immobilized by the increasing decrepitude of old age; it looks like a close race against time.

R. E. S.

AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY YEARS



IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH century Great Britain had surplus people and surplus capital to invest in other countries, and there was a popular belief in the wisdom of what was known as geographical distribution of investments to avoid the error of having "too many eggs in one basket."

Some of the baskets in foreign countries proved to be very unreliable, as for instance some Latin American republics that were notably lacking in anything resembling political or economic stability.

My father went to Argentina in 1866 when he was 17, with the approval and financial backing of his father who was a clergyman and rector of a fair-sized country parish in Leicestershire. A young fellow of 17 might not be well informed about international politics or economics but his father might be.

I have no memory of ever seeing either of them so had no opportunity to ask them if they had weighed the wisdom of investing or settling in a country with such a lurid past.

Three centuries of ruthless oppression and exploitation as a colony of Spain was followed by fifty years or so of sanguinary civil strife between the Provinces with interludes of combined efforts to exterminate the native Indians, or at least drive them so far south into Patagonia that they would cease to be a

menace for a generation. It is now another century since my father went there and Argentina has still not achieved stability.

A considerable number of British people made the same mistake at about the same time and most of them suffered the same fate as my father, who worked hard for 25 years or so developing his Estancia in the province of Santa Fé, only to be rather completely ruined in the long period of chaos with a revolution in 1890 and another in 1893.

My two oldest brothers, George and Bertie, had returned from school in England in time to be called up for military service in the upheaval of 1893. Being born in the country made them liable for this despite having legal status as British subjects.

I suppose that father might have been able to salvage something from the wreck of his property in time, but he died in 1896 at the age of 47 after a short illness. George and Bertie survived their military experience and shifted for themselves as best they could in Argentina, while my mother was left in England with her six younger children and very little money.

Fortunately we were well supplied with aunts and uncles, some of whom rallied round to help us, with a few comments on the fallacy of thinking that orphaned nephews and nieces might be cheaper by the half-dozen.

Custom decreed that we should all go to boarding schools of the kind the British call Public because they are private. The only member of the family I saw much of was my brother Dudley, about 18 months older than myself, though we went to different schools when he was 11 and I was 9½, after which we met only in the holidays.

When he was 16 he went to sea as a cadet in a sailing ship making voyages to Australia and back to England, which took about 11 months, so we met hardly at all. We were never all together under one roof as a family unit and in due course became scattered about the world, as did so many British families in the heyday of the Empire.

My brother Wilfred was also a sailor but died at the age of 22 of black water fever off the west coast of Africa, then known very aptly as the White Man's Grave. Soon afterward Bertie died in Argentina from the bite of a poisonous reptile when he was far from medical help. At least that was the report that reached us in England for what it was worth, observing that sudden death in various forms was always likely to be just round the corner in that distressful country, and the reported cause might not be the real one.

My oldest brother George remained in Argentina till he was 37 in the year 1911, when he decided to move to Kenya for a change. At the same time I decided to emigrate to Canada, when I was 22.

My mother had the experience of being reduced to penury and bereaved of husband and two older sons within a short space of time, but she was not the type to wilt under such "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." My oldest sister went to India and the other two to South Africa. They all married at about 21 or so and I am well supplied with great-nephews and great-nieces, scattered about in England, South Africa, Australia and Canada, with several of them married now.

At the tender age of 9½ I went to a boarding prep school of 200 boys in a town about 30 miles from London. As in other schools of the type and times, the general atmosphere was somewhat austere to put it mildly, and might be described as being composed of about equal parts of monastery and barrack, but I do not think it did me any real harm.

Academically I was behind my age group as my education up to that time had been extremely sketchy, a result of having no settled home. Needless to say I found my first two years or so fairly tough going in the classrooms. Otherwise it was not so bad as I had certainly not been spoilt or pampered, and did not suffer from homesickness so much as some of my classmates.

After 12 months in the prep school we were transferred to the senior school of 600 boys in the heart of the City of London, where it had been since it was founded in 1553, on a site of 5½ acres and in buildings that had once been part of the Grey Friars Monastery.

The atmosphere of the Senior School was even more austere if possible and was accentuated by the cold and gloomy cloisters, with stone plaques on the walls inscribed with grim trivia such as, "Here lies a benefactor, let no-one move his bones," so that one could not help feeling anything remotely resembling joy would be frowned on as unrefined.

One should not criticize one's Alma Mater and I can honestly say I have always been grateful that I had the type of education, character training and discipline for which the public schools of England are noted. In view of the disaster by which my family was overtaken in Argentina I was doubly fortunate.

I was still there when the school took a great leap forward to modernization in 1902. The site of 5½ acres in the heart of London was sold to the post office and a fine, new school built on an estate of 1,200 acres in the beautiful Sussex Weald country some 40 miles away. We even had such startling innovations as electric light and central heat though the latter especially caused some head-shaking among the more conservative and we were solemnly warned of the danger of sitting on the radiators, which were, however, seldom warm enough to present the slightest danger, though vastly better than no heat at all in the average English winter.

More important than such concessions to comfortable living was the complete reorganization of the faculty which needed modernizing even more than the buildings. Many of the older members of the teaching staff were pensioned off and replaced with younger men, including a new headmaster with new ideas about education and how such a school should be run outside the classrooms.

I was about 13½ at the time and thought the changes added up to a vast improvement. I suppose I have always and instinctively been in favour of progress and opposed to keeping up old customs for sentimental reasons, long after they have ceased to have any point.

While the school was still in London I had applied for transfer from the classical to the modern side. This was on my own initiative as I had no-one to advise me in such matters and there was no career master, though the head of the modern side did function quietly and unofficially in that capacity.

Each year a dozen or so of the most brilliant scholars on the classical side competed for scholarships to Oxford or Cambridge, usually with success. The proportion of students from such schools going on to university was much smaller than it is now, and was in practice limited to those who planned a career in teaching, the church or the diplomatic service and so on.

The teaching of science was in a very early stage and those planning to qualify as engineers, architects or accountants usually served for three or four years as articulated pupils with established firms, a form of training that was both thorough and practical, and cost as much in time and money as a university course.

My school had a long-standing connection with the City of London, and a boy on leaving with a good reputation could usually find a start in life as a junior in such organizations as the Bank of England, Lloyd's, the Stock Exchange, or one of the well-known merchant houses of the City.

In the course of history some alumni had become aldermen or even Lord Mayor of London, both positions of some distinction and associated with the prior attainment of substantial wealth.

This type of career did not appeal to me, however, as I have always rather disliked the idea of living or working in a large city, and had decided at an early age that I should probably

emigrate. The fact that I had no close home ties in England was a factor in this decision.

In the many years I have spent in Canada I have often found myself involved in discussions with parents, about the relative merits of boarding schools for boys and girls, as compared with keeping them at home and sending them to the non-private day schools, usually called public schools in Canada and the United States.

I have always been a staunch advocate of the advantages of letting children be educated and trained by people who are professionals at the job, rather than by their own parents the great majority of whom are rank amateurs (and too often bungling amateurs) who botch the job.

Far too many fond mothers seem to be horrified at the mere mention of the word discipline, which is connected in their minds with something harsh and punitive, instead of connoting good training and orderly conduct, in which so many Canadian and American children are notably lacking.

From observation I am convinced that children going to a day-school are far too likely to derive their notions of behaviour outside the classrooms, from the friends and classmates whose parents have the lowest standards in such matters. And if their own parents try to exact a higher standard the youngsters call them tyrants, and often regard as permissible any means they can think of to do what they want, rather than what their parents wish them to do.

Any well run boarding school relieves the parents of much of the less pleasant part of the job of training children in the way they should go, both in the classrooms and in extracurricular activities. It is customary for senior students who have shown capacity for leadership to have responsibility for much of the every day routine, such as keeping order in the living quarters and so on. It is up to the faculty to select the seniors for this chore wisely and back them up if necessary, in keeping the general tone of the school at a high level.

Many youngsters respond more readily to group pressure of their contemporaries than to guidance by parents or teachers, and it is most important for such pressure to be in the right direction.

In non-private day-schools it happens too often that a class or a whole school may be under the baleful influence of a clique with subversive ideas, bent on undermining the efforts of teachers to keep up a good standard of scholarship and behaviour, and very little can be done to improve matters. If this occurs in a private school and the malefactors are intransigent, their parents can be quietly asked to remove them.

Reference to my school days would be incomplete without mention of the cadet corps or O.T.C. as it came to be known, which was organized soon after the school moved to the country. Many well informed people in Britain and France were convinced that Germany planned war as soon as the time seemed opportune. The handwriting on the wall of international politics was too plain to be misunderstood.

I am not a war-like type but it seemed a patriotic duty to be trained and prepared, so I was one of the first to join the corps. We were already well versed in barrack-square drill which was part of our regular routine, but I enjoyed the miniature rifle range where my performance was much better than on the cricket field, for which I had neither liking nor aptitude.

Some of the foremost military critics forecast the outbreak of war for 1910, then only six years ahead of us. In the event they were only four years out in their reckoning, not a serious margin of error as these things go.

After I left school I served for four years in a unit of the territorial army, the 1st Hampshire Royal Garrison Artillery. We trained in the coast defence batteries in the Isle of Wight, which were equipped with naval guns of all sizes up to 12" calibre. When war actually came I served in the navy but that is another chapter.

As the time for me to leave school approached some of my

relatives arranged that I should enter the service of one of the large railways in India that were built by British capital and engineers. The idea was acceptable to me but there proved to be a serious obstacle.

It seemed that before going to India it was desirable that I should have some experience in railway administration in England, and the English railways did not take kindly to the notion of training someone like myself, only to see me go off to India just as I became useful to them. This was understandable but it would have saved their time and trouble and me from a humiliating experience, if they had said so frankly instead of pretending to fall in with the idea and then setting an academic booby-trap into which I fell with a sickening thud.

I was directed to present myself at the London headquarters of a certain line, to sit for an examination the syllabus of which should have been straightforward enough for anyone fresh from seven years at a good school. The syllabus did not mention, however, that the exam could not possibly be passed by anyone who was not fluent in the Welsh language, which would I believe rule out the great majority of the Welsh people nowadays.

The line in question ran to Wales and the final part of the exam consisted of writing down from dictation, the names of a number of the stations in that country. The most notorious of these had 58 letters, *Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch*, but I could not pronounce it to save my life. I do not know if the examiner gave me this one but he might as well have talked Chinese or Zulu so far as I was concerned.

Perhaps this unpleasant experience was a blessing in disguise because it resulted in someone asking me what I really wanted to do, to which I replied that I would like to be a mechanical engineer, though without any serious expectation that it would be feasible for me. However, the kindly old great-aunt who

had been a sort of fairy godmother to me, undertook to make it financially feasible, for which I have been eternally grateful to her memory.

It was arranged that I should become an indentured apprentice in a shipbuilding and marine engineering plant in Southampton. In return for a premium of £150 sterling I had the privilege of working in the different departments of the engineering side of the plant, for a period of four years, the last 12 months of which would be spent in the drafting office. Pay was merely pocket-money of a few shillings a week.

For the first three years it meant putting in a 54-hour week, starting at 6 a.m. daily for six days per week, with Saturday afternoons off unless required to work overtime, which happened sometimes. In order to take full advantage of the training it was necessary to attend evening classes on three or four evenings a week from October to May inclusive, and to study textbooks in what spare time one had. The schedule did not leave much time or energy for fun and games, but I had little money for such frivolous diversions and my work provided plenty of physical exercise.

I was surprised by the relatively small number of apprentices who did seem to take their training seriously, both in the plant I was in and other plants in the vicinity. There was too much absenteeism and attendance at the evening classes in the local technical institute was much lower than it should have been.

From observation I concluded that many of them had no special wish to be engineers and were there mainly because their parents did not know what else to do with them. Some had definite leanings that were out of line with their parents' ideas. I remember one large young fellow who was very fond of horses and whose most cherished possession was a revolver of heavy calibre, that he was obviously itching to use. His one idea was to go to the wild west where men could be men, and he may have done this unless the war caught up with him

first. It was a waste of everyone's time and his parents' money to try to make a would-be cowboy into an engineer.

Lack of keenness in my fellow apprentices was a help to me as there was little competition for some of the things I wanted to do, such as going out on the trials of ships we built or repaired. This often meant overtime work and uncertainty about the time of return, which could interfere with any arrangements they had planned for fun in the evening.

Experience gained on trial ~~ships~~^{trips} was invaluable to me when I went to sea later on, to round out my training and see something of the world while deciding to which country to emigrate.

Some of my relatives poured cold water on the idea of sea-going, for various reasons, one being the risk of falling victim to the temptations that beset seafaring men in sinful foreign ports, another was the hazard of being unable to settle down ashore again, which I fully intended to do after I had gained the experience I needed. I had a strong hankering for a settled life in a home of my own such as I had never experienced.

My naval uncle was very scathing about my going to sea in the engineroom. He exclaimed, "Engineers! we called 'em Ashcats when I was in the service!" He was good to me and I have pleasant memories of him but he belonged to the time when engineers in the navy were not commissioned officers, and senior officers of the executive branch strongly disliked having a lot of dirty, oily, smelly ironmongery below decks, and the ugly funnels above, nestling among their nice, white sails and belching black smoke over everything; to say nothing of seeing ships, sails and men covered with coal dust every time the bunkers must be filled.

Later on when I told this same uncle that I planned to emigrate to Canada, he tried to dissuade me on the ground that (he said) Canada was an agricultural country, where an engineer would find small demand for his services.

It was true that many Britons of the well educated class thought it was the natural function of the "Colonies" such as

Canada and Australia to supply the Mother Country with raw materials for industry and cheap food for factory workers, taking in exchange the products of the factories.

The education of such folk was largely classical and did not include the subject of economies. They were naturally disposed to regard details of money and trade as rather beneath their dignity, and some hardly distinguished between capital and income in their personal financial affairs.

So they did not readily grasp the fact that if the people of the "Colonies" meekly accepted their ideas on the subject, they would soon find themselves either bankrupt or with a standard of living much lower than that of the industrialized Mother Country.

If Canada exported iron ore worth about \$15 for instance, and bought it back in the form of a motor car for something like \$1,500 or \$2,000, it would be a poor transaction for Canada. This is a very rough illustration but the basic principle is there.

At the time Canada was best known to most Britons as an exporter of wheat and it was not generally realized that there was extensive development of mining, lumbering, fishing, general manufacturing and the use of vast potential resources of hydro-electric power.

In due course I was very glad I had not let myself be dissuaded from going to Canada by this mistaken advice. I suppose most young people have the experience of being offered advice by older folk, which is naturally well meant. The problem is to sift the good grain of first-hand knowledge or experience from the chaff of misinformation or mistaken notions gleaned from heaven knows where. It is a mistake to resent advice or to let a shut mind reject it automatically.

Young men of my generation in England were hampered in choice of a career by the operation of the social caste system, that left-over relic of feudalism. Priority went to commissioned rank in the army or navy, for which the pay was so small that

it was generally considered impracticable without private means to support the social status involved, and in the piping times of peace there were not enough commissions to go round in any case.

Some of my relatives felt I was letting the family down in choosing to be an engineer, but there was no prospect of my being a "gentleman" of private means, and I did not notice anyone shedding tears over my decision to emigrate.

I thought it curious that many of the wage-earners with whom I associated in the shipbuilding plant had the idea that a "gentleman" did not have to work for his living, and this despite being strongly socialistic in politics. They were prone to repeat the popular clichés of the doctrinaire socialists such as, "from each according to his ability and to each according to his need," without having any real grasp of the full implications of such idealistic nonsense. I came to the conclusion that the tenets of socialism were far more widely held among the mass of the voters, than was realized by the traditionally conservative class.

At the same time I felt that the ideas of the socialists about economics were just as far from reality as the ideas of those to whom they were politically opposed, if in a different way. My views have not been shaken by the course of events in the past half-century or the present economic troubles of Britain.

The final year of my apprenticeship was spent in the drawing office which was a "white-collar" job, starting at 9 o'clock instead of 6 a.m., thus allowing more time for study and the opportunity to put into practice the theory, design and mathematics I had learned in evening classes at the technical institute.

With the approach of my 21st birthday and the end of apprenticeship it was necessary to think about getting a job in the engineroom at sea, the next step in my career. Owing to the depressed state of the British Merchant Marine such jobs were hard to find. Many men with excellent qualifications as Captains or Chief Engineers were unemployed or glad to

take anything they could get at small pay, as better than nothing.

I was offered a job by one of the large passenger lines but it did not fit my plans as it would have meant several years at sea before I could sit for the exam for a 2nd Engineer's Certificate. The firm offered to keep me on as a junior in the drawing office at 28/- a week, equal to \$7 United States then, and on which I could live without luxuries to which I was not accustomed in any case.

So I did this for several months until one day a telegram arrived from a firm of consulting engineers in Glasgow, asking me if I could join a ship in the Roath Basin, Cardiff, the next day, to which I sent off a prompt acceptance with thanks.

Then I had to scurry round winding up affairs and packing a bag in order to take the train the next morning, knowing that it might be three years or more before I should return. Tramp ships could be away from Britain for any length of time up to three years before a member of the crew could claim to be paid off or repatriated at the owner's expense. That was a risk I had to run but in the event I was lucky.

I had no idea what the ship would be like or where she might be going or even what my pay would be, but those details were unimportant in relation to the business of getting on with my career. It seemed like setting out to keep a blind date with fate but in those days when a job was offered, it was wise to take it and not boggle over details.

I thought I had a fairly good idea what my duties would be and the kind of life I should lead as the "dogbody" of the engineroom staff, doing the hottest, dirtiest and meanest jobs the 2nd and 3rd engineers were glad to be able to pass on to me, in the way of the sea. It was the customary experience of a young engineer on his first voyage, going down to the sea in the hot, oily, smelly bowels of a tramp steamer.

In due course I found that the mental picture I had formed of the experience awaiting me, was very close to the reality.

rough, tough, undisciplined and the bane of the existence of the deck officers and engineers who had to be responsible for them.

I found the chief engineer in his cabin on the upper deck amidships, and introduced myself to him. We looked each other over and while I had no idea what he thought of me, I knew his appearance was not exactly prepossessing at first glance. He was tall and had a prominent paunch, also a very gloomy expression enhanced by a heavy mustache of the drooping or "walrus" type. He wasted no time on the amenities but announced without preamble, "No sick men allowed on board a tramp ship my boy."

I knew he was putting me on notice that I should probably be very seasick but would have to keep on my feet and stand my watches in the engine room, even if I felt like death, all of which I did in due course. The warning was unnecessary as I knew enough about the sea to be fully aware that the worst bout of mal de mer is not regarded as a reason for a member of a ship's crew to take to his bunk.

It was the custom in many ships of the size and type to carry a junior engineer to stand the chief engineer's watch for him, and that was to be my job, one advantage of which was that the Chief naturally had the best watch, from 8 a.m. to noon, and from 8 p.m. to midnight, thus allowing most of the night in bed, unless called out for some reason.

The Chief must decide how much responsibility to let me have, because he would be technically responsible for any errors I made. In the two or three days before the ship sailed and for the first few days at sea, he kept a fairly close eye on me and quizzed me from time to time in order to find out if I had really worked and studied as I should have done during my apprenticeship.

I managed to field all his questions about the engines and boilers, including some that I think he fully expected would baffle me. Once he made up his mind about me he left me

SO I ARRIVED IN CARDIFF ONE wet and windy morning in January, and hired an ancient, horse-drawn cab to take me to the docks, where my ship was loading a cargo of coal destined for Marseille. The export of coal was still an important item in the national economy, though the trade was beginning to feel the competition of the cheap, low-grade coals mined in countries like Japan, India, New Zealand and others.

The first thing I noticed about the ship was the Lascar quartermaster on watch at the gangway. I was glad to see that the ship carried a Lascar crew because I knew from talks with my brother Dudley and with other men who had served at sea with Asiatic crews, that either Chinese or Lascars were much to be preferred to the type of white men who might be willing to ship as sailors or stokers, especially stokers in tramp ships.

I had heard many discussions about the relative merits of Lascars and Chinese, the consensus being that the Lascars were more docile and amenable to discipline, but the Chinese were tougher and less likely to collapse in an emergency. Opinion was unanimous that the majority of white men who were still willing to be stokers or sailors in tramp ships were

very much alone while on watch, sometimes never coming down into the engine room for weeks at a stretch.

The ship was owned and registered in Glasgow and of the nine white men on board seven were Scots. The chief engineer was Welsh and I was the only Englishman on board, often referred to as, "the bloody Sassenach," sometimes in the spirit of good, rough, shipboard fun and occasionally in more serious vein.

The 2nd and 3rd engineers were typical Clydeside mechanics, good men at the job for which they were well trained as apprentices in marine engineering plants, for a minimum of four years and sometimes as much as seven years, from the school-leaving age of 14 till 21. They were physically and mentally tough and had that pride in their craft that would not let them be baffled by those "unforeseen" contingencies with which engineers at sea must cope. They are only unforeseen in the sense that one never knows what will happen next or when, but can be sure it will be something and that in mid-ocean there is no well-equipped repair shop near by to help.

The Chief had told me in my first interview with him that they did not encourage the Lascars to learn English, as it might help to give them wrong ideas about race equality. So it was necessary to have at least a smattering of their language, Lascari Bat, which is one of the many dialects of India. Actually it is mixed with some English words for which they have no corresponding term, and is a sort of lingua franca in general use by seafaring folk and quite helpful in finding one's way about ashore in the seaports of the Orient, and in countries other than India.

I had picked up some words from one source and another before I went to sea, and had managed to acquire a phrase book in Cardiff. I have always had a certain facility for picking up live languages by ear, much more readily than I could learn Latin or Greek from textbooks at school.

As the Chief kept very much in the background most of

the time, my immediate boss was the Second, who spoke with a very marked Glasgow accent and used some words that seemed almost like a foreign language. One of the first things he told me to do was to open a certain steam valve, and when I asked him where it was he replied, "Awa up forbye the lum," which I was able to translate as, "On deck near the funnel."

I was not always so successful and he was very sensitive about any suggestion that his speech lacked purity, especially from a despised Sassenach like myself; he also had a very quick temper. He was irked when he noticed that the Lascars understood me better and asked me how I had learned Lascari. Hoping to be helpful I was so naïve as to try to explain tactfully that it was his Scots accent that baffled them, at which he took umbrage quickly as usual and poured on my well-meaning head the vials of his wrath in such a volume of vitriol, that I resolved on the spot to leave all such good deeds in future strictly to the Boy Scouts. I am sure that any student of linguistics who heard him speaking to the Lascars would regard it as a memorable experience.

The ship docked in Marseille on a fine, sunny Sunday morning in what would be early spring there, and the weather in great contrast to the typical English winter we had left behind only 10 days before.

The mooring lines were no sooner made fast than a welcome committee of young girls with an older chaperone (if that is the word) came on board. In my youth and ignorance I was surprised to see them allowed on the ship at all, especially on Sunday, but it was only for mild fraternization and the distribution of business cards with little maps on the back, to facilitate finding them where they lived.

The French have poetic names such as, "Daughters of joy" or "Butterflies of the Night" for these girls who make a career of entertaining men, with what some regard as the height of hospitality. I was surprised to find they were not done up and

bedizened like the far-famed citizeness of Babylon but dressed neatly in quiet good taste, while their behaviour on the ship was decorous, like working girls of a good type anywhere.

Some of my shipmates recognized former acquaintances among them and there was much gossip and reminiscing, with exchange of news of mutual friends and other ships in all parts of the seven seas, who had been promoted and who was expected to be in Marseille again before long.

The girls tried to extract promises to visit them ashore but I am afraid business was far from brisk owing to lack of money. It was too early in the voyage and my shipmates had either banked their surplus cash from the previous voyage, or spent it all on riotous living ashore before signing on again for another spell at sea, each according to his custom.

We were all nominally on a monthly wage but during a voyage received only very small sums doled out by the Captain at his discretion from time to time when the ship was in port, and always with the impression that it was a favour and was grudged. I never did understand whether any of us could, if it came to a point, claim the full amount owing to us at the time.

There was some grumbling with suitably sulphurous comments on the alleged parsimony of the Captain, but we all knew really that it was a good system of enforced saving, and were glad at the end of a voyage when we were all paid off automatically with a good round sum in gold sovereigns and those wonderful, crisp Bank of England five-pound notes. Even the thriftless ones felt they had better value in riotous living in the United Kingdom than in most foreign ports. The system suited me well enough as I had not acquired a taste for reckless spending, and was bent on saving as much as possible toward a "grub-stake" for the emigration I planned.

All ship captains know that the less money men have the less is the risk of them getting into trouble ashore, especially the kind of trouble that means the Captain must try to ransom

them from the clutches of the local police, or possibly even cause serious and costly delay to the ship. Once upon a time it was possible to simply abandon troublesome crew members with a feeling of "good riddance," but now all countries have more or less strict immigration rules that preclude such a simple solution, ships being heavily fined for crew members left behind.

Discharging the cargo of coal in Marseille took about 10 days, after which we went with empty holds to Torrevega in Spain to load salt for Calcutta. There was no harbour at Torrevega then and the ship anchored about two miles from the shore. The salt was brought out in 30-ton lighters propelled by large oars with man-power.

I had somehow acquired the popular belief that most Spanish men were indolent by nature and given to putting everything off till "mañana," but I had to revise the notion after seeing those stevedores of Torrevega at work. I doubt if they had a trade union then and were probably paid by the ton rather than by the hour, but they loaded the ship in record time without the aid of modern mechanical equipment, just old-fashioned shovels. Their diet seemed to consist largely of bread and cheese and garlic, with some fish at times.

When we sailed the ship was if anything somewhat over-loaded, with the Plimsoll mark below the waterline. There were no port officials to bother about such a detail, and when we arrived at Calcutta after burning some 700 tons of bunker coal the Plimsoll was just on the waterline.

It was customary for the charterers to give the Captain a bonus on the tonnage of cargo carried, and in theory the bonus was supposed to be shared with the chief engineer whose co-operation could help toward the most favourable results. There was a widespread belief that such men might be able to retire early if they wished to do so, but there would be an element of luck in this, depending on the type of ship and the sort of cargoes carried.

There was no opportunity to go ashore in Torrevega and little apparent inducement to do so. It looked like a collection of small, white-washed houses on a sun-baked strip of sandy shore on the edge of an arid hinterland.

The salt came from a natural salt factory consisting of a large, shallow lagoon with a subterranean syphon connection with the sea, so that the water was evaporated by the warm, Mediterranean sun and the salt left behind to be shovelled up and loaded into ships with no further processing.

The Second cut a jaunty figure as he leaned on the rail with his hat at a rakish angle and a large cigar at a different but equally rakish angle, while he looked at the village on shore. Removing the cigar for a moment and spitting nonchalantly in the sea he made the terse comment, "Och! a hundred hooses and twa' whoorrs." The last item was a rough estimate of course but I thought him well qualified as an authority.

Most people find passage through the Suez Canal for the first time an interesting experience. It is well named "The Gateway to the East" as the whole atmosphere seems to change from Occidental to Oriental on arrival at Port Said.

Anchored in the harbour waiting our turn to enter the canal we were boarded by Arab bumboatmen eager to do business with us, if only to swap some of their strangely assorted wares for an old pair of pants. I think their real object may have been to obtain entry to one's cabin with a view to pilferage. They are reputed to be among the world's cleverest thieves. The Chief enjoined me strictly not to leave the engine room without being sure the stout steel door was double-locked. He said, "The blighters will steal the main bearings of the engines or the milk from your tea if you take your eyes off them for a moment." Only the word he used wasn't blighters.

Steaming down the Red Sea for the first three days or so after leaving Suez, the weather was nearly perfect. Then the following breeze began to die down and the thermometer in

the engineroom to creep up, till I began to wonder how high it would go by the time we were off Aden. The engineroom was not well ventilated and as the temperature rose to 120°F. it became uncomfortably hot to work in for four hours at a time. The next time we passed Aden some months later the maximum was 145°F. which was much worse of course, though by that time I had become adjusted to the condition about as well as I could be.

It was actually cooler in the stokehold where a strong draft came down two large ventilators to supply air to the six furnaces. This was just as well because the job of stoking marine boilers with coal is hardly a fit one for human beings, especially when the coal is of poor quality.

With good coal in the bunkers we used about 20 tons a day for steady steaming at 8 knots, and the stokers had a comparatively easy job. By the time we reached Calcutta the bunkers were empty and were replenished with Indian native coal, which was so poor that we used 30 tons a day or more and the stokers had a tough time to keep steam up to the required pressure. Even worse than stoking was the job of trimming, or shovelling coal in the cramped space of the pitch dark and dusty bunkers, to where the stokers could reach it easily.

To my knowledge no-one succeeded in inventing a satisfactory mechanical stoker for marine use, though a number of clever men tried. When the crack transatlantic liners, *Mauretania* and *Lusitania* were coal-burners they used 1,000 tons a day, or 5,000 tons for each 5-day crossing on the New York run. Every pound of coal was shovelled into the furnaces by hand and the ash and clinker raked out and shovelled into the hydraulic ash-ejectors. The coming of oil fuel for ships has been a great boon.

I had often heard and read of the balmy, spice-laden breezes that give notice of the approach to tropical shores some time before land can be seen. Ceylon quite lived up to its reputation

in this respect and as I never had the chance to go ashore there, I was saved the disillusion experienced on finding that sometimes distance lends enchantment. Other exotic tropical shores were not nearly so pleasant to the olfactory sense at close quarters, to put it mildly.

Tramp ships had no wireless in those days and according to custom we passed close enough to the Point de Galle, to "make our number" with a string of flags to the signal station there, so that the news of our passing would be relayed by telegraph to the agents in Calcutta, the owners in Glasgow and Lloyds in London.

Some days later we arrived off the mouth of the Hooghly River and picked up a Bengal pilot for the difficult passage of some 80 miles to Calcutta, difficult because the ship channel is narrow and winding between the mudbanks, the currents very strong even to a high tidal bore at times, and a low-powered ship must on occasion anchor to wait for the tide to turn.

We did anchor that night at a place called Budge Budge, opposite a large factory building that I learned was a jute mill. Later on I was agreeably surprised to see the extent of modern industrial development of various kinds in India, most of it promoted by British capital, technical knowledge and enterprise. It gave the lie to much of the subversive propaganda so actively spread by agitators about the alleged "exploitation" of the native population in favour of British industries. The tragedy was, then as now, that efforts to raise the living standards of the mass of the people were thwarted by the too rapid increase in population.

Years later when I travelled about the United States on business bent, I met many Americans who held forth to me about the iniquity of the system under which (they said) the poor, downtrodden Indian coolies were forced to toil under the tropical sun to grow cotton, for which they received a mere pittance, despite which they were expected to buy back

the cotton after it had been sent to England to be made into shirts, and all this at a fabulous profit to the greedy, grasping grinders of the faces of the poor.

It was quite a bedtime story but typical of the sort of thing widely believed by Americans, who are basically kind-hearted and seem curiously susceptible to such propaganda, while not allowing themselves time to ascertain the true facts. They are taught by their history books to think of King George III as a black-hearted tyrant, whose oppressive ideas still probably form the basis of the policies of successive British governments, or so they seem to want to believe.

They have allowed themselves to become obsessed with dislike of even the most beneficent form of colonialism, with results that are only too plain now in the deplorable state of some of the newly independent countries of Africa, or for that matter India as well. It is of course possible that some of them may be influenced by the notion that cotton is better grown in their own deep south by negro share-croppers, rather than by the coolies in far-off India.

Arriving at Calcutta the ship dropped anchor in the river off the Maidan, a spacious savannah which was a centre for much of the social and sporting life of the city. It took three weeks to discharge the salt that was loaded at Torrevega in 4 or 5 days, owing to the customs department rule that the salt must be carefully weighed as it was hoisted from the holds, and before it was taken ashore.

This delay to the ship must have increased the cost of the salt to the consumers but from the viewpoint of the ship's engineers it was not unwelcome, as it gave us a chance to carry out needed maintenance to the main engines and auxiliary machinery.

I was especially glad of the long stay in port because I was able to see something of my sister Inez and her husband and small son and daughter, in the evenings and weekends, when I was not on duty aboard the ship.

Before the last of the salt was unloaded we heard that our next assignment was to be a six-months time charter in the Calcutta coal trade, which meant carrying coal mined in India to sundry ports in the Far East, such as Rangoon, Colombo, Bombay, Karachi and others. It was not regarded with pleasure by mates and engineers as it meant the ship would be driven as hard as possible, so that the largest number of voyages could be made within the charter period. There would be a minimum of opportunity for any form of relaxation ashore, while the Captain and Chief Engineer would be paid a bonus by the charterers, based on the tonnage carried by the ship.

A special drawback for me was that sometimes cargo would be worked at night, which involved my staying up all night and getting what sleep I could in the daytime, despite the noise, dense clouds of coal dust over everything, and getting up for meals if I wanted any food at all, a most comfortable existence, to which by tradition of the sea the "dogsbody" is automatically elected.

The coal was loaded in Calcutta in the Kidderpur Dock, which the ships entered through lock gates at high tide. It was a long dock with berths for 10 or 12 sea-going ships of good size. Only one berth was equipped with modern cranes for handling cargo, and it was always the last to be filled. It was cheaper to use hand-labour, with long lines of men and women coolies carrying coal in baskets on their heads, tramping up one gang-plank, dumping the contents of the basket in the hold, and going ashore for another lot down another gang-plank.

I shall remember the coal dock at Calcutta as long as I can remember anything, but words fail to do justice to the scene. Most of the time eight or ten ships would be loading simultaneously, with six or eight long lines of coolies tramping up and down the gangways to each vessel. There was a permanent fog of coal dust and the whole scene reminded me of Dante's

Inferno, especially at night when the cooking fires in the coolie lines on shore glowed and reflected through the black fog, while the coolies looked like hundreds of lost souls wandering about in search of something to drink, and keeping up a dirge-like chant that was both continuous and extremely monotonous.

Fortunately it took only three or four days to load the ship as a rule and it was a relief to get away to sea again, and see the decks and hatches washed clear of the mess of black dust. It was not so easy to get it out of one's clothes and bedding and everything one possessed.

Our first load was destined for Rangoon in Burma, a short run of four or five days till we anchored in the River Irawaddy opposite the city, for the cargo to be discharged into lighters. The only way to get ashore involved hiring a native sampan, which I did on Sunday morning, in order to see something of the town and especially the famed Shwe Dagon Pagoda with its gilded roof, which I thought quite came up to its reputation as something unique.

When the ship was in port the engineers put in a full 8-hour day at work on maintenance jobs, most of which were in the engineroom, which was uncomfortably warm for hard work. We usually had Saturday afternoon and Sunday off when in port though one deck officer and one engineer must be on board and available at all times day and night, in case of need.

The usual native bumboatmen came on board with the customary assortment of merchandise, including sewing materials, proprietary remedies for sundry ailments and trinkets of the cheaper sort to take home as souvenirs or gifts for friends. Some of my shipmates bought hundreds of Burmese cheroots to take home and smuggle ashore. Their story was that any question with the Customs officials could be readily solved by a gift of 50 cheroots, but I have no personal knowledge of any such transaction taking place.

Some hours before the ship was due to leave for the return

to Calcutta, I was taken ill with one of those bad intestinal upsets that were even more common in the tropics in those days than they are now. There was some talk of getting me to a doctor but the Captain decided to dose me himself from the ship's medicine chest. He prescribed castor oil as he said "To get it over with." The Chief said that was all wrong and gave me a sort of cocktail of laudanum and opium, a recipe of his own.

By then I was feeling like death and past caring what happened to me, but I must have had a strong constitution because I survived in spite of the well-meant ministrations of the amateur medicos. I am sure they both wanted me to get well if only because the Captain would not want the red tape involved in accounting for a body, and the Chief would dislike having to stand his watch in the heat of the engineroom. It was no joke to anyone in good physical condition and he was decidedly overweight.

I stood all my watches on the trip to Calcutta though by the time the anchor was dropped there I was so weak I could hardly climb up the steep steel stairs from the engineroom to the main deck. The Captain hurried ashore and came back with a doctor who looked me over and said I should go to hospital and be fed on calves foot jelly and essence of chicken.

I noticed the Captain's face getting longer at the thought of such expensive luxuries for a mere junior engineer, so I piped up and suggested I might go to stay with my relatives ashore, which was adopted unanimously and with evident relief.

My brother-in-law was engineer-in-chief of the Bengal-Nagpur railway which gave him the status of a "Burra Sahib" or executive, and a very pleasant bungalow in a lovely tropical garden setting, complete with peacocks stalking sedately about, flaunting their gorgeous plumage in the bright sun and making their uncouth noises.

My sister and her husband were very good to me and I enjoyed a brief interval of gracious living, while the resilience

of youth and a good constitution helped me to a speedy recovery from a most unpleasant and even dangerous experience.

Many years later in what I suppose was advanced middle age I had several narrow escapes from a similar experience in tropical countries, where it is wise to be constantly on guard against infected food or drink. Once in the island of Barbados I lost 10 pounds in one night but had the advantage of approved remedies in our own bathroom cabinet, and was spared the efforts of amateur doctors experimenting with the limited resources of a ship's medicine chest.

My brief respite from the discomforts of life aboard ship in the Calcutta coal trade came to an end all too soon, when I reported on board just before departure for Colombo in Ceylon, a few days steam southward down the Bay of Bengal.

Again we anchored in the harbour and had small chance to go exploring ashore, where the scenery looked very attractive from the ship. The Singalese coolies worked hard and discharged the 6,000 tons of coal in five days or so, without the help of any modern equipment for handling the stuff, just shovels and the ship's steam winches.

It was part of my job to make running repairs to the winches between ports, working in the afternoons when not on watch in the engineroom. It was a fairly tough life with long hours of work under conditions that were physically trying, mainly owing to the heat.

On watch in the engineroom was rather like being stewed alive in one's own juice, and "working at winches" in the afternoons resembled being grilled alive on the hot steel deck by the tropical sun almost directly overhead.

While the ship was at sea my hours of work added up to about 80 per week, though in case of trouble it could be 24 hours per day till the job was done. My very modest stipend was by the month with nothing said about overtime. However, I was getting what I wanted from it, which was the technical experience plus the feeling of self-confidence that comes from

doing a tough job under difficult conditions, and knowing one has done it well; the pay was relatively unimportant.

On our return to Calcutta I found an invitation to spend a weekend at Curraghpore, a "railway" town about 70 miles away on the mainline of the Bengal-Nagpur, and the site of the main repair works for the rolling stock.

I believe my brother-in-law was largely responsible for planning the place, including the living accommodation for the native workers and the white executives and foremen. The latter were responsible for training and supervision of the native artisans, and I was impressed with the quality of the work being done in the machine shops and other departments.

They were building some of the passenger coaches and what the British call "goods wagons" and Americans call "freight cars," and planning to build some locomotives in the near future. I had noticed that some of the engines in use were made in Germany, and was told that it was the policy to buy equipment on the open market, with no pressure to "buy British," though the whole railway had been financed by British capital.

It was a favourite complaint of critics and agitators that India was "exploited" for the benefit of British industry, but I saw much evidence of the falsity of such canards.

The Bengal-Nagpur was said to be the second largest railway in India, and from what I saw of it I thought it was well managed. The crack train was the Bombay Mail which gave a daily service over the 1,500 miles from Bombay to Calcutta on a 36-hour schedule, with an average speed of 42 miles per hour including stops. This was comparable to the best long-distance trains in North America at the time, in the year 1910, and the first class coaches were equally luxurious, lacking only air-conditioning which did not come into general use on the American railways for another quarter century.

As it happened our next trip with coal from Calcutta was for the B-N Railway, which illustrates the fact that it is cheaper

to transport goods by sea than by land. The coal needed by the railway for its own use could be carried 3,000 miles by ship at lower cost than it could be carried 1,500 miles by its own trains.

Our first trip to Karachi provided some mild excitement of a kind that seafarers always have in mind though it actually materializes rather rarely. When "making our number" to the signal station at Point de Galle, Ceylon, we were asked to keep a sharp lookout for a liner called the *Trieste*, carrying mail and passengers to Bombay and said to be drifting helplessly with her single propeller shaft broken, in bad "monsoon" weather. Her passenger list was said to include an ambassador and other assorted V.I.P.'s which might not increase her salvage value but helped to make for bigger headlines in the newspapers of the world.

Our only chance was to actually sight the stricken vessel and the monsoon season meant poor visibility. In those days passenger liners had wireless but tramp cargo ships had not. The *Trieste* was actually sighted and taken in tow by a British cargo ship called the *Lowther Range* that had left Calcutta 24 hours ahead of us, also bound for Karachi. Owing to the stormy weather they had quite a struggle towing her to Bombay and lost two or three men overboard, including the 2nd engineer, while replacing tow-lines broken in the rough seas.

Some weeks later we were again in the Kidderpur Dock in Calcutta at the same time as the *Lowther Range*, when they heard that the salvage award was 80,000 pounds sterling, a really substantial sum in those days, part of which would go to the owners and the rest to the members of the crew. The prospect of salvage was always exciting.

Our second trip to Karachi coincided with the end of our six months charter in the coal trade and the news that our next job would be to take a cargo of wheat in bags to Hull in England. It seemed odd at the time for a country like India in which large scale famine seemed to be endemic in one

district or another, to export a staple food-stuff like wheat to relatively well-fed England, but it was our job to carry the stuff not to reason why. The nine white members of the ship's company were glad to be homeward bound, especially when it meant surcease from the discomforts and other drawbacks of the Calcutta coal trade.



RELATIVELY SHORT VOYAGES
Rwere a drawback to the Calcutta coal trade, because every time we returned to Calcutta the entire crew was paid off and a new lot signed on a day or two before sailing again. It seemed a matter of luck whether the new crew would contain a larger proportion of experienced stokers than the last lot, or too many "jungli wallahs" with forged papers who had never been to sea before and would have to be taught from zero the ungente art of stoking marine boilers with low grade coal.

When a new crew was needed the Captain would go ashore to see a functionary known as the God Serang, who could apparently produce any needed number of Lascar sailors, stokers, serangs, sekunnis and tindals, all of course supposed to be experienced men with discharge papers from other ships in which they had served; all this for a suitable fee of course. Being a wily Oriental the God Serang received a fee from the men for whom he found jobs and I used to wonder if he was supposed to be responsible for supplying men with experience at the job for which they signed on. There were certainly times when I felt I would like to have him in the stokehold with me at sea and put him to work at trying to keep steam up in our boilers with the low grade native coal, when the boilers were designed to burn good Welsh or Yorkshire stuff. It was

difficult enough for really experienced stokers and almost impossible for the raw recruits fresh from the jungle, even after they had recovered from seasickness and found "sealegs" of a sort.

I was fortunate in that the tindal who was in charge of the stokehold in my watch and the oiler came back each time we took on a new crew, as they were both very good men at their respective jobs, which made a world of difference to me.

I got on well with the Lascars and had no trouble with them. The oiler in my watch was an elderly man with a long, wispy beard that gave him a venerable look. He knew his job and I found him completely reliable. On the occasion of a Moslem festival the Lascars would hold a service of some sort on the after hatch, just outside their quarters and dressed up in their best clothes. My oiler seemed to have the status of a lay reader, presiding over the affair, standing up in front of the congregation and holding a copy of Koran from which he was apparently reading. I did not know if he could actually read but if not he put on a very good act, reciting from memory while seeming to read.

When we were on watch if I noticed the steam pressure dropping below the correct figure, I would tell the oiler to tell the tindal I wanted to speak to him. The oiler would say, "Accha Sahib" and go to the stokehold. Then the tindal would appear and I would look at him and the pressure gauge, whereon he would say "Accha Sahib" and vanish to the stokehold again; they could read the gauge at any rate.

In a short time the needle of the gauge would begin to creep up and all would be well. Thus would the dignity of man be respected and protocol preserved while the main engines turned over at a steady 60 revolutions per minute and the ship maintained her usual speed of 8 knots.

For the first few days of our passage from Karachi to Hull everything went smoothly, though the weather became perceptibly warmer as we approached the Gulf of Aden. We

passed Aden at 8 o'clock one morning, when the sea was glassy and the temperature of the water 93°F. and the air temperature in the engine room 145°. The stokehold was slightly more bearable owing to the draft coming down the two large ventilators to supply the air necessary for combustion in the furnaces.

At 10 o'clock I was startled by the sudden loud clanging of the engine room telegraph, while the pointer whirled round from "Full Ahead" to "Full Astern," something that rarely happened at sea and almost surely indicating an emergency of some sort, such as a "man overboard."

This time it was a case of two men overboard, both of them stokers in my watch apparently crazed by the heat, who had gone up on deck and over the side into the clear blue water that certainly looked enticing if one did not think about sharks.

To get a large, slow speed, triple expansion engine from full ahead to full astern was a rather complicated operation, and while I was working at the controls as quickly as possible, the second engineer came running down the steep steel stairs to take charge. He explained the cause of the trouble and told me to go up on deck and see what happened.

I saw the two stokers swimming about in circles, not as if trying to get back to the ship, and one of our lifeboats being rowed toward them by four deckhands, with the Mate at the tiller and the carpenter in the bow holding a boathook; to complete the picture there were several very large sharks swimming about quite near the stokers but apparently not making any move to attack them. They could certainly have gobbled up the stokers with time to spare before the lifeboat reached them.

The two swimmers were pulled into the lifeboat, brought back to the ship and laid out on a hatch looking very limp. Two of the ship's officers went to work to apply "artificial resuscitation" according to the Board of Trade instructions and diagrams with which all British ships are equipped.

However, the stoker serang took a hand in the proceedings by respectfully asking the Mate to let him cope with his errand subordinates, and the Mate was obliged by recognized custom to agree. Whereon the serang removed the heavy leather belt he was wearing and proceeded to strike eight bells on the still limp, half-drowned swimmers and chased them down to the stokehold to shovel coal again. This seemed brutal but was certainly effective. The serang presumably knew the men as shirkers and felt they had caused him to "lose face," so dealt with them according to his lights.

It was understood that the owners had obtained a good freight rate for carrying the cargo of wheat to Hull, probably owing to the ship being the only suitable one available in Karachi at the time. So we had orders to clear out the coal left in the largest bunker and have it washed out to receive bags of wheat; the coal was stored in the alleyways to be used up before that in the other bunkers.

This meant that we must put into two ports en route to Hull to take in more bunker coal, and the first of these was the small island of Perim, about 120 miles or 15 hours steaming after passing Aden.

It was a pitch-black, moonless night when we arrived there, suitable for deeds of darkness, such as the formation of a syndicate consisting of the Chief and second engineers and the chief officer, to purchase a case of Scotch whiskey from the ubiquitous Arab bumboatmen.

The Second roped me in to help him pull the case up from the bumboat and take it to the Chief's cabin, while the Chief went up to the bridge to engage the Captain in conversation on the other side of the ship, a simple plot that worked smoothly, though I would have preferred not to be a party to such a nefarious scheme.

It was an understood thing that we were not supposed to have liquor in our cabins, though just how much force the rule had in law if it came to the point I never knew. In the

navy it has plenty of force and it is a serious offence for any officer except the Captain to drink in his cabin. In this case the chief engineer was exempt from the rule perhaps by tacit consent. Most of the time at sea he was under-occupied with me taking his watch, and he guzzled steadily in moderation.

I was 22 at the time and practically a teetotaler, not on principle but because I did not like the taste of any liquor I had encountered, and was bent on saving as much money as possible toward my project emigration, as soon as I decided where to go.

We sailed from Perim before daylight and when I went to take over the engineroom from the Second at 8 o'clock it was obvious that he had lost no time in sampling his share of the Arab's merchandise. He was in a state of alcoholic euphoria, without a care in the world, but I would have been fully justified in refusing to take over the watch owing to the condition of things in the engineroom.

This was a dilemma I had not encountered before. It was of course the Chief's watch and in any case I should report to him my reasons for refusing to relieve the Second. So far as I knew he might be in the same condition and the last thing I wanted to do was to stir up trouble of any sort. Being the "dogsbody" of the engineroom staff, I couldn't win.

So I decided on the spot to take over the watch and do the best I could to get things straightened out in the four hours before the Third relieved me at noon. I was quite certain he would not take over from me unless all was as it should be then.

This sort of thing went on for 48 hours, till the Second had consumed his four bottles of Scotch singlehanded, which is fairly hard drinking even for the tropics, though I suppose the intense heat plus the liquor causes a very high rate of evaporation through perspiration, and helps to stave off some of the more obvious effects of heavy drinking.

The morning after we left Perim the Chief told me casually

to take indicator cards from the main engines in the afternoon instead of working on the winches. It seemed an extraordinary order and I never did figure out the reason. It was certainly not necessary and was regarded as something to be done by two men working as a team, at some time when the temperature was not so excessively high, because it was a very hot job working around the cylinder heads. It could as well have been done three or four days later under much cooler conditions.

The job had been done once before while I was in the ship and then it was done by the Chief and Second together, when it was comparatively cool and while I was on watch in the forenoon. It occurred to me that the Chief thought I probably would not know how to do the job, as I think many juniors on their first voyage would not.

As it happened I did know very well and actually did it and worked out the results singlehanded in less time than the Chief himself took, with the Second helping him. This was because I used my slide rule for the numerous small calculations involved. When the Chief noticed the slide rule in my hand he said, "What the hell is that bloody thing?"

It was a bit of a shock to realize he had never seen a slide rule before, and when he told me to show him how it worked I was faced with the problem of trying to explain the rule to someone who had never heard of Logarithms, without making him seem ignorant — a tough task. I did the best I could while he pretended to understand.

Owing to the large size of the engines the actual business of using the indicator without help resembled doing fairly strenuous gymnastics for two hours or so, in a very high temperature. When I had finished I was as close to sheer physical exhaustion as I have ever been, before or since.

The indicator may be likened to a graphic recording barometer or some such instrument that draws diagrams, from which the exact horsepower developed by the engines may be calculated, and the trained eye can tell if the valves that con-

trol the flow of steam through the cylinders are in good order and working efficiently. This is important because if the valves become worn or even slightly out of adjustment, the result is a serious waste of steam and therefore of fuel, which is a major item in the cost of operating a ship.

As we steamed north toward Suez the temperature dropped steadily and was a most welcome relief. In the Mediterranean the weather was bright and sunny but felt chilly by contrast.

Our next stop was Algiers for more bunker coal, which we hoped would be of better quality than the Indian coal we had burned for many months, but this proved a vain hope.

The coal came alongside stacked in neat rectangular piles on barges and looked well enough to a casual glance. When we tried to burn it at sea it behaved more like the slag from a smelting furnace, and ran through the gratebars in long streaks, destroying the bars in the process. It was fortunate that we had an unusually large supply of spare bars, which may have saved the ship from total loss in a very bad storm in the Bay of Biscay.

It is about 400 miles from Finisterre to Ushant and when we were half way across the weather became worse rapidly and developed into a real hurricane, with winds over 75 miles per hour, and mountainous waves.

It was vitally necessary to keep the steam pressure up so that the engines could develop full power, as otherwise the ship might turn over and sink. It would be impossible to launch lifeboats in that sea, so all hands would probably be lost with the ship.

Some of the Lascar stokers collapsed under the prolonged strain and the second and third engineers took over the stokehold, where they did a wonderful job for 48 hours without relief, and under the most difficult conditions.

They told me to stay in the engineroom and make sure nothing occurred in the way of hot bearings or other such troubles, which would necessitate stopping the engines for

even a minute. Such things are more likely to happen when the ship is rolling and pitching in a very rough sea than in relatively calm water.

When we arrived in the English Channel there was very little wind but dense fog, and as usual plenty of traffic. It is an eerie feeling being in the engineroom well below the waterline, hearing the foghorns of several other ships and knowing that the bow of one of them may come crashing through the steel plates of your ship at any moment, followed by a flood of water.

When the fog cleared we were near Dover and found we had only just enough coal left to take the ship into that port, "with swept bunkers," meaning the last shovelful of coal we could scrape up.

I never heard whether the owners wanted to know why the unscheduled visit to Dover was necessary, but I would think in the nature of things they would expect an explanation. I suppose it might have been blamed on the unusually bad storm in the Bay of Biscay. I doubt if they were told that they very nearly lost the ship and cargo and crew owing to the exceptionally bad quality of the coal we took in at Algiers.

When we arrived in Hull we heard that the next voyage would be to Rio Janiero with a cargo of coal, also that we might have a bit of leave to visit our homes if we had any, which I had not. I did, however, manage to have a brief holiday for which I went to Southampton to stay with friends.

I rejoined the ship shortly before she was ready to sail for Rio, with orders to put into Las Palmas to "top up" the bunkers. This because coal was relatively expensive in Rio. We left Hull with bunker coal stored in the boarded-up alleyways as well as with the holds and bunkers chock full.

The process of getting out of the docks of Hull was liable to be complicated at best, as it meant going through many lock gates, with much "manoeuvring" which means stopping and starting, going ahead and going astern and changing

speed. It took us a good part of a night to get clear and drop the pilot.

The occasion was made memorable for me because the Second and Third had been ashore for a good-bye visit to the pubs of which there were a large number near the docks as in most seaports. When they came on board they were both very sleepy, and during a long wait between signals on the telegraph they both went into a very sound sleep, sitting on the floor with backs against one of the large cast-iron columns that supported the engines, and sloped at a comfortable angle.

That was all very well though I was mildly wondering what would happen if the next ring of the loud gong of the telegraph would wake them, when it happened and it didn't. So I had to try my best at doing three things at once, answer the telegraph, operate the steam reversing gear and the main throttle valve, always a three-man job when entering or leaving port.

This went on for a while till the Chief came down and looked the situation over solemnly, as if he had been to a pub or so himself, as I expect in truth was the case. Finally he decided to wake the sleepers up, but none of them said anything and I resumed my usual job of answering the telegraph.

We had a good run of about ten days to Las Palmas and were glad of the change from typical English winter weather. I think it rained copiously every day of the three weeks or so the ship was in Hull.

A few days after we left Las Palmas the coal in the starboard alleyway was on fire, and we had a fairly tough time getting it out. I had just finished my breakfast one morning when the Goanese messboy called my attention to the steel deck outside the messroom door, where a large round bulge like a blister had formed in the past few minutes, just where I might have stepped on it unless I happened to be looking down at the deck, so I narrowly escaped having a very hot foot.

It was obvious that the coal stored in the alleyway was burning, a rather startling idea as we must have had over

7,000 tons of the stuff in the ship, including the cargo, the bunkers and the alleyways. The ship was a long way from the nearest land, we had not sighted any other ships since we had left Las Palmas, and we had no wireless with which to broadcast our position or call for help.

Coal is not normally regarded as an especially dangerous cargo but ours had become ignited through a combination of circumstances. A steampipe ran through the alleyway and the coal was in contact with it. The pipe was covered with asbestos insulation but the metal flanges were not and were in direct contact with the coal, just beneath the steel deck on which a tropical sun blazed down. So the coal had evidently reached the temperature at which ignition took place.

I sent the messboy to fetch the chief engineer who promptly sent me to the bridge to notify the Captain, then to the engine-room to start a pump to supply seawater to the firehose under high pressure.

In order to reach the seat of the fire it was necessary to do a lot of digging, and the diggers were working in the cramped space of the alleyway. The closer they came to the fire the more air got to it and the more smoke and fumes were given off. For a time it looked as if the blaze might get out of control before it could be extinguished, but fortunately the firefighters won the battle.

Rio Janeiro has one of the finest natural harbours in the world, surrounded by magnificent scenery. When we arrived and dropped anchor there the place had a curiously martial appearance owing to the presence of Brazilian, British and American warships anchored here and there. Suitable sound effects were furnished by occasional outbursts of gunfire from the land, and we were informed that an attempt at a revolution was in progress, the whole place was under martial law and we must not go ashore till it was lifted. That was no hardship as it wasn't our fight and none of us wanted to be involved. At the time Brazil and Argentina were engaged in an arma-

ment race and Brazil had managed to acquire from the builders in Britain, two of the largest battleships afloat, the *Sao Paulo* and the *Minas Geraes*, equipped with guns of 12-inch calibre on both broadsides like their prototype in the Royal Navy, H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, commissioned two years before in 1908.

British people were convinced that the Germans planned to start World War I when they thought the time propitious as they evidently did in 1914. For some time prior to the actual outbreak of hostilities the atmosphere of international diplomacy was tense, and any incident such as the attempted revolution in Brazil was regarded as possibly leading up to the major conflict between Britain, France and Russia on one side and Germany and Austria on the other. Communication by wireless was comparatively new and the sudden arrival of British and American warships in Rio was an early instance of the use of wireless for controlling the movements of the "pieces" about the chessboard of international politics.

Both Britain and the United States had extensive commercial interests in Brazil and a number of civilian citizens living there. The British engineers who had brought the two new battleships out from the builders' yard were still on board and were in a somewhat precarious position after the Brazilian crews had mutinied and killed their own officers.

After ten days or so martial law was lifted and we could go ashore so I proceeded to live up to my sobriquet of "The Tourist," either plain or bloody. Many of the fine buildings were badly pock-marked by bullets, and windows shattered. I remembered my mother reminiscing once about being a passenger on a ship between Britain and Buenos Ayres that put into Rio en route, when the place was in a political uproar that resulted in Brazil becoming a republic, instead of being ruled as a monarchy by a member of the reigning family of Portugal.

After we had discharged the cargo of coal we heard that the ship was to load manganese ore for Antwerp, which suited

me very well, Antwerp being one of the continental ports that rated as "home ports" for British ships. So I could claim my discharge there and would have done so except that I was saved the trouble by the ship going from there to Cardiff.

I had put in the twelve months in charge of a watch that was necessary as a qualification before I could sit for the examination for a Second Engineer's Certificate, the next step in the career I had planned for myself.

The passage from Rio to Antwerp was uneventful except for what the engineers regarded as a serious nuisance, caused by careless stowage of the manganese ore in the holds. Instead of being spread evenly it was very uneven with hillocks of ore here and there about the four holds. This resulted in some distortion of the steel hull of the ship, so that the bearings that carried the propeller shaft from the engine room amidships to the stern, were pushed slightly out of line, causing them to run hot.

Fortunately the weather was fair and we did not meet any storms, so managed by keeping a small stream of seawater running over each of the "plummer-blocks," as those particular bearings are called. The water drained to the bilges and was pumped overboard by the bilge-pump. It was a source of anxiety to the engineer on watch and we had to keep a close eye on the bearings during the passage to Antwerp, which took about a month.

The manganese ore was unloaded into barges to be taken via the canals to the Krupp Works at Essen, doubtless to be used as an ingredient in the special steels for the manufacture of armaments, for the First World War that was to begin less than four years later.

Our stay in Antwerp was prolonged by the trade union rules that limited the tonnage of cargo to be unloaded in a day to 600 tons, less than half what could be done quite easily with the available equipment, and a prime example of the

union policy of "Go Slow" and "Make Work," thereby adding considerably to the cost of the material.

On passage from Antwerp to Cardiff the weather was stormy and the ship with no cargo in the holds bobbed about like a cork, which made being on watch in the engine room very unpleasant. Every time the stern lifted on a wave the propeller came out of the water, which took the load off the engines, causing them to race at high speed, so that when the propeller was again suddenly immersed there was danger of a breakage serious enough to cripple the ship.

Just before I joined the ship a year before, under exactly similar conditions the propeller had broken, necessitating costly repairs and delay. Trying to avoid this meant the engineer on watch must keep very close to the throttle valve, and try to catch the critical instant to shut off the supply of steam without actually stopping the engine, which would bring sulphurous language down the speaking tube from the bridge.

It was a very tricky operation, nerve-racking for four hours at a stretch, and made more so by the fact that it was impossible to attend to closely and carry out the normal routine of the watch as well. I had plenty of previous experience when we were returning to Calcutta with empty holds, and I disliked it intensely. So it was with relief that I contemplated a spell ashore after we reached Cardiff, to be spent in final swotting for the exam, then emigrating to Canada if I passed.

When we arrived in Cardiff we heard that the next trip would be to Rio again with coal. The Chief's home was in Cardiff and the Second and Third both planned a brief holiday in Glasgow. They all asked me if I would stay on board for a few days which I was under no actual obligation to do but did not like to refuse. Nobody warned me I should have to cope with a very angry Captain as soon as darkness fell and he wanted to work on his papers in his cabin.

The dynamo needed some repairs and the Second worked

hard at taking it apart before he skipped ashore to see if any new pubs had been opened in the twelve months or so since he was last in Cardiff.

In my innocence I assumed that the Chief would have told the Captain the dynamo would be out of commission for at least two or three days but apparently not. So at the onset of dusk there came a messenger from the Captain asking me to start up the dynamo, and I had to explain why it could not be done. He was extremely annoyed but there was nothing he could really do about it; I was only the dogbody in the engineroom and was leaving the ship for good in two or three days, and I felt sure he knew I didn't like him very much anyway. He was not at all popular with the mates and engineers.

My last memory of the year I spent in the ship is pleasant as it is of the wonderful feeling of the double handful of gold coins and crisp Bank of England notes with which I was paid off, real money that I had earned literally by the copious sweat of my brow and every other part of me in the heat of the engineroom in the tropics.



WITH THE EXAM FOR A SECOND
Engineer's Certificate looming ahead of me I had done a certain amount of studying as opportunity offered, both at sea and in port. I had also picked up odd bits of information and advice from men who had passed and obtained their certificates. I had been told for instance that the Board of Trade surveyors in the various ports where the exams were held had a tendency to bear down on young men like myself of the minimum age at which it was possible to comply with the requirements as to apprentice training and sea time, before taking the exam. They were said to ask what were known as trick questions that comparatively few would be able to answer, especially in the viva voce part of the test.

It was said that the best way to prepare for this eventuality was to go to one of the established Crammer's schools for a short course beforehand, and I did this at a well-known school in London. Among other items of good advice from the proprietor was a suggestion to visit the display of models of marine engines in the South Kensington Museum. This was a very good display designed to trace the evolution of the marine engine from the very earliest types.

In due course I had reason to be very thankful that I had spent some hours in that section of the museum. The exam

took four days and what was regarded as the toughest part, the viva voce, was on the last day. Candidates who had failed one of the earlier parts did not reach the viva voce test.

It was with some trepidation that I went into the examiner's office and sat facing him across his desk. After a few preliminary remarks he pushed a sheet of paper and a pencil across to me and told me to draw a rough diagram of the valve gear of an oscillating cylinder engine. It was certainly a trick question if only because the type of engine was obsolete, and I doubt if any had been manufactured for some years, though possibly one might be found still in operation in some remote part of the world.

I would never have been able to comply with the examiner's request if I had not studied the models in the museum. As it happened I was able to produce the diagram he wanted and after that it was all plain sailing. He chatted with me about my voyages, occasionally interjecting a question that I was able to answer easily enough, and the ordeal was over, to my great relief.

My decision to emigrate to Canada had been made as the result of discussing the pros and cons of different countries with engineers I had met on ships in the various ports I had been in. At the time there was a boom in emigration to Canada and the passenger ships running to Canadian ports had their accommodation fully booked.

I did manage to secure a passage in a 4-berth cabin in the *Empress of Britain* of the Canadian Pacific Line, for which I paid the sum of 11 pounds sterling. It was much too crowded for comfort and caused me to resolve that I would never cross the Atlantic again unless I could have a cabin to myself. In the event my next crossing was at the expense of the Admiralty, when I went back to serve in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in World War I, and shared a cabin with a very good friend I had made in Toronto, who was going on the same errand.

I stayed in Quebec for three days and concluded it was not a promising place for a young Englishman to seek a career, so took the train for Montreal and after three days there moved on to Toronto, where I stayed for 25 years, less the time spent on active service overseas in the R.N.V.R. in World War I.

Canada and the United States were enjoying a boom that lasted for two years after I arrived in mid-1911, and collapsed rather suddenly in mid-1913, some twelve months before the outbreak of war in 1914.

The summer of 1911 was very hot and I remember that in Toronto the official temperature was recorded for several weeks after I arrived, as 103°F. in the shade at mid-day. Many people were taken to hospital suffering from heat prostration, but I did not feel it so much as I had but recently come from doing my daily stint in a ship's engineroom in the tropics, and in much higher temperatures.

Jobs were fairly plentiful and skilled artisans were especially in demand, but there was a marked prejudice against Englishmen in some quarters. I had heard and read about this before I left England and had not been in Canada very long before I encountered it in operation.

English people were naturally inclined to resent this strongly but in time I came to understand that it was not entirely without cause. I met Englishmen of the working class who indulged the national propensity for grumbling to the full in Canada, continually making the most trenchant criticism of the many things of which they did not approve.

I think it is fair to say of them that they were not adaptable and in that respect temperamentally unfitted for emigration. It is also true that there were large numbers of immigrants from Scotland and Ireland, who came from the social class that persists in nursing ancient grudges against the disliked Sassenach, and welcomes any opportunity to annoy or embarrass any English who cross their path.

I had brought letters of introduction from relatives in England to Canadians who were, I found, in the category often referred to as "wealthy and socially prominent," but it did not take long for me to discover that such letters in Canada were not regarded in the same light as in England, and in any case it seemed better to "paddle my own canoe" in hunting a job.

I came across a number of young Englishmen who had been educated at one of the private boarding schools known as "Public Schools," where they had excellent education in the classics, also character training and discipline, but little or no training for any specific vocation.

They were first-class material as officers in the armed services but there were not enough commissions to go round in time of peace, and few of them had the private means needed to support that mode of life. Many came to Canada with some vague idea of learning to farm and then taking up some of the homestead land being given away by the government.

Learning to farm by working as virtually unskilled labour on an established farm, was "doing it the hard way," especially in the harsh winters of the Canadian climate, wages were very small and living accommodation extremely primitive.

It was not surprising in the circumstances that a number of the young Englishmen of this type ended by enlisting in the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and I think it is true that the enviable reputation for devotion to duty enjoyed by the R.C.M.P. today, was built up by the men of the "Old School Tie" class from Britain, in the earlier days of the existence of this unique service. In those days the pay was too low and the standard of discipline too high to attract the majority of young Canadians, most of whom were more intent on making money in a business of some sort.

The Canadian banks did not employ women then but recruited many of their junior clerks in Britain, to come to Canada on a contract at a salary of \$40 a month, on which it

was barely possible to subsist without a supplementary allowance from home.

One thing we did not have to contend with in the second decade of the twentieth century was the current passion for university education, which is all very well when not carried to absurd extremes as it is today in some ways, I am convinced.

Because things were booming I had little trouble in finding jobs despite being English, which was definitely a handicap where I was, in Ontario. In other parts of Canada that might not have been the case, specifically I think in the west, but it takes time for a newcomer to find these things out and some have to be learned the hard way.

There was certainly a demand for men with the kind of technical training I had, though pay was not high and some of the jobs available offered only subsistence rather than a reasonably comfortable living. I had my experiences of what English people called "roughing it" in the Colonies, taking it for granted that living conditions in the "Colonies" were in the nature of things primitive and lacking in the amenities of civilized existence.

After trying various jobs for 18 months or so I stumbled more or less by accident into a job with an engineering firm, that had the Canadian agencies for several well-known English concerns of world-wide reputation.

These included makers of electrical equipment of all kinds, steam engines, gas engines, pumps and other assorted engineering items. I began as what was known as a "trouble-shooter," going out in response to calls received from customers about real or imagined trouble experienced with some item purchased from the firm.

For a time all went well and I liked the work for which my experience qualified me fairly well, though my knowledge of electricity was limited, and I had several narrow escapes from being electrocuted in the process of "learning by doing."

Incidentally I did have the opportunity to learn much about the business part of the operations of the firm, by which I mean the buying and selling and office routine, and what was very important in Canada then, the matter of getting paid for what was sold.

At the time Canada was developing rapidly and working capital was limited, so much business was done on credit; there were many instances of firms going bankrupt through extending credit to their customers unwisely, and in fact the firm for which I worked experienced that fate after I had been with them for about two years. This was sad for them but gave me the opportunity I wanted to start in business for myself, an example of the old proverbial saying about the ill wind . . .

The firm's troubles began when a general business depression started in mid-1913, in both Canada and the United States. In those days the economy of both countries was very much of the alternate "boom or bust" type. It was quite possible for the "bust" part of the cycle to be brought on by a serious crop failure in the mid-west United States or the Canadian prairies.

When so much business was done on credit, people generally were disposed to panic on slight excuse, banks called in loans to business firms some of which could not pay at short notice, unemployment increased rapidly and bankruptcies multiplied.

This sorry state of affairs had existed for more than a year when the outbreak of war in 1914 had the initial effect of giving panic and economic depression a great impetus. One large firm making electrical equipment reduced its staff and ordered a salary cut of 25% for those not discharged.

I was in the early stages of starting my own business as the Canadian agent for an American firm in Cleveland, Ohio, who were manufacturers of electric motors and dynamos, and specialized in equipment for electric welding, a process in which I had become much interested. It was in a very early

stage of development but I was convinced it had a tremendous future, and was happy to stake my own future on this new process.

The outbreak of war put me in a very difficult position. My problem was whether to drop everything and join the Canadian army or return to England to rejoin the territorial army unit to which I had formerly belonged during my time as an apprentice, or possibly go to sea again as an engineer in the merchant marine for which I was qualified. In the end I did none of those things immediately but went overseas on active service in the R.N.V.R. a year or so later.

When it came to the point I found it was not so easy for me to simply drop what I was doing and go off to the war, without feeling I had let down the American company whose agency I had in Canada, and a Canadian friend who had undertaken to give me the financial backing I needed in order to start the business, not possessing enough money of my own for the purpose.

Also I admit making the same error of judgment about the probable length of the war that was made by many people better fitted than myself to have opinions on the subject. At the very beginning the fighting was so fast and furious, and the casualties so heavy, it really seemed that it could not last long at that rate, and would be settled one way or the other in a few months at most. I thought it more than likely that if I did go off at once to the war, it would be over before I got close enough to it to see action.

It was not long before Canadian industrial firms began to realize that the war offered interesting possibilities for supplying munitions of all kinds to the British and Canadian armies. I believe one of the first orders of the kind was given to a manufacturer of farm machinery for a large number of horse-drawn wagons for the Army Service Corps.

The war on land soon settled down to the frustrating stagnation of trench warfare, with trenches stretching from Switzer-