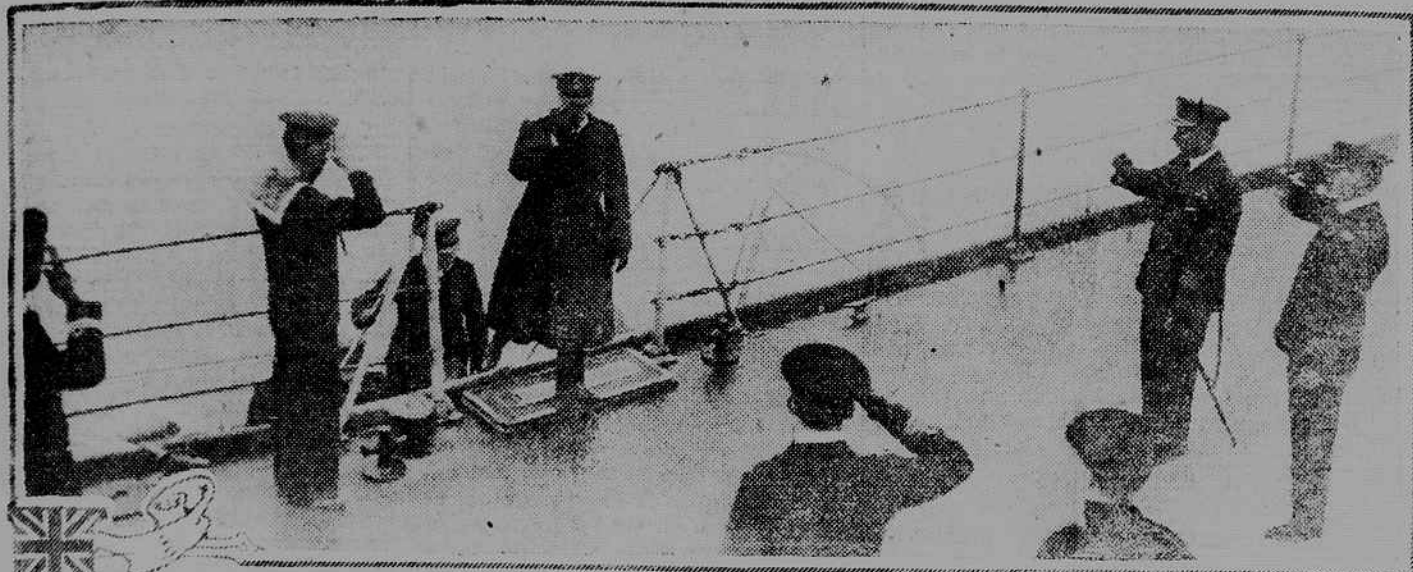


## "Duty Completed"—And Our Victory Fleet Speeds Home



The first German officer to board a British man of war. Admiral Meyer arriving to arrange the great surrender

By William Hoster

WHEN the great Atlantic fleet swings from the ocean into the lower bay next Tuesday and majestically steams to its anchorage in the Hudson it will present to New York and the nation the greatest array of seafighting forces ever witnessed in America.

All the more significant and to be appreciated by those privileged to behold the spectacle will it be, moreover, since it will bring before the vision in massed formation those giant dreadnoughts, the scarcely less formidable battleships, the cruisers, the despatch boats and last, but in the matter of results achieved, best and most effective of all, the torpedo boats and submarine chasers—"vipers of the sea"—which along the coasts of Britain and Ireland and France and far flung down the Mediterranean coast, united with the navies of Great Britain and France to make certain the fate of the Hun.

America has already welcomed with a plenitude which gives the lie to that maxim about the ingratitude of republics the men who fought to victory on land. Now comes the tribute to the men who "saw it through" on the seas. Tuesday marks the beginning of the demonstration in honor of Sims and those who served under his command.

We had a glimpse of some of them last December. The complete armada now heads toward the home port. Pointing out to sea, as she bade goodbye to Europe, the stately dreadnought Pennsylvania signalled from her masthead the proud message, "Duty Completed." So the fighters of Sims and Mayo, this signal graven in the annals of the republic, are speeding toward New York—duty completed and well performed.

On the eve of the departure of this "Victory Fleet" from the other side Sir David Beatty, commander in chief of the British Grand Fleet, paid this high compliment to the departing Americans:

"I was sorry to see the Sixth Battle Squadron come over, because up until that time the feeling in naval circles was that there were some chances for a major action with the enemy, even if they were slight. After the arrival of the Sixth Battle Squadron we felt that they were practically nil."

### Added Last Touch To Allied Fleet

A splendid fighting unit in itself, the Victory Fleet, each of its larger parts a mighty floating fortress, added the final touch to the perfect seafighting machine of the Allies. Thereafter the part of the forces at sea was but to stand by, grim and determined—stripped for action, towering over the Hun as a mastiff watches at the rat hole, wearing away slowly but surely by superior physical and moral prowess the morale of the Hun, while the forces on land battered away at his defenses. That and the not less important work which the smaller craft performed in establishing that unbreakable zigzag line across the Atlantic through which the manhood of America crossed the ocean completed the combined movement by land and sea which made safe the democracy of the world.

The history of the Victory Fleet remains to be written in detail. When it is finally completed and given to the world it will be, however dreary to fighting men who pine for action—the roar of the big guns and the shriek of the projectile—one of thrilling interest to the American people, not the least remarkable feature of which will be that after sixteen months of warfare in the greatest war the world has ever seen the ships return victorious, bearing an equal share in the glory of having defeated the greatest warrior since Napoleon, without the loss of a man in battle and without having fired a shot.

Like the old scissors grinder in Brown- ing, they have no story to tell, these returning "gobs" of the Victory Fleet, yet they stood by from that day in April, 1917, when Sims assumed command overseas, until November 21, 1918, when the

first of the German ships surrendered; and there was not a day in between that they were not ready for fight at the drop of the hat; and there is not a man on the returning ships who will not agree that a fight is preferable at any time to standing with guns primed and ready at the gateway through which the foe is afraid to emerge.

As ever with the navy, it was on the job just a little ahead of the opening of the show. March 24, 1917, Admiral Sims, accompanied by Commander J. V. Babcock, sailed out of New York under assumed names, bound for Europe, to look over the situation. Any one who knows those two gallant officers is aware that they had no taste for that secret manoeuvre. Far better, in the view of all navy men, to have sailed out—the full fleet in being—battle flags lashed to the masthead, full speed ahead and straight for Heligoland Bight.

### America Acted While Germany Wondered

Which would have been magnificent, but not war as it is now played, for as it turned out, the war which was expected broke after Sims and his companion had landed safely in England, and the plans for America's naval participation in the struggle had already been formulated and the ships were en route before Germany fully realized that the might of the United States had at last been entered against her.

Of the events which followed on the sea, so secretly did the powers move there is yet no complete and accurate record. Locked up in the records of the Navy Department, in process of slow compilation by a force of twenty historians, is the full story of what the navy did. But we know from what is no longer a secret that Germany at the period of our entrance into the war had reached the apex of her success, and particularly on the sea; though her Grand Fleet was not venturing out, her mastery through the relentless use of the U-boats was virtually complete.

When the United States entered the war the Allies were at the end of their resources.

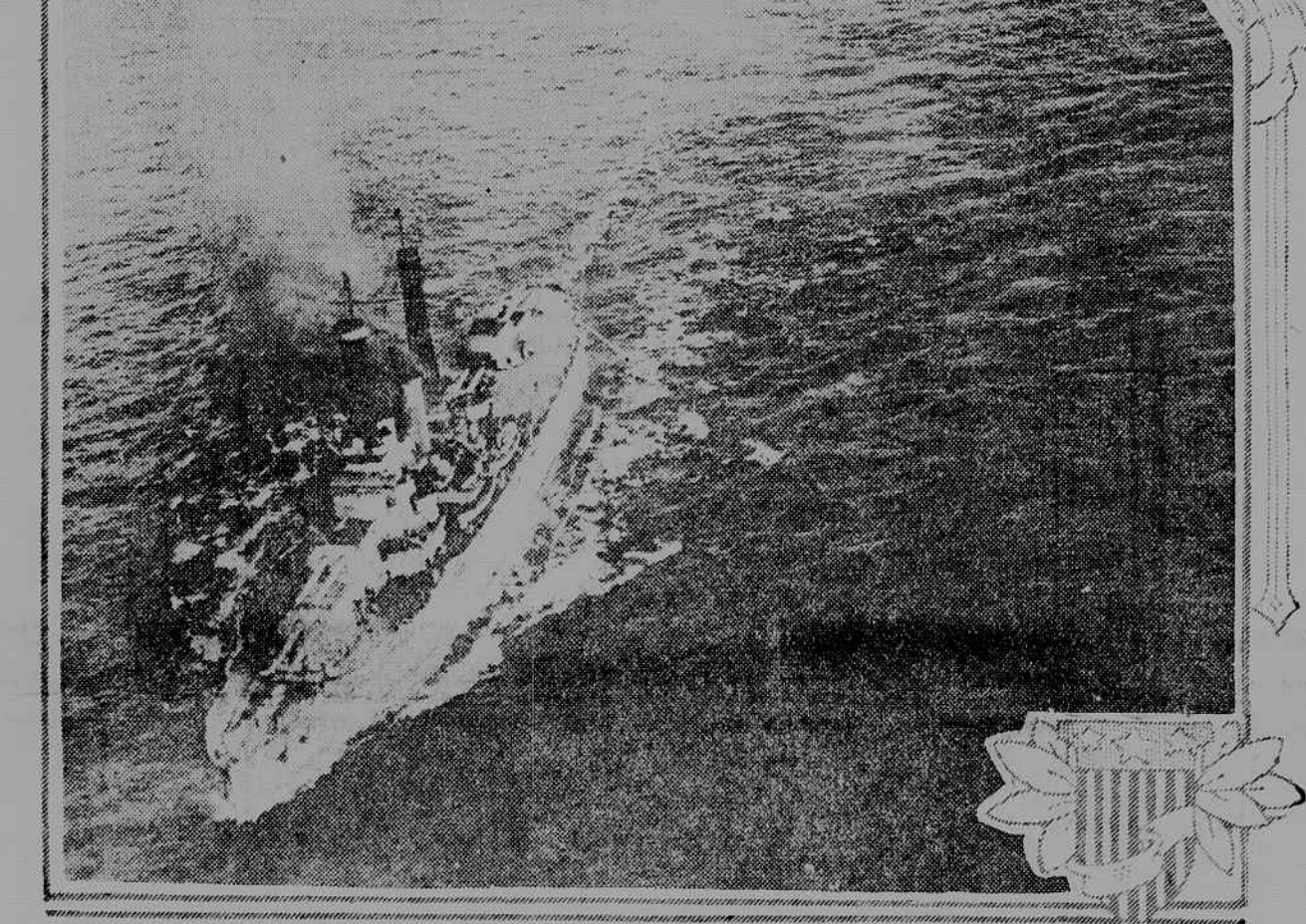
What followed, when it is told in detail, will add another brilliant chapter to the everlasting glory of the American navy. How, on land, the throttle was thrown wide open and the signal for full speed ahead was given in navy yard, factory, boiler and machine shop—how the flower of American manhood donned the blue of the seafighter, and all the ingenuity, power, might and resource of the nation were thrown into the task of vindicating the traditions of the navy, are all part of the tale that will be told.

Navy yards were stripped bare of ships—even those that had long been permanently laid up and were ready for the scrapheap being pressed into commission. The merchant marine was hurried into the breach. The American flag again began to illumine the seven seas, but converging always toward that stage termed the war zone, where was being enacted this tragedy of the centuries.

The problem was to dispose of the submarine, and Yankee skill at once devised the submarine chaser. Yankee ingenuity equipped the chaser with the depth bomb. Forth fared the chasers, like swarms of wasps, with them the destroyers and torpedo boats, and preceding these the dreadnoughts and the battleships and the cruisers—all of them filled with the pent up desire of two years' standing to have it out with the Hun.

In their wake, near them always, guarded and protected by the big and little brothers of the fleet, went the merchant ships, not cargoed now, as of old, with those bulging holds of merchandise for profit, but laden with the precious lives of thousands of young American boys, destined for the task of whipping the foe to his knees on land while the navy held the gate.

As has been said, the navy's part in what followed was the part of a glorified watchful waiting. Ships stripped



America passing in review, with the New York in the lead, just before leaving British waters for home

and ready for action always, on that far flung blockade of the German coast line and surrounding territory, the men on board, through tempest and calm, through heat and cold, amid all the conditions faced by those that go down to the sea in ships—driving rain and blinding snow storm, hurricane blows, mountainous seas—day after day, month after month, were constantly on duty, their nerves at tension point, waiting and watching always; called at dead of night to man the guns on false reports that the enemy was coming out, remaining with shotted guns waiting for the command to fire through the long night watches—patient, eager, ready—sentinels of civilization, begging, pleading, hoping, praying, swearing for the enemy that never came.

How necessary it was for the American bluejackets—and that includes every man on board, from the high command to the man in the stokehole—to be ever ready for the call during those sixteen months of nerve destroying waiting is indicated by the orders under which the fleet, the main body of which was now attached to the British fleet, was operated. Never during the whole period of that service in the war zone, with inconsequential exceptions, were they given more than four hours in port. Many times orders came calling ships back into the line within two hours after docking for supplies and overhauling. And this expectation of immediate orders to "steam"—the naval term for shoving off or getting under way—cut down all shore leave to two hours. Lucky indeed was the man who got that much shore liberty.

### Jackie Was Always On the Job

On land the soldier did his turn in the trenches, and forthwith was relieved for a period of rest and recreation. Perhaps he even got a chance to visit Paris. At least, the tension under which he labored was relieved; he got a breathing spell. But Jackie was always on the job. And it is declared to be a fact that there were hundreds of sailors who sailed out from American home ports with the ships of the line that never, except once or twice, set foot on European territory during the entire length of the war, and most of those that did got no further than the ports where they touched for supplies, and had their liberty cut short by the implacable order to steam up and return to the battle line.

Every minute of the day and night the ships were required to be ready for immediate action with the enemy. No matter to what point the ships were ordered, war-time watch was maintained on the decks and the gun crews were standing by.

Rear Admiral Rodman, commanding the Sixth Division of the Sixth Battle Squadron, which was the official designation of the American fleet, thus graphically describes the nature of the duties to which the Americans were assigned.

"As one of the two so-called fast wings," he says, "we would take station at the head or rear of the whole battle force when going into action. As a matter of fact, on one occasion, when we came within a few miles of cutting off from its base and engaging the German fleet, the disposition was such that the American battleship division would have been in the van and have led into action had the enemy not avoided action and taken refuge behind his defenses, as usual, before we could catch him."

"It was our policy to go after him every time he showed his nose outside of his ports, no matter when or where, whether in single ships, by division, or his whole fleet—out we went, day or night, rain or shine (and there was mighty little daylight and much less shine in the winter months)—blow high or blow low, and chase him back to his hole."

### Sailor Fritz Never Went Far From Home

All the while, there was the peril of submarines to be guarded against, the menace of air attacks, the danger of a surprise.

"In our operations in the North Sea," said the admiral, "we were frequently attacked by submarines and our battleships had numerous narrow escapes, often only through prompt and skilful handling. Once, when guarding a convoy of forty vessels on the coast of Norway in midwinter, a bunch of hostile submarines fired six torpedoes at us. Again only our vigilance and instantaneous maneuvering saved us, but by a very narrow margin."

Admiral Rodman also tells of the rigorous natural conditions with which the fleet had to contend while it was discharging these more strictly warlike duties.

"It would be superfluous," says he, "to mention the details of our operations in

the North Sea, or to go into the matter of the rigorous climate, when the latitude is north of Sitka, Alaska, or about equal to that of Petrograd; or the terrific weather, the cold, the sleet, snow, ice and heavy seas; the arduous and dangerous navigation, the continuous cruising in close formation at high speed, without lights, where the winter nights lasted eighteen hours, or the dangers of the minefields—our own, sometimes, as well as those of the enemy—or the repeated attacks of the submarines on our battleships, which I have mentioned, and the never ending vigilance of the whole fleet and the necessity for its readiness to put to sea on all but instant notice."

One gets a vivid picture of the heroic efforts of the men of the fleet in the description thus presented by Admiral Rodman.

While the big ships of the line thus kept watch and ward, the little fellows were engaged, if not in more important, at least in more dangerous and more disagreeable tasks. Patrol and convoy duty was constant throughout the war period, and likewise the ceaseless search for submarines. This latter service was rendered by the destroyers and the submarine chasers. They were constantly on the go, answering calls of distress from ships at sea which had been attacked by subs or had run afoul of a mine. Or they were bringing in scores of American transports. Or they were darting in and off the Irish coast in search of subs whose activities were being reported hourly to the naval bases.

The Jack whose lot was cast aboard one of these smaller craft put up with inconveniences and sufferings which earned him a D. S. O. every time he put to sea. Winter storms off the Irish coast stand great liners on their beam ends. These little wasps and hornets of the fleet were as corks in the tempestuous waves. Men on watch were lashed to rail and deck. Heavy woollen underwear, wind and rain proof trousers and jackets and heavy rubber or leather boots ill served the purpose for which they were designated in the regulations.

While the men on board the dreadnoughts and the battleships were sitting down to hot chow in comfortable mess rooms, the "gobs" on the chasers and the destroyers were snatching a cold bite from a can, drinking cold coffee, mixed with sea water, and calling themselves fortunate. Their sleeping quarters were frequently awash, even if sleep were possible, for what with the tremendous motion of the seas and the war-time

necessity which forbade them more than four hours of sleep at a stretch, sleep, like warm meals, a warm suit, a bath or a shave, was a luxury not to be indulged in until the job had been put over.

Major Randolph Coyle, of the Marine Corps, who saw active service with the fleet throughout the war, says of the men who served on the submarine chasers:

"These men have stood on open decks while the cold winter hurricanes of the North Sea tossed their craft about like so many corks. Waves would dash over the tiny vessels with such force that it often became necessary for men on watch to rope themselves to the decks. It was a rare trip when the men were not required to put in two hours out of every six, day after day. Meals were out of the question, for on those ships it is impossible to cook when the sea gets up a bit. Canned soups, cold, and canned meats were all that the men could get. Coffee was generally made before the ship left port, and this was dished out as long as it lasted. After that nothing resembling coffee appeared on the haphazard menus."

"Ordinarily the ship's schedule called for five days at sea and two hours in port, with those two hours of rest put to overhauling the ship for the next deep sea jaunt. If an S O S message came in, or if a submarine was reported in a nearby section, the ship would be ordered out immediately. When a division of destroyers was on duty, it would leave France or Ireland to meet a convoy of transports about 300 miles at sea. The destroyers would form a V-shaped protection running in front of the troop ships. Always they threw up a heavy smoke screen as they zigzagged their course into port."

### Is First Reception To Little Scrappers

Incidentally, while the men of the dreadnoughts and battleships, for the most part, enjoyed the hospitality of New York last December, when Admiral Mayo brought the big fellows home, the reception which will begin in New York on Tuesday will be the first recognition which the boys of the little scrappers have received since the United States entered the war.

Following the arrival of the Liberty Fleet in European waters forty submarines were disposed of. Maybe not all by the Americans. But with their coming the submarine gradually ceased to be a factor. And while the little fellows convoyed and rescued and darted hither and yon after the submarines—getting them, too—the big fellows, augmenting the Grand Fleet of the Allies, gave that final weight and number which made the result inevitable. The grim, silent, dogged watch followed. With the big policeman just outside the door, the criminal dared not venture out. His morale sagged. His sea power lay limp and useless, like a withered arm. And all the while on land the slow, grinding process was under way which eventuated in the armistice and that epoch-making event in naval warfare when the sea might and power of a great nation was suddenly relinquished to the enemy, without a single shot having been exchanged.

The part the American ships would have played in the major battle for which all hands had hoped is indicated by the position Admiral Rodman indicates they held in the line. Six of the ships which are due in New York on Tuesday served in this line of honor. These are the New York, Texas, Wyoming, Arkansas, Florida and Delaware. The squadron, under command of Rear Admiral Rodman, went to the war zone in November, 1917.

The Pennsylvania was the flagship of the fleet during the continuance of the war. It flew the flag of Admiral Mayo, but did not operate in the war zone. The Utah, Nevada and Oklahoma, in addition

to those named, however, all saw service on the battle line. The Arizona arrived in the zone just after the armistice was signed. All participated in the surrender of the German fleet.

The visit of the fleet will bring to New York more than 40,000 men and officers who saw active service in European waters during the war. Of the more distinguished officers, aside from Admiral Sims, Admiral Mayo, Admiral Rodman and those heretofore named, there stand out the commander of the Pennsylvania, Captain Nulton, who was commandant of the Annapolis cadets at the time of his appointment to the higher command.

### Rodman's Flagship Was the New York

Rear Admiral E. W. Eberle, in command of Division Five, was until a few months ago superintendent of the Naval Academy. Captain T. J. Senn of the North Dakota was until the latter part of October assistant chief of the Bureau of Navigation. Rear Admiral Hugh Rodman was in command of forces off the coast of France during the war, the New York being his flagship. Captain Twining of the Texas was throughout the war one of the principal aids to Admiral W. S. Benson, chief of operations. Captain L. R. de Steiguer of the Arkansas was, until his present appointment, chief of staff to Rear Admiral N. R. Usher, of the Third Division.

Every man who was with the fleet on the other side will remember the Texas and her homegoing pennant, and if she decides to exhibit it on her visit to New York it will be one of the curiosities of the fleet. For when the fleet pulled out to sea it looked long enough to reach around the State of Texas.

The visit of the New Mexico will be interesting for the fact that it will bring Vice-Admiral H. B. Wilson, who was in command of the forces operating in France during the war. It was he who held the reins and guided the destinies of the work along the coast on land and in the air, and under whose direction grew those great ports of activities in handling American troops—St. Nazaire and Brest. The commanding officer of the New Mexico is now Captain A. L. Willard, who has just taken charge, coming from a successful and brilliant direction of the navy yard and gun factory at Washington throughout the war.

Captain W. A. Moffett, commanding officer of the Mississippi, will ever be remembered as the man who put the navy on the map in the West. It was under his administration that the Great Lakes Training Station became one of the marvels of the new navy and an unending source of supply of fine types of boys, who made good wherever they were sent.

### Melville Flagship Of Admiral Sims

The Melville was throughout the war anchored at Queenstown, and though Admiral Sims made his headquarters at London, it was officially his flagship. It now carries the flag of Rear Admiral C. P. Plunkett, who is the man whose genius organized and built the railway trains that carried the big navy guns into Belgium and, after getting them there, made them felt in a way Germany still remembers.

Nearly all the destroyers included in this remarkable list of fighting ships saw active service during this war. Among those who will come on the destroyers and are well known in New York is Captain W. T. Conn, who before taking command of the Dixie was commander of recruiting in New York City. Another is Commander B. McCandless, who was one time aid to Secretary Daniels. Another is Commander A. S. Carpenter, who, in command of the Fanning, captured the first German submarine.