

man, and would go out without accepting its voluntary tender.

"All ready Mr. Hardy," he said to the boyish Lieutenant, with the brevity of one who had commanded mighty fighters of the sea.

The junior saluted and gave an order. The engineer turned on the steam, and the quartermaster at the rudder took a course that had been laid down with as much exactitude as would have been bestowed upon a cruiser. They were off with the blue pennant at the staff opened wide to let passing ferries know that a Rear Admiral was aboard and this was his flagship.

Out through Kill von Kull and into Newark Bay they tore through the dancing crests, which seemed to welcome the sailor home again, and then through Staten Island Sound, where great steamers narrowly missed them and men stared curiously at their pennant. Now they nosed along Arthur Kill and into the Raritan River, heedless of the glasses leveled at them by outlying craft, and entered the waters of the nearly deserted Raritan Canal. There the Loggerhead passed between shady ranks of trees standing mute guard over the narrow thread she was to traverse.

THE magic sparkle of the sea was left behind and replaced by the cathedral like stillness of this long, dreamy avenue, above which a strip of clear, stainless sky shone in far away splendor. The journey had been made thus far with no more than desultory talk, which now, in the afternoon laziness, subsided into silence. Only the cough of the exhaust and the flapping of the flags awoke echoes. The Rear Admiral lounged back in the big wicker chair which had been placed for his benefit, and was less erect.

He felt drowsy, and fought against his weakness. Why, it was a shame for so young a man as he felt himself to be to snooze like a doddering old chap in a chimney corner! He wouldn't do it! No sir, not he! He watched the flag—his flag—with loving eyes, until it appeared to grow in size, and quite insidiously the throb of the little screw became the tremor of a huge ship in the open sea. The horizon widened until land was nowhere in sight and nothing could be seen in the offing save the far lying smoke of others of the fleet which were now surely following the flagship in a splendid cruise of magnificent distances. There they were, unmistakably, battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, the pride of the service, the glorious emblems of a glorious nation's might. He sagged from his usual upright pose, and his square chin was pillowed on his breast.

The pennant still whipped, and the shadows lengthened; but the Rear Admiral had succumbed to habit and fallen fast asleep.

THE curtain of the dusk was lowering and the polished waters of the canal caught up and threw back red lacework gleams cast by the sunset through the bordering trees when the flagship Loggerhead hove to for the night. With rigid punctiliousness the junior Lieutenant appointed his watches and dutifully followed the Rear Admiral to the weather beaten tavern where they were to rest, while behind them came a sailor who lugged the officers' suit cases. There was a relaxation of form in the inn. The white headed old man was lonely. He called for the waiter that had taken his order in such a sharp tone that the man involuntarily brought his heels together and assumed an air of deference.

"My compliments to Lieutenant Hardy," the guest said, his voice in the deserted hollows of the dining room sounding with a roar, "and say that the Admiral requests the pleasure of his company at dinner."

The waiter's eyes and mouth seemed synchronized in an effort to open to their widest; but he delivered the message. The officers dined together without reference to their cruise. The Rear Admiral's thoughts were going back to the little golden haired girl in the park. If it had not been for the voyage, he would have seen her hours before this; would have watched her come skipping away from her playmates with that half-slipping hippityhop to beam up at him and thrust her slender white hand into his. He wondered if she too was to go out of his life in this chaos where everything of habit and training and environment was retreating stealthily and leaving him alone, cast off and marooned among civilians. He was still thinking of her when he bade his guest good night.

"I wish," he said on the following day,—"somehow I wish we had brought a ship's bell. I feel sort of lost without the bells." His voice sounded plaintive.

"Yes, sir," the junior dutifully assented, sharing in the belief that it would add to the dignity of the flagship of which he was chief executive officer. After all, he had that honor, and his brawny young chest unconsciously swelled a trifle. It was a great command for one of his years. And then as its significance dawned on him he covered his mouth to hide the grin at the thought of what "the boys" of his class would say when they heard of it.

The junior kept a log of the cruise, according to

the rules and regulations. It was eventful. It contained such entries as this:

11.44.—Sighted a canal boat on the starboard bow; under slow sail. Name not apparent; but when spoken showed the number 1578. Master's name not quite audible, but sounded like Watt T. Ell.

Or again.

11.52.—Came up with power launch Marietta bound for Newark, flying owner's flag. Owner reports trouble with lock tender farther up, and asks Government intervention because the tender impudently volunteered to pedicure his face.

The junior decided later that his entries were facetious, and expunged some of his comments.

After New Brunswick, Princeton, and Trenton had been dropped behind they had a stormy interview with this same belligerent lock tender. He opened the water into his cell like aperture so viciously that the Loggerhead was almost psized in the swirls that hoisted her up like a bobbing cork and sent her reeling into the spume until her gun deck

was awash. The Rear Admiral delayed for a few minutes after they had gained the upper level to express his opinion. It has been confirmed that the lock tender, despite a long life of contact with canal men, was much impressed; that there have been no further complaints; and that he still deports himself with the subdued air of one who has been petrified with awe. He has also learned to distinguish between flags.

Intrepid navigators in half abandoned canals find the greatest and most insidious enemy in the weeds, and they audaciously shackled the propeller of the

Loggerhead at frequent intervals, requiring halts to be made while a man dived overboard and tore loose the mop of verdure; but the Rear Admiral bore these annoyances with uniform patience.

INDEED, the only mishap in that strange voyage was in a plane. The cumbersome cradles were coated with slime, and crawled over the hills with rheumatic groans and clanking chains like materialized ghosts of forgotten traffic. They were never intended for small craft or with a view of transferring flagships, and while a huge canal boat fitted them snugly and rested upright, the Loggerhead was almost lost in their ribs. The Rear Admiral on this occasion was seated in his chair, while the crew clung to the wet stanchions on the side endeavoring to hold the cutter on an even keel; but the slime was their undoing.

The Loggerhead's keel slipped abruptly from the chocks; she fell on her side, and the officer was sent sprawling out on a muddy beam, to the detriment of his uniform. The revised log was not devoted to personal remarks, so what he said is lost to history. It was without doubt a vigorous dissertation; but the flag—his flag—was still uninjured and fluttered as gaily, while the plane halted and the boat was righted, as it had when flung to a more propitious breeze.

Bordentown was lost in the wake, and the Delaware River bore them to where they entered the Delaware & Chesapeake Canal to pass to Elk River, down which they steamed to the gaunt receiving arm of Chesapeake Bay. Annapolis and the end of the trip seemed very near; but this, after all, was more like the broad, open ocean. It was more inspiring than a canal.

The Rear Admiral sniffed at the salt water and drew deep inhalations. He forgot the afternoon naps and recovered years of youth; but felt always an indefinable melancholy. He pulled himself together and held himself more severely erect. His

calm gray eyes beneath his heavy gray eyebrows shone brighter, and closely scanned the shoreline along which they bore. He was scrutinizing it to see whether it too had grown older; but it showed no sign of retirement. It would be there to watch languidly whole generations of other sailors pass in review long after he and all who knew him were dead. It was immutable and supercilious! Well, it didn't matter, anyway; it was his last cruise.

THEY were waiting for the Loggerhead when she blew her thin, shrill whistle off Annapolis, impudently assuming the dignity of a battleship.

The sun was shining,—the early morning sun which flirted with the waves and sent them into spasms of leaping exultation. It intensified the blue of the uniforms on the landing. The Commandant was there in person to receive the Rear Admiral, and appeared anxious when he studied his old friend's face. They walked away arm in arm, while the junior Lieutenant looked haughtily at the cadets of whom he had so recently been a member. They chafed him; but he preserved a stony and austere silence.

The Commandant refrained from comment, but with his own hand gave the Rear Admiral an official envelop. It contained a peremptory order to report forthwith to the office of the Secretary of the Navy in Washington. The Rear Admiral read it and brushed his hand across his forehead. His fingers trembled a little. Such a summons was ominous; but duty was duty, and all his life he had bravely obeyed without hesitation.

He lost no time in issuing orders to the Loggerhead, and hastened to comply. On the short journey he reviewed his cruise and had a sense of abashment at his past temerity; but doggedly set his teeth, resolved to answer any pertinent question that might be asked. Was he not a Rear Admiral and within his rights and entitled to some leeway?

HE trudged steadily into the huge building, where the men holding high administrative offices, the various minor bureaus, and their army of clerks held working abode, and announced himself. For the first time in many years he was compelled to wait for a few minutes outside the forbidding doors.

Behind them the Secretary of the Navy and the first assistant and the second assistant and the first assistant clerk and the first assistant stenographer were assisting each other in a conference. Before them was a pile of newspapers containing a good story. The topmost carried a conspicuous heading which read, "Rear Admiral Stone's Cruise. Mighty Flagship Loggerhead Last Heard from in the Bay. Has Safely Escaped the Dangers of the D & W Canal. Doughty Officer's Flag Sighted Passing Markton Light."

The chiefs had many theories, some of which embodied insanity. They cringed beneath the storm of ridicule that had burst over them; but this culprit was too much beloved by his countrymen to be dealt with like a mischievous midshipman. They must go slowly, hear his explanation, and then permit him to retire immediately and drop from public sight and memory. The cruise of the Loggerhead must be expunged. The Secretary, polished, forceful, and well groomed, who had recently been called from his law practice in one of the great cities to direct the naval affairs of the nation, was decisive on this point. All withdrew save him, and it was he who greeted the Rear Admiral when the usher opened the door.

THE Secretary's frigidly of air thawed imperceptibly when he looked at the sturdy old figure and met the perturbed gray eyes. Here was a hero after all; but he had done something that he alone could explain. Perhaps there was some explanation. He hoped so; but doubted it. He wished he knew sailors' lives and sailors' motives more intimately. They were of a different world than he had studied. In this episode was the ridiculous; but none of it attached to the man before him. He was perplexed.

"Admiral," he said after the customary greetings were exchanged, "what about this cruise of yours?"

"Well, sir, we came through the canals in a cutter."

"And flew your flag?"

"Yes, sir."

That was all. The officer had no excuse to offer, apparently. He sat quietly before the Secretary, with an underglow of smoldering defiance in his eyes. The Secretary mistook his attitude for stubbornness, and his wrath flamed again when he thought of the newspaper stories. His voice became hard and cold and sarcastic. He bit his words off incisively.

"Yes, and you had a fool christening up there in the yards, called your cutter the Loggerhead, went out demanding full honors to your flag, and—"

"Stop, sir!"

The fighting man who had been in peaceful paths for years was aroused. His interruption was a command that recalled the valiant clash of steel, the terrific boom of heavy guns, and the wild savagery of battle. It was the ringing, vibrant voice that had been heard above slippery decks when it cheered men on and drove them into the teeth of Death. He was on his feet now, a martial figure of majestic force and dignity, only his face was drawn and white and his eyes flamed with a livid fury of indignation.

"Stop, sir!" he thundered. "It is my flag. I've earned it. By Heaven! I have! It's almost as dear to me as the one for which I fought before you were born. Did you think you could shelve me on the retired list after more than forty years of service, without giving me a chance to see the flag I've dreamed of having all my life, and worked for all my life, afloat at a masthead?"

The Secretary gasped and lost the arrogance of position and the white heat of temper. He stood silent and nonplussed before this quivering old gladiator of the seas. The hand that he had involuntarily raised when he sprang to his feet to confront the Rear Admiral dropped slowly to his

