With the Naval Militia Aboard Battleship Kearsarge

District Boys Spent Profitable Two Weeks at Sea on One of Uncle Sam's Big Fighting Vessels—Turning Men Into Capable Housekeepers, Besides Training Them to Use Big Guns—Citizen Sailors Did Everything Aboard Ship From Cooking to Cleaning House, With a Wash Day as a Feature of Every Twenty-Four Hours—Learning the Language of the Regulars—The Value of Discipline—Making Volunteer Firemen.

AFTER two weeks at sea aboard one of Uncle Sam's mighty battle ships, nearly 180 excellent male housekeepers were turned loose into the District of Columbia, with a knowledge of housework such as their mothers or their wives could not have imparted in a whole lifetime. They couldn't get their attention long enough, but when those sailors stepped aboard the United States battleship Kearsarge for a two-week cruise it was a case of everybody working and giving his undivided attention to details. Every man looks out for himself, and the officers look out for all.

These men, who are the citizen-sailors of the District of Columbia, the reserve naval force upon which the United States can rely when the call to arms is sounded, did everything aboard the ship from cooking to cleaning house, with a wash day thrown in every day for a change. And they kept themselves and their part of the house clean. To lay back on the job meant double duty when the busy officers found time to catch up with the shirker.

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It was work practically day and night for those citizen-sailors from the time they came over the side of the ship at Hampton roads the morning of July 3 until they had returned there July 16, after a voyage up around Long Island a day at target practice and a few hours' liberty in New York city. They worked in every part of the ship, from the depths of the engine and boiler rooms to the decks, around the guns and in the galley, where the savory dishes for the crew were prepared.

But it took those citizen-sailors from the District some hours to get used to the things aboard, to "shake down," as they say in naval parlance. The navy has a language all its own and every citizen-sailor has to take a post-graduate course in naval English. Take the English language, or a few words of it, throw it into a twelve-inch turret, give it an extra charge of powder and send it through the guns backward and you have the correct naval language that will pass muster for a sailorman.

But the District boys in about four days could speak it just as well as an old salt who had put about two "hitches"—otherwise enlistments—in the service. They could say "on the top side" without even thinking of upstairs, and "below" when they meant to go down. In the first place, they don't have stairways in the navy—they have hatches, and you can't very well go down stairs except under the jeers of the experts in naval language.

While those District sailors were aboard the ship they ran about everything with the exception of the captain's cabin, and they might have gone after that except that it is sacred ground where both angels and fools fear to tread. Commander Dempf, commanding the local jackies, kept that part of the ship running with his funny stories.

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Up at four bells—6 o'clock—in the morning watch, there is a flushing of human systems with large amounts of black coffee, and the eyes open wide, the better to take in the large amount of work to be done during the day. For then the day's work begins. There comes the slushing of water about the decks and the grind, grind, grind of the holystones could be heard scratching back and forth across the decks.

Somebody always looked for the easy job there. That was handling the hose. These otherwise clerks and professional men in civil life just rolled up their big-bottomed trousers with the rest of the sailors, bent their backs double and started holystoning the decks until they were immaculately white.

And the boatswain's mate had an eagle eye, too sharp for some of the District boys who were not used to doing things well. That mate could watch twenty-five men at one time and could tell the minute some man skipped a half inch of the deck. It seemed to change the sound of the holystone. That's what the men said, anyway. Of course, one doesn't get a chance to sit down and think during the hours of daylight aboard a battleship. These District sailors were no exception.

When the decks were well holystoned, then came the paint work to be washed, and there were miles and miles of this, stretching, as the citizen-sailors seemed to think, from Hampton roads to Long Island sound. Steel parts of the ship had to be sandpapered to get the rust off, and the brasswork had to be polished and other woodwork scrubbed. If there's any appendicitis in the navy, it doesn't come from a sedentary occupation, at any rate.

By the time these chores were completed the officers would be awake and fed, or half fed, for some of them didn't manage to get a full breakfast some mornings. The officers' mess tables must be cleared up entirely at 8:30 and any one who happens to be half through his breakfast at that time loses out.

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The call to quarters is then in order and every man must assemble in clean white uniform for roll call. This is to see that every man is accounted for and that all have clothes nice and clean. But the first few roll calls after the ship had poked her nose outside of the Chesapeake capes of Henry and Charles there were a few missing names. They had been unwillingly learning a part of a sailor man's duties—manning the rail. But they were not in the prescribed erect style. They were a bit droopy and had a dark-brown taste in the mouth.

Those boys seemed to get seasick about the time the anchor chain came heavin' in, just off Old Point Comfort. But a few hours of steady rocking brought them to their feet. However, when they did manage to get around to the mess table, they went after that substantial food so hard that the paymaster was about to charge a double ration to them. A few of the boys didn't learn to come to quarters clean until it had been impressed upon them by a couple of hours' additional duty, put in giving the ship's brasswork a mirrorlike polish, under the watchful eyes of the master-at-arms.

Then came the drills and schools, lasting until 4:30 o'clock in the afternoon, with brief respites for meals. In the evening there were a few minutes for recreation, until they turned into their hammocks to be rocked to sleep with the motion of the ship. At least those men who did not have watches during the night could turn in.

Many of these District militiamen always tried to find some excuse to give for not washing clothes. But the bugler sounded "fresh water" call morning and evening. This was the signal for the men to "stand by" and draw buckets of fresh water to be used in washing clothes. It was scrub clothes all the time, with the deck for washboard, wash tub and all. And if a sailor didn't scrub clothes in the prescribed time and came to quarters in dirty clothes he got extra duty and washed his clothes, too, under the watchful eye of the ship's police. At least that's what the District boys had to do.

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Discipline is what some of the District sailors found it hard to submit to. The men could only go in their bags—that's what the sailor has for a bureau, chiffonier, washstand and all, a canvas bag—it's the whole bedroom furniture in one—at certain times of the day. Some didn't heed the warning, so they, too, did double duty for violating this part of the regulations. And the love for tobacco and the practice of taking a smoke whenever one wanted it back home didn't work on the ship. Some few were caught smoking out of hours. It was double duty for them also.

But after the District sailors had "shaken down" there wasn't a finer naval militia crew in the country, and the regular officers gave them full credit for everything they did. Under the carpenter they repaired boats, caiked decks, built target rafts for subcaliber practice and did any one of a number of things. They were on the bridge night and day at the helm and signaling and otherwise assisting in running the ship from that part. According to the ship's officers, they did it just as efficiently as the regulars.

But the gunnery work is what brought the competitive spirit up in the men. Their old rivals, the North Carolina naval militia, who headed the list in target practice last year, were aboard, and every bit of time that could be found was used by the District boys in training at the guns. They worked like Trojans to get their teamwork down to a machine. And before the big ship went on the range they were working like the mechanism of a chronometer.

They had worked to get the heavy shells in the gun as rapidly as possible consistent with safety. They had learned to prepare the gun for action in the shortest time, for time as well as hits counts in the final markings.

Just one week after they had been aboard the vessel the ship went on the target range with eight well drilled crews from the District of Columbia, some of the members of which had never handled a big gun until they boarded the Kearsarge. Some members of the crews had drilled well, while there was no booming and no recoil and no jar on the decks to give the feeling that the ship was falling to pieces; but they became a little gun shy when they heard those five-inch guns speak and send a big shell roaring across the water.

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They made frantic appeals to their division officers to be relieved from gun duty, but the battle was on, and the names could not be changed. With a heart-throbbing and a scary feeling those boys were driven into battle. After a couple of shots these same gun-shy boys were standing up with the rest, and they made good scores. And the District boys accomplished their purpose, too—they beat the North Carolinians.

For a whole day they pumped away at the tiny targets, fairly riddling them with shell. After that duty was over the boys were anxious to return home, for the goal had been reached and interest was waning. However, there was more time for recreation, for battery drills were taken off the schedule after the target practice was over.

After a voyage on the battleship these men would make good volunteer firemen. A part of their duties was to learn how to protect the ship from fire. A rapid ringing of the ship's bell sent them one night scampering here and there about the decks battening down the hatches, trimming the ventilators away from the wind and getting streams of water on the imaginary fire.

Some of the boys were in their hammocks when the "fire" broke out, and they came just as they were, some of them in "September Morn" style. Some grabbed hose lines, others took up hand fire grenades, others brought their hammocks for smothering the flames, while others saw that all drafts were cut off.

One District militiaman didn't answer the call, confident in the belief that he would not be missed. But the "fire" was right in the spot that he had selected for a comfortable seat while the other sailors were rushing about the decks. The executive officer of the ship found him and had him placed where he would get on the jump when another drill call sounded.

So much enjoyment did these young men get out of going barefooted about the decks while doing seaman duty that when it came time to go ashore for liberty they couldn't get their shoes on. They were in a fine predicament, but after more than a week aboard ship they were willing to suffer almost any agony to get ashore, and they just squeezed their feet into shoes that once fitted.

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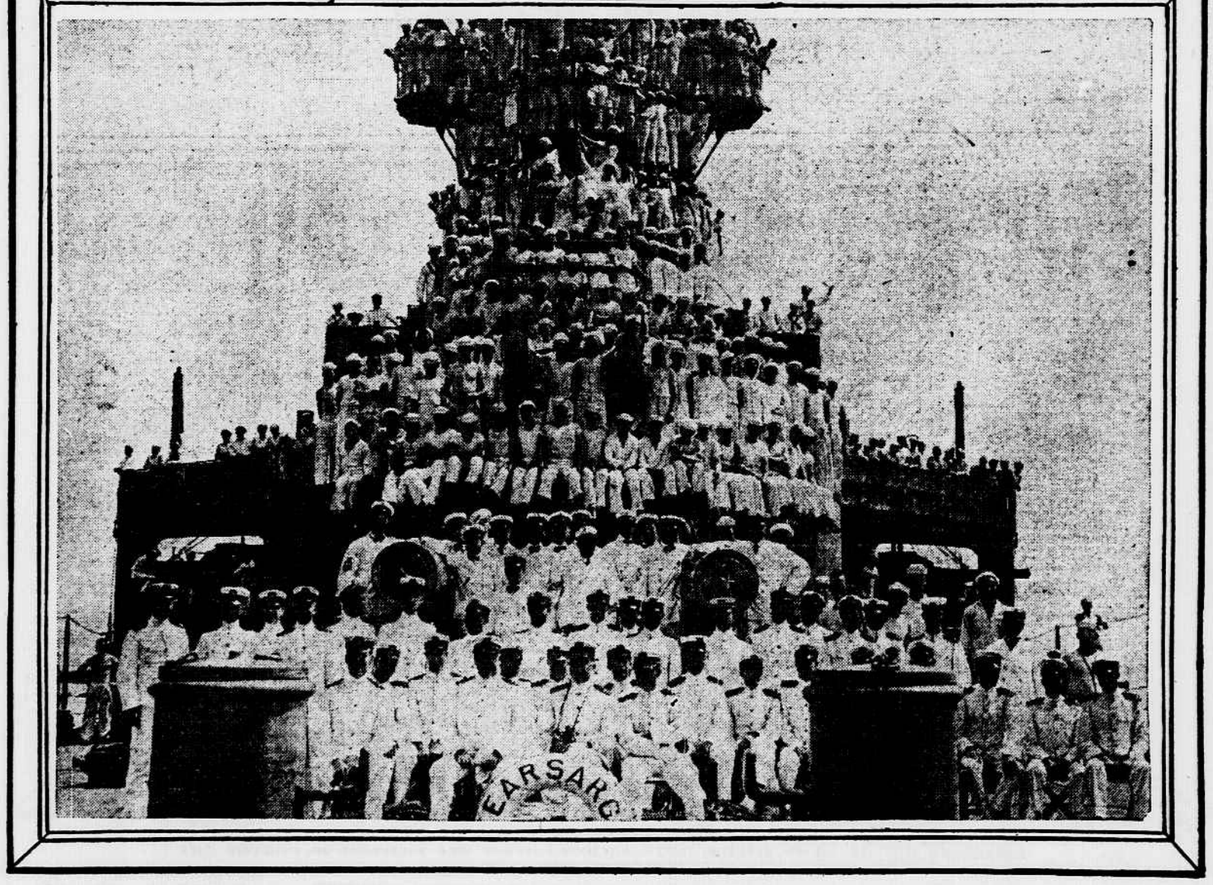
Schools proved an interesting feature of this 1915 cruise. It was something the local militiamen had never before participated in on the cruises. It was always drills and no schools. Each afternoon the various divisions would be assembled in comfortable places about the decks, if there can be anything such as comfort aboard a battleship, squatted down and listened to works of instruction from the regular officers.

One afternoon they received instruction in seamanship; another afternoon they would be passed on to another schoolmaster, who would instruct them in the nomenclature of parts of the ship; another afternoon they went up on the bridge and received instruction in matters pertaining to that section; then they went into the turrets, and they had instruction in infantry drill and the manual of arms. In fact, in those two weeks aboard that vessel they were given instruction such as a seaman apprentice who enlists in the regular navy gets in six months at a training station.

The officers, too, had separate schools. Every afternoon and night they were assembled in the wardroom and various topics were taken up, including deck work, navigation, organization, engineering and first-aid and sanitation.

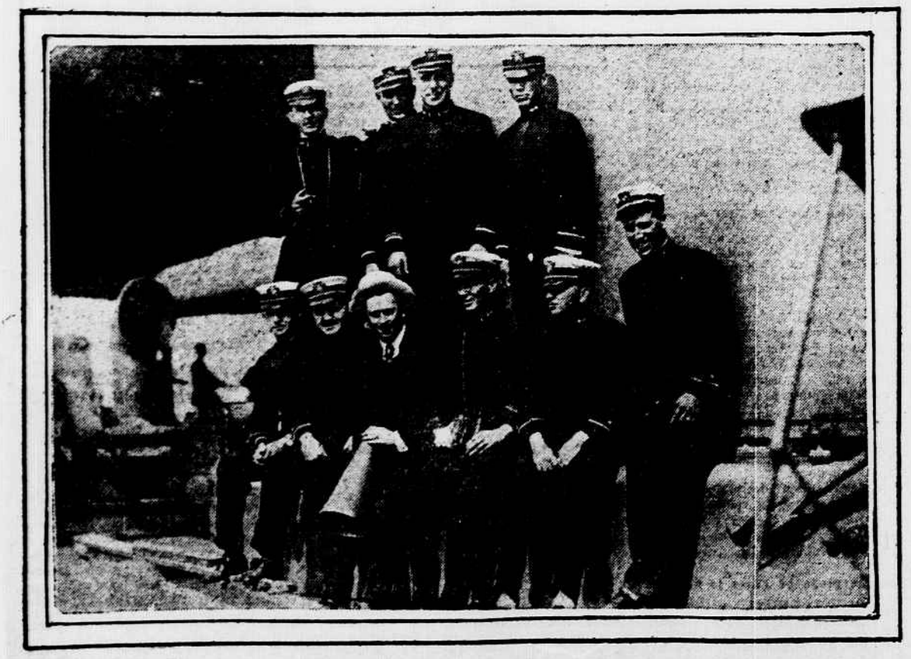
And when the cruise had ended, it was pronounced by those who have been connected with the local naval militia during its entire existence of seventeen years to have been the best, most successful and most profitable training cruise in the history of the Naval Battalion.



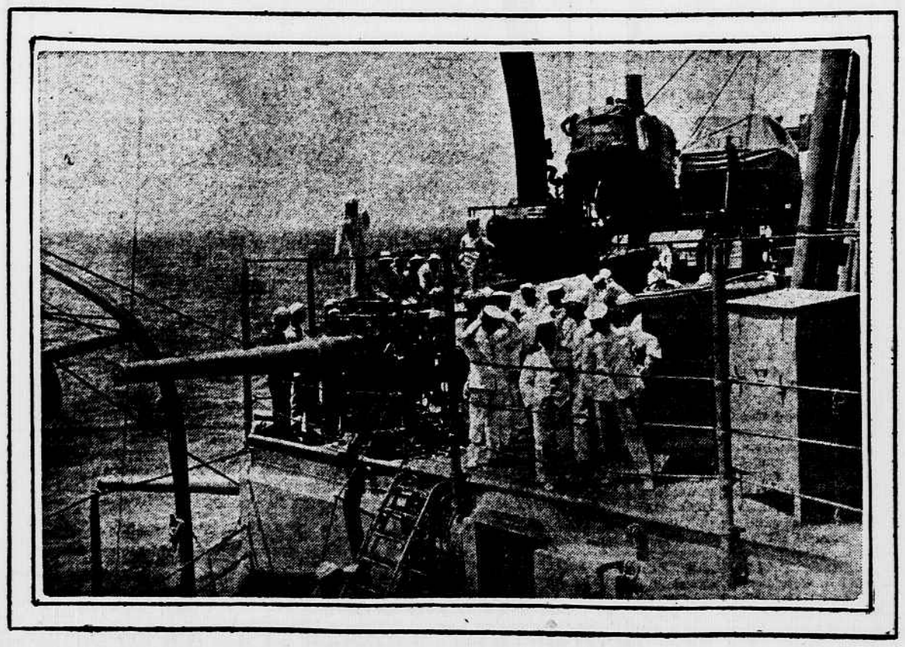
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND NORTH CAROLINA NAVAL MILITIA ON BOARD THE KEARSARGE.

DISTRICT BOYS GOING ABOARD U. S. S. KEARSARGE IN HAMPTON ROADS.

WHEN THE WASHLINE COMES DOWN EACH JACKY MUST GRAB HIS OWN CLOTHES.



UNITED STATES NAVY AND DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICERS ABOARD THE KEARSARGE.



INSTRUCTION IN GUNNERY.

OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS RETURN TO POPULARITY

THE private flower gardens of Washington, the flower borders and beds and the window box gardens show a tendency toward the growth of annual flowering plants. Sometimes these gardens are called old style, perhaps because so many of the bright, blooming and cheerful annuals were garden pets and garden beauties when grandma was a girl. One of the most prominent of the private "old-fashioned" gardens in Washington is that of Mrs. Sampson, at the northeast corner of New Hampshire avenue and Corcoran street, but many bright and radiant old-fashioned gardens are blooming just as happily in other sections of the District.

Not everybody in these days of new-fashioned or new-fangled roses and carnations can call the names of the genial flowers that are coming into popularity in those sections of the city where the homes are three stories high. But these sweet annuals are bringing the most prosperous and prominent citizens under the enchantment of their beauty.

Ageratum, with its blossoms of rose white and blue—especially blue—is winning praise for its contrasts and its combinations with geraniums, perillas, amaranthus, alyssum and candytuft. What memories alyssum brings back to old time folk! White alyssum was the usual variety planted in borders, edgings, baskets, pots and rock work, but there were, and of course still are, yellow varieties of alyssum, and now and then it is seen in a Washington flower garden today.

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When one speaks of asters he does not always mean the white and blue and purple wild asters, that bloom in late summer and autumn in the woods and fields, but he may mean some of those old-time garden varieties that produce flowers equal in form and size to some of the better sorts of chrysanthemums. While the plant world is none too well supplied with blue flowers, the aster provides all shades of blue and purple, and in many gardens the beautiful New England wild aster has been taken in and cared for as a domestic plant.

What garden of the olden time could be considered complete without those handsome bushes thickly massed with large rose-like flowers and which grew and thrived if the sun were warm and the soil rich under the name of balsam? It was a native of India, but was adopted in this country generations before it became a republic. One sees a touch of balsam in some of the city and suburban gardens. And one also sees calendula, or pot marigold, its flower ranging through all shades of yellow from ivory to deep orange. This ancient favorite seems lately to have come into especial repute for beds, borders and backgrounds and may be seen in the windows of florists' shops. Calendula was called pot marigold because its dried flowers were sometimes used for flavoring soups and stews.

Coreopsis was one of the old-fashioned favorites, and its blossoms of yellows, maroons and browns not only decked the ancient gardens, but because the flowers were long stemmed, graceful and handsome it was much employed in bouquets.

Campanula, or Canterbury bells, or slipperwort, is another flower that lived in grandma's garden and which seems to have come back to blossom for the moderns. Candytuft is with us, white and fragrant, and in beds is doing all it can to make Washington beautiful.

Generally the cockscomb, though odd, picturesque and historic, is not at home in aristocratic gardens. It seems to live most happily with plain people, and in those city gardens inside paling fences you will see cockscombs, crimson, scarlet and occasionally yellow, growing joyously and manifesting every symptom of content. Often growing in the same yards or the same gardens with the cockscomb is the cone-flower, most of the flowers with yellow rays, but sometimes with crimson. If you want to address the cone-flower by its family name you should call it "rudebeckia," but there are two kinds of rudebeckia, growing in Washington—rudebeckia hirta and rudebeckia triloba—and you should know which you are addressing. One of the yellowest and showiest flowers in Washington is known as golden glow, and this is also a rudebeckia.

The cone-flower should not be confused with the corn-flower, a member of a different family and which very old people called when they were little children "blue bottle" or "ragged sailor." One of the old-time flowers which has maintained its popularity throughout all the time and changes in flower fashions is the cosmos, and it is growing in thousands of Washington's gardens and making ready to unfold its dainty blossoms in the late summer and early fall.

You will see, if you are on the lookout for them, screens of four o'clocks, and beds of fox glove and forget-me-not, evening primrose, gaillardia, larkspur, lobelia, marigold, mignonette, phlox, sweet william, portulaca, snap dragon, verbena and zinnia, another name for which is "youth-and-old-age."

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For some reason, but for which the flower itself is not to blame, the hollyhock, despite its radiance and many virtures, is not often found in expensive gardens. It is a much-neglected flower, but if you give it welcome and encouragement it fully repays you for your courtesy. Other flowers which do not prosper in certain sections of the city are the morning glory and the moon flower.

The flowers which are now enjoying a high degree of popularity in Washington gardens are sweet peas, scarlet sage, nasturtiums, pansies and petunias.

If you have not planted flowers in your garden and do not feel much tenderness toward them, it might improve your disposition and make you feel better to read the following lines written several years ago by L. C. Corbett, horticulturist of the bureau of plant industry of the Department of Agricultuire:

"Plants are missionaries of nature constantly at work attempting to cover up some ugly scar which civilized man has made in his struggle to wrest from the earth the living which he claims she owes him. If you will but give nature the suggestion of your wishes in the form of a few choice seeds she will paint for you the rich shades of the pansy or the phlox; she will carpet your floor with a velvet rug of green and strew upon its surface in bold contrast the golden disks of the dandelion or the bright, saucy faces of the crucus. She will drape your walls with a festoon of green and hide therein rich gems of purple, of crimson, and of white, and, if you ask it, she will screen one apartment from another with barriers of green which may or may not carry bright floral gems.

"While flowers are primarily utilitarian in purpose, the end is attained by attractive and alluring means. The beauty, fragrance and sweetness of the flower are not vain attributes; each is designed for a subtle purpose. The bright colors are the gala-day attire of these natural fairies to attract and allure the passerby, be he insect, bird, or man.

"Beautiful plants and flowers naturally grouped are pleasing because they are restful. Association with nature is soothing because the crudities of man's invention, in which friction is such a large factor, are all eliminated. The sounds in the woods are musical, harmonious and rythmical, soothing and pleasing in effect, while the colors are beautifully blended, holding the eye and the attention without effort and without fatigue. Nature in such moods is restful."

CONQUERING DISEASE AMONG THE TRENCHES AND CAMPS

THE prophecy that plague, cholera, typhoid, typhus and gangrene would decimate the armies of Europe this summer seems not to have been borne out. Last winter this prophecy was frequently made because of the shallow battlefield burials and because there were long periods when, according to the reports, burial of the dead was not possible. Another reason for this black and dire prophecy was because of the belief that effective sanitation could not be adapted to trench warfare. The medical departments of the battling armies seem to have been as energetic and efficient in their sphere of operations as those departments whose concern it is to slay as many of the enemy as possible. The medical history of the war will probably be a bright page in a black book.

News came from Europe last winter that typhoid fever, an ancient scourge of armies, was raging among the troops of Austria and Hungary. The report was plausible, because there had been few campaigns without typhoid and it is written in history that typhoid has put out of action more men than have been slain or maimed by bayonets and bullets. The report was surprising though, in view of the fact that within the last few years, the once dread disease had been adopted in all the modern military ravages checked because of the immunizing treatment of men based on a knowledge of the cause of typhoid.

It was known that this treatment had been adopted in all the modern military establishments of the world, and the only reasonable explanation of a typhoid epidemic in the Austrian armies was that hosts of civilians had been converted into troops so hastily that there had been no time to administer the typhoid prophylactic treatment. Later advices were that though typhoid had appeared among the troops it was promptly checked and that it was the civil population in certain districts which had been most heavily afflicted with the disease.

Typhoid fever swept through the training and concentration camps of the United States volunteers in the Spanish-American war and claimed about ten victims for each man who was hit in battle action. As late as the Anglo-Boer war there were in the English army in Africa 57,684 cases of typhoid—an army corps in itself—and more than 8,000 deaths from the disease.

It was not long after the opening of the greatest war that reports came to the United States of the appearance of gangrene, both traumatic gangrene, or the gangrene of neglected and infected injuries, and of hospital gangrene among the French troops. Hospital gangrene claimed its victims by thousands in the Crimean war, the American civil war and in all previous wars. The reports from France were distressing to all persons who had knowledge of this old army scourge.

When bacteriology and sanitation were infant sciences hospital gangrene was one of the mysterious diseases. It would sweep through a hospital of sick and wounded soldiers. With the wonderful improvement in surgery, hospital methods and knowledge of antiseptics, hospital gangrene disappeared. It became what physicians call a "historic disease." Its disappearance in Europe caused consternation. There was an explanation of the gangrene of the battlefield, due, of course, to too long neglected wounds, but hospital gangrene was another matter. Following the report of the appearance of gangrene came reports that the germ of the disease had been discovered, and this was hailed as one of the magnificent achievements of science and was accounted one of the good things that had come out of the evil of the war. Nothing has been heard in this country of hospital gangrene for months, and very little of the other form of gangrene, and the inference is that the disease has been conquered.

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Coming to the United States at the same time with the reports of gangrene was news that lockjaw was frequent among wounded troops. The reason lay in neglected wounds. There were urgent calls for anti-tetanus serum and all facilities in the United States for producing this were utilized, and it may be that the output is still enormous, though very little is now heard either of tetanus in the armies or of the production of unusual quantities of anti-tetanus serum in the United States.

The outbreak of typhus among the Serbians recalled to men a disease which has followed armies for ages and has afflicted men where they have been herded in foul surroundings. Typhus is that disease which has sometimes been called "camp fever" or "jail fever." Its cause is known, and Serbia, after a heavy toll of death, seems to have been freed from the plague. In April last the announcement was made that an American physician had succeeded in isolating the germ of typhus, and this was also hailed as one of the momentous scientific achievements of the times and of all time.