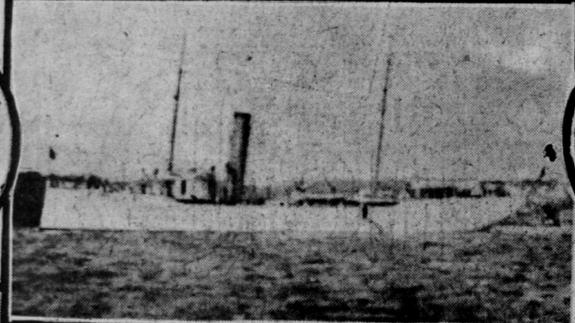


FISHING for DEAD SHIPS with GUN COTTON for BAIT

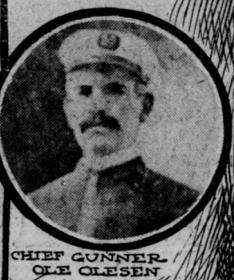
HOW IT FEELS TO GO TO SEA IN A REVENUE CUTTER HUNTING FOR DERELICTS, WITH 180 POUNDS OF GUN COTTON IN YOUR BERTH



LIEUTENANT R. L. BROCKWAY, COMMANDING THE REVENUE CUTTER MOHAWK



REVENUE CUTTER MOHAWK EMPLOYED IN DESTROYING DERELICTS



CHIEF GUNNER OLE OLESEN



PARTLY SUBMERGED WRECK OFF OCEAN CITY, N. C.

HOW would you like to go fishing for dead ships with half a ton of gun cotton for bait?

Do you think you would sleep well if you knew that 180 pounds of this powerful explosive were packed in the berth over your head, and as much more in the berth next to yours? No doubt it might disturb your nerves at first, but after a time you would become accustomed to the little wooden boxes tucked away in every corner of the ship; you would get used to seeing the men toss them about like so much laundry soap, and you would forget that you were afloat with a cargo of explosives sufficient to destroy in one second of time half the battleships in the United States navy.

Just as safe and simple as baiting a hook with dead angleworms," says the bluff old gunner, as you sit smoking on the quarterdeck. Surely he ought to know. At any rate, you must take his word for it, and very soon you find yourself looking out over the ocean, watching for floating spars, quite as eager as any member of the crew to "pick up a good catch."

Half a score of Uncle Sam's fleet revenue cutters are engaged in this new business of fishing for derelicts. Day and night from Maine to Florida, they are cruising about looking for grim old hulks which wallow in the pathway of trans-Atlantic and coastwise ships. Many of them have floated for years, half submerged in the ocean, but until recently no official effort was made to put them out of the way. By mariners they were looked upon as one of the unpreventable nuisances of the deep. From the bridge of a Cunarder the captain would observe in midocean a slimy spar rising and falling in the wash of his ship, like the fin of a great shark. To him it was of little more importance than a shark. Well he knew that beneath this spar lay the dead body of another ship, but happily he had escaped collision with it, and that was an end of the matter.

Perhaps if it did not escape his mind he made a note of it in the ship's log, and sometimes this information that a derelict was sighted in a certain latitude and longitude on a certain date reached other mariners, weeks later, but ordinarily the thing attracted no more attention than the body of a dead porpoise floating on the water, and thus the derelict drifted on and offentimes, no doubt, rolled into the track of other vessels which went to the bottom or themselves became slimy monsters wandering with the tides and the winds.

WHAT was in the days before wireless telegraphy was in use and before the pathways of the Atlantic became congested with ships carrying priceless cargoes of human life and treasure. Finally when the accumulation of derelicts became a general menace to navigation the United States government took the matter in a small way, and from time to time sent out naval ships to destroy the hulks wherever they were found. Little was accomplished by that method, and two years ago the revenue cutters along the Atlantic coast were called into service, and today the most interesting part of the most important part of their work is the destruction of these stragglers of the sea.

But the government has done more than that. Aside from the revenue cutters three large vessels are now being equipped and soon will be put in commission as derelict destroyers. They are fast ships, with coal capacity for a long cruise and expressly designed for carrying large quantities of explosives. They are equipped with every facility for destroying any sort of derelict, no matter where found, and will be pro-

vided with crews of the sturdiest sailors who understand the work. One of these vessels, the Androscoogin, is now in commission, stationed at Portland, Me. Like the others, she is a vessel of about 1,100 tons, and will cruise along the North Atlantic. She is built of wood in order that she may be more serviceable in breaking ice, which often threatens the safety of small vessels in the northern waters. Frequently the island of Nantucket, off the coast of Massachusetts is shut off from the mainland for long periods in the winter, and hereafter it will be a part of the Androscoogin's work to go to the relief of the people on the island.

As a fisher for derelicts it is expected that she will be kept very busy, because a large number of lumber carrying vessels meet with grief every year along the New England coast. When wrecked these lumber barges become especially troublesome, because they do not sink to the bottom like ships laden with iron or coal, but frequently float out into the ocean roadways and for months or years menace the safety of larger vessels.

The Seneca, similar to the Androscoogin, is completed and is now receiving her crew in Baltimore. She is an iron vessel and will take care of the derelicts that appear in the South Atlantic. The third destroyer is now being built and will be stationed at Key West to patrol the gulf of Mexico. Special crews have been selected for the big cutters, and the men are carefully drilled in the handling of explosives and in all those things which have to do with the finding and destroying of derelicts.

Besides these specially built vessels the following revenue cutters are stationed along the Atlantic coast, ready at a moment's notice to put out after a derelict when reported within their district:

The Gresham, stationed at Boston, goes as far north as the eastern extremity of Maine and south to New York.

The Mohawk, stationed at New York, patrols from Cape Cod to the Delaware breakwater.

The Onondago, stationed at Norfolk, looks after wrecks from the Delaware breakwater to Cape Hatteras.

The Seminole, stationed at Wilmington, N. C., patrols from Cape Hatteras to Jacksonville, Fla.

The Winona, stationed at Mobile, patrols from New Orleans to Tampa.

The Forward, stationed at Key West, patrols from Jacksonville to Tampa.

The Windom, stationed at Galveston, patrols from New Orleans to the Rio Grande river.

LIKE all fishermen, however, these hardy sailors who go angling for sunken ships must observe certain government laws and restrictions. They must not disturb a derelict found within the three mile shore limit. That part of the ocean is the special property of the United States war department, and the consent of the secretary of war must be obtained before a revenue cutter may so much as throw a firecracker at a wreck discovered there.

The revenue cutter service is under the control of the United States treasury department, and, having a sort of courtesy feeling for each other, there is rarely any friction. Outside the three mile limit it is high seas territory, and all wrecks found there are common and the nerve to use it. And like all fishermen the derelict catchers have their full measure of bad luck. Often they return from a cruise empty handed, for in the wide expanse of the Atlantic a ship's hull, in part or wholly submerged, is not easy to find, even though it may be wallowing but a few yards distant from the vessel that is hunting for it.

Reports of derelicts reach the revenue cutters from various sources. Sometimes when a ship's captain discovers a particularly bad one directly in the track of navigation he sends a wireless

WRECK OFF BARNEGAT LIGHT HOUSE



CHIEF GUNNER OLE OLESEN, ON REVENUE CUTTER MOHAWK PREPARING 30 POUND CHARGE OF GUN COTTON FOR BLOWING UP A DERELICT

PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS COPPER CASE HOLDING THE EXPLOSIVE, COIL OF CABLE AND ELECTRIC BATTERY

message giving the latitude and longitude, the time and character of the wreck. Many of these reports reach the government through the New York Herald's maritime columns. In other cases they are not made by captains until they reach port. The life saving department and other governments give information, but always it is largely a matter of good luck if the revenue cutters find the wrecks near the spots where they were reported. Wind and tide sometimes carry them long distances in a few hours, and it is usually several days or a week after being sighted before the revenue cutter begins its search.

Imagine yourself on the quarterdeck of the revenue cutter Mohawk as she steams quietly away from her anchorage at Tompkinsville on a derelict hunting cruise. You must be satisfied with making the voyage in fancy, because the treasury department, however courteously inclined, does not as a rule care to send its guests to sea in such a case—well, the story of the Mohawk and all on board, would never be told. Sea gulls might pick up small fragments of it, but they would be very small fragments at that.

Assuming, however, that the permission of the treasury department were given, you would find yourself on one of the sturdiest little vessels afloat and equipped with every comfort and convenience of a first class battleship. The officers and crew are all young men. First Lieutenant B. L. Brockway, a clean cut young southerner, is in com-

mand, with Second Lieutenant R. H. Waesche ranking second. The chief engineer is J. J. Bryan, with rank of second lieutenant. He is a veteran of several arctic expeditions, and can tell you interesting stories of every ocean where ships have found their way. Besides these are four cadets and a crew of 55 sailors.

But most interesting of all is Ole Olesen, the chief gunner. His position is the most important of all, for it is he who handles the gun cotton, places the mines and performs all the ticklish functions connected with the perilous work. He is red haired, blue eyed and a man of few words until explosives are mentioned, and then he talks to you about his craft with a vividness of detail and description that makes you wish you were anywhere else in the world but on the Mohawk.

AS you move about the ship you get the feeling that a mine ready to be set off is concealed in every corner. In your cabin you find half a dozen boxes securely lashed to the top of a dressing table. In each of these boxes is a glass jar containing 30 pounds of gun cotton. In the berth over your head is as much more. Suspended from the ceiling swings a small tin box that looks like a can of peas or peaches. In that are a dozen detonators, vicious little metal firecrackers that are used to explode the mines. They are really the only dangerous part of the cargo, and that is why they are left suspended so that there is no danger of explosion from sudden shock.



BLOWING UP A DERELICT TEN MILES OFF BARNEGAT LIGHT HOUSE

BLOWING UP A DERELICT

is lowered, and with the gunner in command a dozen sailors are sent away to the derelict. They move slowly around it, taking soundings on all sides until Olesen finds how the hulk lies and just where he wants to lower the mines. Maybe one mine will do the work, and it may require three or four, but the gunner determines all that as accurately as if the wreck were in plain view and he could measure it with a chalk line.

Having made the soundings the boat returns to the ship and the mines are prepared. The wet gun cotton is brought up from the hold and the dry gun cotton is fetched from the cabin. Sailors are stationed about it on the deck. Then Olesen produces the copper cases in which the explosive is to be sunk. They look like square oil cans. Just 30 pounds of gun cotton may be placed in each—25 pounds of wet and five pounds of dry. The cakes are laid in carefully and then, with the aid of a small rubber ball to make the receptacle watertight, the detonator is placed and the metal top screwed down.

From another part of the ship a huge coil of copper cable is rolled out. That is to carry the electric spark from the small battery to the mine. "Ready now with the boat," bellows the gunner, "and keep that battery away from the cable!"

THE mines are then taken into the boat and once more Olesen goes around the derelict. "Down here," he says to the sailors, and slowly the mine is lowered until it rests on solid foundation. The boat moves back to the ship, and then pulls away far enough to be out of reach of falling wreckage. The Mohawk moves still farther away to get out of any possible

danger from wreckage or shock. Olesen takes charge of the battery, connects it with the cable and signals to the bridge that everything is ready. For just an instant every man on the ship and in the boat holds his breath. All eyes are focused on the wreck. Olesen bends over the little battery, and, pressing his thumb to the button, shouts, "Here she goes!"

You are expecting a terrific report, but it does not come. The deck of the ship seems to lift slightly under your feet. You have a swaying sensation for an instant, and you hear a muffled roar that seems to come up from the sea everywhere. Then a mighty geyser mounts into the air. Fifty, seventy, perhaps a hundred or two feet, a massive fountain of wreckage and water leaps upward and falls back with tremendous force. Again the ship trembles slightly and you can see the men rocking violently in the surfboat. When the foam subsides the water is strewn with wreckage.

Five minutes after that hundreds and thousands of dead fish float upon the surface. For half a mile in all directions you see them coming up. If the wreck is near shore fishermen come with their boats and carry away dead fish by the ton.

But Olesen's work is not yet finished. Again he takes soundings, and if the hulk is not sufficiently broken up down goes another 30 pounds of gun cotton. "What was that ship?" you ask Olesen, shaking his head. "The good Lord only knows," he answers. "Did she have a cargo?" "Probably," says the gunner. "It might have been coal, it might have been silk and there might have been a cabin full of dead humans there. You can't tell, and there's no use fussing about those things after a ship goes under. Bust her up so she won't send any more ships to the bottom. That's the best we can do, and that's good enough."

Olesen gathers his dangerous fishing tackle together, the sailors lift anchor and the cutter again lays her course for Tompkinsville. But the search for ocean vagrants is not ended. It never ends. Night and day the sailors are on the lookout because a reward is given to each man who first sights a wreck. The reward is one day's shore leave, and that means more lot to the sailorman on a gun cotton ship.

LORE OF THE WEDDING RING

THE old Roman wedding ring was usually of iron, symbolical of the enduring bond, says the Pittsburg Dispatch, which perhaps explains the supposition of some authorities that it, in olden times, indicated the submission of the wearer, as did the iron ring worn about the neck and ankle.

There are many tales, romantic, quaint and amusing, associated with marriage rings of all nations and all ages. Those interchanged between Martin Luther and Catherine von Bora were of silver gilt, with a figure of Christ upon the cross. And it has been stated that a certain Lady Cathcart, on marrying her fourth husband, had inscribed upon her wedding ring:

"If I survive, I will have five!"

Among Hebrews the wedding ring is sometimes ornamented by an elaborately carved temple fixed on a hinge, and when opened discloses a tiny representation of the ark of the covenant. Very interesting, too, is the lore of the engagement ring, now generally worn after marriage on the third finger of the left hand as a guard to the plain golden wedding ring of modern preference.

A pretty fancy, not common, though not new, is to have this ring set with stones, the initial letters of which will spell the name of the wearer or the giver. The keeper given to the present queen by the then prince of Wales on

their marriage is set with precious stones, the initials of the names of which stand for the royal husband's pet family cognomen, "Bertie"—a beryl, emerald, ruby, turquoise, jacinth and an emerald again.

The custom of giving mottoes to engagement rings—possibly originated with the Romans, "Good luck to you" is Roman, and perhaps "Love me, and I will love you," is Roman also. The trite, "When this you see, remember me," that may be found in the autograph album of almost every schoolgirl, was used for this sort of thing more than 200 years ago, and is declared to have been not original even then.

The modern engagement ring must be of gold, of any shape except that of the wedding circlet, and may be set with any stone other than an opal or emerald, the opal being regarded as unlucky, and the emerald not favored for some like superstitious fancy. Why pearls—the "good luck to you"—have never thus been taboos remains to be explained. A few years since fashion attempted to bring into use for betrothal circlets these interdicted gems, but with small success.

Among the ancients all rings had some significance. In Greece and Rome only freemen were allowed to wear them; and as the more wealthy had a different one for each season, it may be inferred that there was some fanciful meaning attached to each month and each finger and that from them came the pretty whimsical idea of a later century that there is a certain gem that has an auspicious association with each month of the year, and that to bring good luck or avert evil one ought to wear that which represents the birth month.