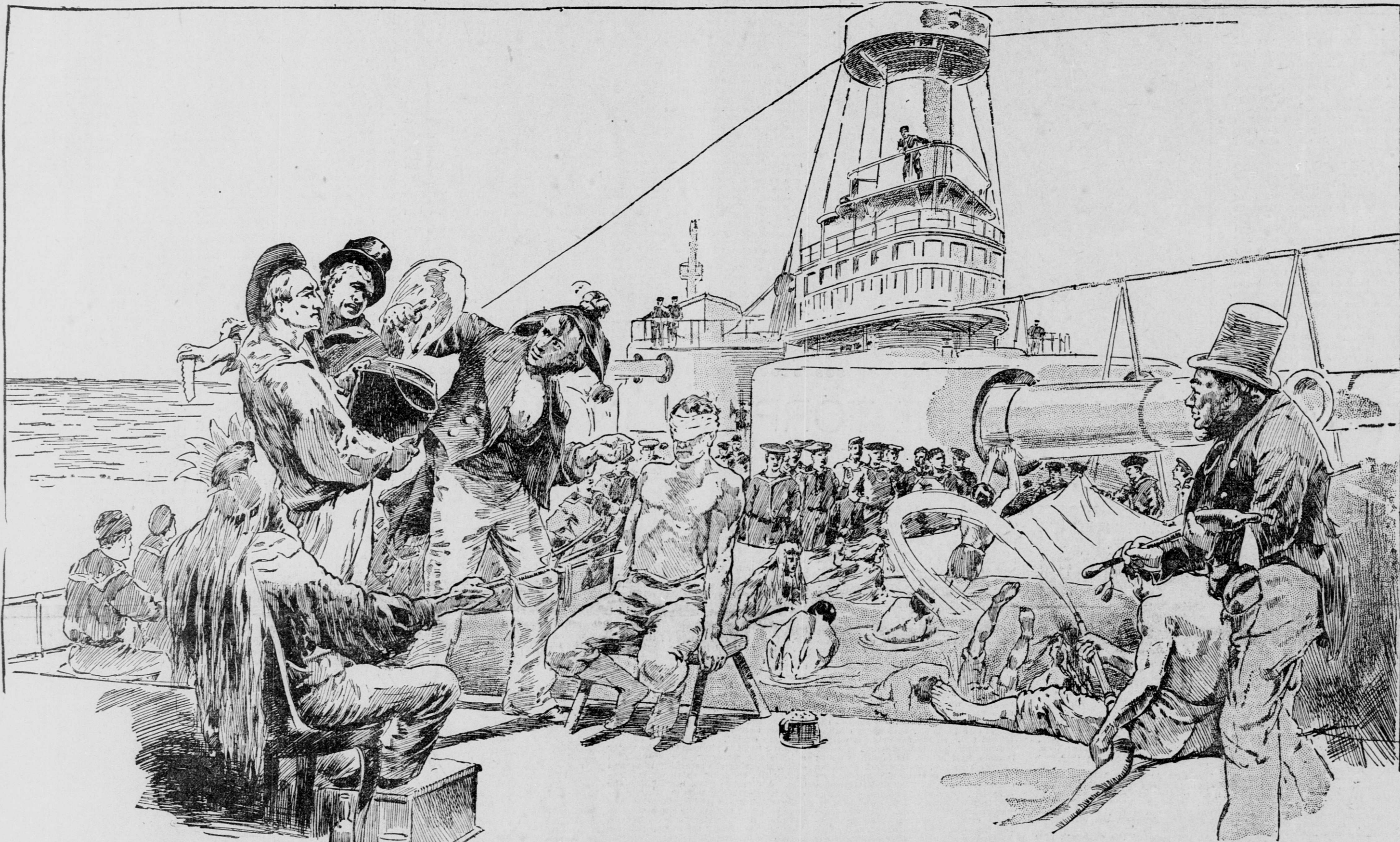


THE Sunday Call

SAN FRANCISCO, SUNDAY, MAY 8, 1898.

GLORIOUS VISIT OF NEPTUNE ON BOARD THE BATTLE-SHIP OREGON.

When the Oregon Crossed "the Line" Recently on Her Way to Join the Atlantic Squadron Before Cuba She Was Met by Neptune and His Beautiful Wife Amphitrite. It Was Such a Great Occasion That the Battle-Ship for a Time Was Turned Over to Neptune and His Retinue. What Followed Is Told Below by Lieutenant Edward W. Eberle, Officer of the Vessel.



NEPTUNE TOOK HIS POSITION ON THE BRIDGE WITH HIS STAFF, AND ON THE DECK BELOW WAS RIGGED A BIG SAIL FULL OF THE SALTIER KIND OF SALT WATER; THEN THE BEARS AND WOLVES PLUNGED INTO THE WATER AND WERE READY FOR THE FIRST VICTIM.

U. S. S. Oregon.

To all to whom these presents shall come
Greeting

Know Ye that Edward Eberle, Jr. has this day been enrolled by proxy as a loyal subject of his Most Gracious Majesty Neptunus Rex, monarch of all the seas and, in virtue thereof, is entitled to all due respect from the common landlubbers of the earth.

By royal command therefore, it is decreed that all good sailor-men, mermaids, sharks, whales, sea serpents and other faithful subjects of his Royal Mibs, shall abstain from maltreating or slandering the holder of this certificate.

Done at royal court,
on the Equator, this 31st
day of March 1898
according to earthly
computation.



By the King.

Downalldittyboxes,
Secretary.

that Neptune would make his customary visit on board. Then the representative disappeared into the sea, and we began to make grand preparations to receive King Neptune.

This morning I was officer of the deck and about 9 o'clock I shouted to the officer on the forecabin (through the trumpet):

"Keep a bright lookout ahead for the line, sir!" and the answer came, "Aye, aye, sir!"

All was bustle and excitement about the decks now, making preparations for his Majesty and the many landlubbers who had never crossed the "line" were very nervous, for they had been told blood-curdling tales of how Neptune initiated all strangers into his domains.

All hands were on deck keeping a lookout for the ruler of the seas, when the officer of the forecabin shouted out to me:

"The line is sight right ahead, sir!" and I answered:

"Very well, sir, keep a sharp lookout for his Majesty King Neptune!" and in another moment came the word:

"The King is in sight ahead, sir!" and I answered:

"Ask his Majesty to come on board, sir!"

And then out of the sea and over the ship's bow came Neptune with his numerous staff.

I invited his Majesty to walk aft on the quarterdeck, where he would be officially received by the captain, officers and crew.

Then I called "All hands to muster," the most formal ceremony on a man-of-war, where all the officers and men assemble on the quarterdeck and I reported to the captain the arrival on board of King Neptune.

The captain received the King on the quarterdeck in the presence of the officers and crew and turned over the ship to him.

Neptune introduced his wife, Amphitrite, and the members of his staff, and then he made a short speech, in which he stated that he had never before been on board such a great battleship and that when he first sighted her he did not know whether it was some new American up-to-date sea serpent or a fort adrift upon the seas, as he had always been accustomed to ships with masts and sails—an he had not ordered a floating lighthouse, which he took our military mast to be.

Then he looked around at the crew and remarked with a cynical grin that he saw many strange faces on board,

which caused the poor landlubbers to tremble with fear. He serenely remarked that he did not suppose that more than a dozen landlubbers out of the three hundred on board would be killed as a sacrifice (whereat their knees knocked together with fright) and that his initiation would so harden and toughen them that they would consider Spanish bullets a mere picnic party and they would be able to stand anything hereafter.

Neptune had with him his wife, Amphitrite, his secretary, his judge, his barber, mermaids, a lot of big, burly sea policemen and a number of bears and wolves, all dressed in costumes of seaweed, shells, barnacles and starfishes.

Old Neptune had long white hair and a beard and he looked very much like Santa Claus, but he was dressed in seaweed and salt instead of furs, as the weather here is so warm; and instead of a sleigh and reindeer he travels in a large shell drawn by beautiful sea horses and he goes like the wind. For binocular glasses Neptune had two large empty beer bottles and he said he could see a long distance with them.

Amphitrite also has white hair, about the color of new snow and all through her hair are brilliant crystals of salt.

After Neptune concluded his speech he took his position on the fore and aft bridge with his staff and on the deck below was rigged a big sail filled with good salt water of the most salty kind. The bears and the wolves plunged into this water and were ready for the first victim.

Neptune's secretary had a list of the officers and men and he began with the captain, who appeared before Neptune. The judge then looked up the records and found that the captain had crossed the line before and had duly paid tribute, whereupon Neptune congratulated him and the next officer was called.

None of the midshipmen had crossed the line and they all acknowledged the authority of Neptune and offered tribute and were given certificates with Neptune's seal, like the one I send you.

After they had gone through the list of officers they called the first sailor man on the list of uninitiated and the big policemen brought the trembling victim before the King, giving him a good taste of their clubs on the way.

There the judge made a speech, in which he stated that those who survive this ordeal would be ever after hardy followers of Neptune. He cautioned the men to sweep the Spaniards

from the sea, as every time Neptune had visited a Spanish ship he had been made very sick by the odor of garlic and vile cigarettes. For this insult to royalty he demanded that his subjects hereafter must seek vengeance. He also cautioned his North American subjects against the two most noted products of South America, fleas and yellow dogs, and stated that a thick coating of salt would act as a counter-irritant for sea bites and would make a yellow dog so sea sick that he would not bite a second time.

After his speech he turned to the first victim and in stern, deep voice told him of the grave responsibility he was about to assume in becoming a follower of Neptune, and then he ordered his men to proceed with the ceremony.

The victim was placed on a stool with his back to the sail filled with water. Neptune's barber lathered his face and head with a mixture of flour meal and molasses, using a whitewash brush, and then shaved the poor victim with a large wooden razor, after which the man was dumped over backward into the water on the deck below and there the wolves and bears ducked him and beat him with paddles until he was almost strangled, after which he was thrown out on deck and received his certificate as a Son of Neptune.

Over two hundred men were put through this same ordeal, and those who fought or resisted were clubbed by the policemen and given a double dose.

U. S. S. OREGON.
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By the King.
Downalldittyboxes,
Secretary.

Done at royal court, on the Equator, this 31st day of March, 1898, according to earthly computation.

The policemen went all through the ship searching for the victims and not one land-lubber escaped.

Cheer after cheer went up; as each man was shaved and ducked and Neptune gave additional attention to those whom he called the "freshest of the fresh, who are -y freshy."

It took Neptune until 3 o'clock in the afternoon to initiate all the landlubbers, and he said that he had never before struck such a rich harvest, as the crew was such a large one.

He recognized me as an old friend of his, for you see I have crossed the "line" more than twenty-five times, and in the Pacific, the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, so old Neptune knows me very well and he looks the same as he did when he gave me my certificate, more than thirteen years ago.

I told him about you and he gave me a certificate for you, but said that you would have to pay tribute and get another certificate when you crossed the "line" for the first time. He said he hoped you would become a naval officer like your father.

He made a farewell speech, wished us a pleasant cruise, said we would always be welcome to his domains and then disappeared into the sea. Amphitrite sent her best love to mother and said she would like to send her one of her beautiful salt crystals, but that Neptune would be angry if she should give away the jewels he had given her, so mother must do without the salt crystals.

You must not worry, for the Spaniards cannot harm father's ship and we will soon be together again, either on the Eastern Coast or in San Francisco. Your devoted father,

EDWARD EBERLE SR.

"What in the world are they fighting about, anyway?" asked a young girl in an Atlanta store Saturday morning.

"For liberty, my dear child," replied a companion with an air of superiority.

"Our country must not be insulted by the Italians."

"I thought it was the Spaniards," mildly protested the first speaker.

"Well, they are all the same. It makes no difference who it is we are fighting, it is the principle of the thing we are after."

"Has anybody been shot yet?" asked the first speaker.

"I really didn't read the news clearly this morning," was the reply.

Then they turned their attention to the bargain counter, and the war was totally forgotten.