THE CHARLOTTE NEWS, OCTOBER 27, 1918.

THE FIGHTING FLEET coared to a signal yard and spoke the

THE MIDNIGHT ALARM.

They fied on their appointed course

without confusion, unerringly, separ-

ate parts of one enormous mechanism

barmonious and synchronized. To nav-

roadsteads in broad daylight would

it at night as a matter of course.

(By RALPH D. PAINE)

WHEN THE BATTLESHIPS MOVE | and the freshening wind brought gusts of rain. They passed out as though

The American battleships, eager for feeling their way with a blind man's active service and reluctant to be held dred yards apart, steering close to in reserve, were given the position of rock-bound islands whose merest honor whenever they maneuvered touch would have ripped a battleshij's with the British divisions at sea or hull.

cruised in search of the enemy. This indicates how highly they were regarded by Admiral Beatty. It was no empty compliment. Efficiency was the only test. For their own part, the offifollow into action. He was ready to that the Secretary of the Navy could receive such reports at this:

the "The English command has highest respect for proficiency of the American ships and for the personnel which is regarded as modest, eager to play its part, and well up in its business. The American Admiral enjoys the most cordial relations with the British forces and finds the exchange of ideas and practice most valuable.

It was no small task to send these ships across the sea and keep them fit, by night and day, for emergency orders. They made the passage in the winter, beset by gales of extraordinary violence which smashed boats and deck hamper and flooded the living quarters. Things were put to rights, the crews made their own repairs, and done when they steamed into their Irish harbor.

These vast and complicated structures, filled with men, from twelve to fifteen hundred in a ship, had to adjust themselves to naval conditions and an unfamiliar routine.

At home it had seemed almost impossible that battleships could be kept ready to dash to sea at from two to four hours' notice through month after month, independent of navy yards and docks, but when it had to be done the American navy did it without grumbling. The work was hard, the strain incessant, but the British fleet had endured it for three years and more and showed almost no sympish battleships. toms of staleness or war-weariness. If John Bull could take his medicine posed to grin while he swallowed his ican fighting ships across the sea as parison the plight of a mariner mawas said to shoot most infernally straight. These American ships had gunnery records of their own. Nothing would delight them more than a chance to show what they could do. I was lucky enough to be on board the American flagship when the fleet moved out. It was not a practice cruise, but a night alarm, the real thing. A memorable experience, thisbut immensely difficult to describe with any satisfaction because of the reasonable restrictions of a naval censorship. I trust, however, that it is permitted to say that the earnest anticipation of every man of thousands was to cut the German High Sea Fleet off from its base on the other side of the North Sea and so compel a battle of big ships. The signal came long after the decks had piped down for the night and the watches below were slumbering in their hammocks. Many of these men were undisturbed until later. There was almost no stir within these crowded steel walls, orders spoken here and there, groups of men moving alertly toward their particular business. They were as boyish as the lads of the yachts or destroyers, but the navy had already made them its own. The message puased from lip to lip

submarine warning to the ships in column behind. A gun was fired and a shell splashed near the suspicious object which so closely resembled a periscope. It served as a reminder that the fleet was cruising in perilous waters. The admiral was undisturbed by

this momentary interruption. His ships had fought off submarine attacks before now. It was one of the annoy-Now the big ships do not move ances of the service. He had reason alone. They are escorted as befits their to be in good spirits whenever he gaz-

the mighty squadrons. All these, too stations, hour after hour, and there

On deck, beyond the forward turret, several sailors in charge of a boatswain's mate were toiling to make

als and captains. This trained obedi- reckless chance and had nothing to suppose there was a thousand of them, ence, the flawless co-ordination of cling to when a big sea stamped to get it right. They were war orphans these many thousand men at the across the deck and carried him away or their daddies were serving in prompting of a few words, was pro- with it. He was gone from his com- France. We blew them off to a turkey foundly impressive. The fleet had a rades in an instant, swept off into the dinner, and a moving picture show, soul and a purpose. It was human, not chaos of broken water, blotted out and clothes and shoes, and ten shilso many masses of floating steel, but with no warning.

it had the tenacity of tested metal. The signal of "Man overboard" This midnight alarm was no more swiftly pased from ship to ship, but it ried home in paper bags. It was no than an incident in the routine which was impossible to launch a boat. The the British ships had maintained ever one hope was to throw him a line or a was it worth it? Say, you forgot to be get punished for it somehow," said ice, as the destroyer divisions had since that fateful day of August, 1914, life belt if he drifted past on the crest homesick. ders. Their inflexible vigil had been of him. He had given his life for his kept in lonely waters far to the north, country, on active service. All he had and the crews and the navy. Then a gets under my skin?. It's the little through oppressive winter darkness, to give he freely offered while engagwhere the rough winds seldom cease ed in a hard and dangerous task which and the bleak shores are forlornly he had not hung back. The sacrifice inhospitable. And because they were was as complete as if he had died bethere, whether at anchor or in rest- hind his gun. There was sorrow in his less quest of the enemy, the argosies watch division, for his mates were of merchant vessels under many fond of him, and the loud talk was flags were able to steam in safety hushed when they gathered for coffee

over oceans ten thousand miles dis- and hash. One of the British ships towed a kite tant. The rich Atlantic ports of the United States were guarded against balloon which had been sent up before attack by this tireless, unconquera- leaving the harbor. Then the gale ble fleet, and their millions of people swept down and in became impossible went about their business or made to reel in the great gas bag without ready for war behind the guns of Brit- wrecking it and drowing the observer. He was therefore condemned to sway It was the courteous thing to do by aloft in his basket, and there he stay-

-to send Amer- ed for twenty hours on end. By com-

ing money, because you can't spend a shilling, and your moral conduct is a hundred per cent because there are no temptations whatever. It's all to the good as the proper place to keep the German ships from breaking out, but I can't hand it anything else."

"And yet the men are fit and cheerful." I ventured.

"They were never healthier, taking the run of them. They tell me that the British ships have averaged less than one per cent of men on the sick list. stately rank and station, and with ed astern and watched those other That's going some. Cheerful? We're fied that Beatty was a proper man to craft that screen, scout and protect by they maintained their intervals and kept smart and clean are not clutterwere under way at the stroke of the was no reason to fear the critical eyes had one star entertainment, a bull'shour, as if a master mind had pressed of the British admirals who looked on eye. It was at Christmas and we were aggressive offensive. It was gratifying They fiel on their appointed course abies

about it? "Well, there was Christmas trees igate this fleet through the cramped things secure. Life-lines had been rig- and fake fireplaces all over the ships, ged to safeguard the men when the and socks hung up for dear old Santa have been considered a handsome bow of the ship went roaring under Claus to slide down through a ventilafeat in time of peace. In war they did and she shook herself clear of the tor. And the admiral pulled off his water that streamed aft. One of these favorite stunt which was to invite a Whither they were bound and why bave young bluejackets was not quite million or so poor kids aboard and -this was known only to their admir- vigilant enough or perhaps he took a give them a party. Counting noses, I

lings in cash per kid, and what they couldn't eat without busting they cartrouble at all to raise the funds. And

ter over one eye covered a fresh "The kids sung Christmas songs

and cheered the flag and the Admiral gang of minstrels came over in boats mites of babies on passenger ships from some British ships and serenaded us and we gave them a band concert, and when we turned in that night it didn't seem such a bum Christmas after all."

"It's a marvel what the babies can Ruthless submarine warfare has not stand," reflectively spoke the englblockaded the British Isles nor has it "Do you know the mate of the daunted British merchant seamen. neer. Alnwick Castle? An old shipmate of Hamburg harbor is dead and desolate, mine. He told me the yarn when he but London river is still a crowded came home. He had thirty-one people road of empire, the turbid thoroughin his boat after she was torpedoed, fare of a seaport great and ancient. for himself. and they were three hundred and Because the fairway is so narrow and twenty miles from land. The weather sense of movement, of an incessant was so heavy that he lost touch with coming and going, is enhanced. All It was frightfully rough, a sea anday long spars and funnels are slid-The chef of battered leather wallet he extracted a lence. there was always the bright hope of a fight, not in chase of tin sardines disclosed but it was and dragged the balloon with it was and dra reason for their employment has not steamed into the teeth of the gale der way shove through the press, and store-keeper went mad and had to be man of the British Seamen's Union, side the door before the men beg of submarines, but with the turret geen publicly disclosed, but it was and dragged the balloon with it. High a din of whistles, imploring, warning, lashed to a thwart. He died soon af-guns against a German fleet which for circulation in the cabins and fore- to sing "The Watch on the Rhind not because the Grand Fleet had sui-fered wastage or dulled its fighting like an apple on a twig. Beneath it winches derricks and the creak a whine of running gear which of all "Another night and squalls and sleet, and an able seaman died. All uments are more appealing than the of some of the interned Germans so formuable on blue water as she about fige a game of clack the willy. The palpitant industry of the river hands were suffering agonies from impassioned denunciations of orators, came so intolerable that it was impossioned denunciations of orators, came so intolerable that it was impossioned denunciations of orators. sounds is most suggestive of the sea. to shift the ratio of mobilized sea and fro, sometimes trailing horizon- is quiet only when fog smothers it in thirst and most of them were delir- and they drive home, like white hot ious. Next to go was a fireman who rivets in a keel plate, the pledge der Union auspices, and its care a Coastwise and offshore the traffic was found dead in the bottom of the which these seamen have swornmoves unhesitatingly, regardless of boat at daylight, and then the pantry "No peace until the sea is free from mine and torpedo, waiting only for boy curled up and passed away. The Hun outrages." Their union has dethe signal from the convoy of the ad- mate tried to keep them from drink- clared a boycott on German ships, ness from the melancholy expanse of ket with fingers, toes, and teeth. You miralty assurance that the channel is ing sat water, but he was standing sailors, and cargoes for a term of swept. Even the Thames barges auda- watch and watch at the tiller and five years after peace shall be deciously cross the channel and carry there was a limit. They hoisted sail clared. The reasons thereof are fairly been written in letters of blood.

sergeant of marines. "It seems further chored training ships, obsolete three- very dotty tried three times to jump ed his spectacles athwart a fleshy sergeant of marines. It seems further choice with painted ports, brought oveerboard and at last succeeded. The nose and pointed to the title of his keeping watch and ward.

channels to the northward, the deepto join their convoys at the Downs, stately rank and station, and they were nearly lost in the busy to grouch. Ships that then vanishing hull down and under breakers. All hands were too weak them go the flocks of destroyers, the splendid ships of his as they crashed for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that had there is a cleared for action all the time and to follow the nather that the time and the follow the nather that the time and the follow the nather that the time and the follow the nather the time and the follow the time and the follow the nather tis a cleare them go the nocks of destroyers, the spiendid sings of his as they clashed are cleared for action all the time and to follow the paths that lead them to to row or help themselves, but two submarines, the cruisers, and other through the towering seas. Faultless are cleared for action all the havens of the charted accord to be the charted accord all the havens of the charted oceans. fishing boats came out and towed The British Seamen's and Firemen at Gravesend, which some one else tered the villagers and they lifted the were members of the correspondent has compactly described as "all tea people out of the boat. The linen. German union should be interned anda shrimps, oilskins, sea-boots and keeper died as he was being carried mooring-buoys sheered and twisted gone mad refused to leave the boat. the British Government quickly con in the strong tide, and every vessel They had to be dragged out. The vil- sented in this evidence of our frate.

the Royal Navy, and what not. The women and the baby---causeway held an idling population of bilots, fishermen, bluejackets, and interrupted as one man. As though time it had about a thousand inmate merchant sailors ready with expert it were a personal affront, the oldest They had wooden huts to sleep in and criticism of the manoeuvers of the captain thumped the table and protugs, steamers, and sailing craft. tested:

The tavern had a snug little parlor with a coal grate. Three master mariners, a mate, and an engineer had cursed polite of us to listen to you cinema shows, and all kinds of must cast anchor in this comfortable refuge at all. Do you always spin a yarn while an easterly wind drove the rain against the small-paned windows. They talked nothing but the war and their own trade, of course. Two of them had been recently in torpedoed ships and were on waiting orders. "It seems as though the Huns 'ud

the tall captain. A long strip of plas-

wound. "Do you want to know what wearing tiny little 'specially carried for them. To see 'em toddling around this way all through the war-zone is about as much as a man can stand.

from anywhere than any piece I ever dechards and plate of his others were too feeble to pull him in pamphlet, "The Way of the Briton but the sole of my foot in. What with to mind the exploits of Rodney, Blake, others were too feeble to pull him in pamphlet, "The Way of the Briton no towns at all and the natives few and Cloudesley Shovel. On the lawn again. The last tot of fresh water and the Way of the Hun." He offer. no towns at all and the natives lew of the navy yard at Chatham Reach was served out,-a mouthful apiece, ed no comment, but cleared his throat and far between, it is excellent for sav- of the navy yard at Chatham Reach was served out,-a mouthful apiece, ed no comment, but cleared his throat stood an old wooden figurehead of -and then they tried to collect rain and began to read Nelson overlooking the bit of sloping water, but all the clothing and canvas voice. The others paid shore from which the Victory was was so saturated with salt that what heed, gravely gazing at his bald head launched. The red lightship which little they caught was undrinkable. or into the coal fire: warns mariners off the Nore sands They licked the oars, the seats, the marks a stretch of water reminiscent gunwales in a frantiic effort to gather of mutinies, of sea-fights, of fleets rain drops, but the flying spray in- before the war began

At the Nore the ships of London empty water-breaker and licked the of the Seamen's Union were sorry f River cease to trail in column and inside which was still damp. The the Germans because they could turn to go their several ways, the deck-boy, who had been slowly sink- longer get employment on our shir little coastwise craft through the ing, died very quietly in the night. "They sighted land after being with those whom our Government fe water ships steering east and south adrift a week. The mast was carried it necessary to intern away and they were nearly lost in the

It was cheering to linger in a tavern them into Carino. The priest mus- Union begged that those Germans m bloaters." Off the wharves the red ashore and two of the crew who had of the Union, and greatly to its credit

passing had to slow down for visits lage was tremendously kind and the from the customs, the health officers, wives paid every attention to the two The audience in the tavern parlor

sternforemost, young man?" "Of course there was a baby," anwas four and half months old. The polite and fine imprisonment whit mother could nurse it, I fancy, but

many hearty men died?' "The men divided their whack of known.

food and water with her," said the engineer, as a fact to be taken for granted. "And did this plucky little German "brethren" beggar of an infant pick up again?" "No, it turned up its little toes six A concert had been life-preservers days later. The men hung about and demanded bulletins every few min- members of the utes. They took it to heart. Some of dreadful news came, I and all them wept, I believe. And those who other members of the committee were strong enough went to the fun-

> eral service." "I wish you hadn't told it," blurted the tall captain with the plastered such a celebration, and I face. He brushed a hand across his camp. The Germans were called eyes. He was a soft-hearted man. gether and I explained to them in Having been with dead men in an we would postpone the concert f open boat he could picture the scenes the time out of respect to the fin

MORE HUN ATROCITIES.

in a rumbling attentive There was no bad feeling between the British and German seafaring man

terfered. At last they smashed the break of the war we British member and more especially we sympathize

With regard to this and the sympathy came to an end I car tell you an interesting a camp which was under the contra nal feeling.

So in a lovely district near North. ampton a splendid place for the in terned men was established. four good meals a day. Their only guards were fourteen policemen who

"Why the devil didn't you mention | were even allowed actually to enter the women and the baby? It was the camp. They had concert half cal entertainments. They had bottled beer three times a week, and each man was given four ounces of toha swered the mate, quite unruffled. "It | co every seven days. It was might they were called upon to endurehow did she manage to live while so imprisonment fat more comfortable than any freedom they

We began to see a great light wit regard to the real psychology of a lowing the sinking of the Lusian amusement of the that this moment. dred of our fellow dore to death, was not the time hundred of our fellow Union member

who had perished. There were about a thousand Ge There was one pudgy master mari- mans in the hall listening to me, a ner who had remained silent. From a when I stopped there was dead

and was repeated in low tones. "Under way at three o'clock-the whole orks, Bill. Get that? Do you think we'll get a crack at those Dutch burglars this time?"

"You never can tell. This isn't the first hurry-call. The same old story, maybe. But if there's anything doing, we'll be there, old-timer. Say, if the folks at home could see us now!"

"Well, sometimes I think I'd rather be in jail than cooped up here at the jumping-off place with nowhere to go, but you can't get real sore on it as long as we go surgin' out like this every now and then.'

"It's busy bunch of packets all right. These old battle-wagins sure do roll up mileage in a month.'

At two o'clock in the morning l drifted into the Admiral's quarters and found him sitting at his desk, a burly figure is hooded waterproof clothes. He looked like a deep-water sailor, complexion burned brick-red by incesant winter gales, a face broad, jovial, massive, while his voice rolled strong and resonant from a chest as thick as a barrel. He was drinking coffee, smoking hot, and appeared to have nothing else to do. To play the part, as a landsman might fancy it, he should have been pacing the floor, hands locked behind him, frowningly absorbed in his weighty responsibili-

ties His work had been done. The ships were prepared to move, to go into action. This was why he sat at the desk and awaited the word to climb to the bridge. There was his yarn of the sacred calabash which had been left

edge during the long war. In terms hung the tiny basket whose motions of battle strength, England was never were wild and terrific. It was snapped power which is as three to two tally and then swinging off to describe a gray blanket.

against her. A glimpse of this seapower was dra- server was invisible. It was to be inmatically revealed when a dawn, som- ferred that he was busily engaged in bre and angry, slowly drove the dark- sticking fast to the inside of the baswater. The wind had risen rapidly. expected to see satastrophe overtake It was a shouting gale which tore the him, that the balloon would collapse shallow lepths into foam-streaked or break free and go rocketing off in cargoes to Boulogne and Dunkirk, pass when they could, but had no stars to combers huge an dviolent. The con- the mist, or that this unfortunate cap- ing within sight of the German bases steer by. fused fury of the sea was astonishing. | tive would be shot out of his basket on the Belgian coast. Hoisting a red This sudden gale which blew with and tumble into the sea. Doubtless he mainsail, jibs, topsail, and j'gger, the a velocity of seventy miles an hour expressed his emotions by telephone would have flattened the North At- to his shipmates who could no more hulk of a canal boat, rowed and pushlantic and then rolled it up in long, than crane thei rnecks and look on.

swinging surges. Here it tumbled the sea this way and that so that a ship can navy gazed with sympathetic con- along with lee deck awash or working was assaulted with unexpected blows cern and shook his head as he obsorv- to windward on the flood of the tide. and could find no respite. ed:

Rain, spray, and mist were whirled along together. The horizon seemed Wind cold enough to freeze your gizno more than a mile away. From the zard, and he can't help being seasick. bridge of a battleship one conjectured Nobody could. I shall never complain bargee. His orders rang out crisply, he what would happen should a Germanu about anything-no, never again. And strides the bit of a quarter-deck with fleet loom out of this rain and spin- the kite balloon drift, at pointblank range.

from me," said a quartermaster with ought to stand here and look at that!" his glasses at his eyes. "The lads that, Only the commander-in-chief knew

their own way. Wow! With this rotten small, were spread out over this region visibility? Fairly bumping into each of the sea as a fleet. The mist concealother? Excuse me! Would there be ed many of them, and their columns

der? Salvos of big guns at two or vision. Other units might have moved three thousand yards? Well, it may out from their several bases to meet break that way some day. You can't at the appointed rendezvous somepick your weather in this game."

Off to port and starboard moved in were all mysteriously in touch with ships. Dead ahead was the majestic the course assigned them. super-dreadnought which a British ad-

showed their hooded snouts. Rolling the Grand Fleet was unavailing. Men moved with care lest they tobog- Fleet was well aware.

gan across the deck and break a leg. Water swashed in when the gunports ing a road on an island nlear by and rolled under and barelegged bluejack- several hundred American marines eigh and Martin Frobisher were bring. ets were bailing the floors with buck- went ashore from their ships, next ing home just such cargoes as these ets. It was damp, gloomy, dismal be- day, to help them. They turned to with found in new, mysterious lands or low, with the hatches battened, but a will, for this navy game was a part- looted with clash of boarding pike and the ship had bucked through heavier nership and it was not the proper smoke of cannonade from the gilded

another arc as startling. The lone ob-Thames barge is no longer a clumsy ed and scraped among others of her A junior watch officer of the Ameri- kind, but a weatherly vessel snoring Give her sea room and a bright look-

"That bird is distinctly out of fuck

tar, and his crew of one or two lumpish friends of mine want to be transferred "A short and merry scrap, take it to the kite balloon service! They lads moves at the trot.

got in the first punch would have it all how many war vessels, great and anybody left to tell about it. I won- moved for miles beyond the field of where in these clouded waters. They

dim perspective other lines of battle- one another, unhesitatingly following For twelve hours they held their miral had chosen for his flagship. The way, driving the wind and sea at a

seas were leaping over her. They pour- standard speed of twelve knots, and ed across her decks as a tide swirls then reluctantly they turned and or lower New York. over a reef. They reared and broke stered homeward. The weather had in white cascades about her turrets "spoiled the show." Again the enemy from which the great guns grimly had eluded them and the challenge of ponderously, she exposed almost hait | In the pitchy darkness of the second her hull then plunged into it with night the great ships picked up their bows clean under. Seas that will toss | landfills and filed in through the nara thirty-thousand-ton battleship about row firth where the tide boiled in in this fashion are indurably rough whirlpools and the sound of breakers Our own ship was making no better was clamorous to starboard and to weather of it. The motion was not as port. They dropped anchor or found erratic as that of a destroyer, but their mooring-buoys, but not to rest this great citadel of a vessel was by inactive. The fire-room watches were no manner of means comfortable to keeping steam in the boilers and, as live in. Meals at the table in ward- always, the fleet was preparing to seek room or admiral's cabin were out of the sea if another alarm should call the question. Chairs were lashed fast. to action. Of this the German High Sea The British bluejackets were build-

"A cattleman who had been acting

ber language of the sea. These doc- cheers. Soon after this the condu control were handed over to the G ernment

Since then, as the Germans continued their murderous campa against seamen of all nations, sin ships without warning, I have sen communication to the Berlin he obvious and the provocations have quarters of the International Fede tion. There a committee, consist

The grizzled master mariner cock- of four important labor men, was a



