

A SEAMAN IS BORN

The grey silence of the still foggy morning was shattered by the shrill blast of a destroyer's siren. The Captain had received orders to slip and proceed immediately to Latitude 48° 20' N. Longitude 63° 28' W. to investigate a distress signal.

As the ship made her way out the harbor a solitary figure stood by the after funnel. He was Ordinary Seaman Nick Doran, embarking on his maiden cruise. This was the day he had dreamed of all his life. The powerful throb of the steam turbines, the gentle roll and pitch of the ship as she sliced through the water gave him the impression that she had cast off her inanimate characteristics and assumed a life peculiar to her alone.

The elation in the lad's heart was unprecedented. The yarns of the Able Seamen were all malarkey. Imagine a man getting sick aboard such a large ship. How could the water toss her around? The speed of her advance soon replaced the familiar sight of land with the white capped breakers of the Atlantic. The mountainous waves were taking their toll on the ship. Nick had, as many others before him, underestimated the strength of this element. The ship tossed incessantly. To remain upright was an acrobatic feat. A dull ache developed in his head, a squeamish feeling in his stomach. The odours from the galley and funnels nauseated him. When the ship went up on a wave there was an indifferent effect, but when she came down his stomach retained the higher altitude. These sensations precipitated into what is commonly known as seasickness. He rushed to the ship's side to relieve his complaining stomach. As he watched the swirling waters envelop his breakfast, the truth of the yarns became apparent. The Recruiting Poster had said, "It's a man's life." At this point he was willing to surrender all claims to manhood, or even to life itself.

The men didn't help matters much. Having had similar experiences themselves and survived, they were not overly sympathetic. Instead they grinned and went on with their duties. Oh! How he would like to punch their grinning faces, but he couldn't muster enough strength to insult them.

A gentle but firm reminder from the Boatswain's Mate told him there was work to be done. This reminder he chose to ignore; instead he contemplated the moving water. The never ending formations of divers patterns fascinated him. The awful feeling was superseded by his new pastime. He was snapped back to reality by the hubub of the crew. The distressed vessel had been sighted and the destroyer was closing her rapidly. Not wishing to risk a collision in this heavy sea the Captain stopped the ship a short distance from the stricken vessel.

The hurried, but orderly, preparation for rescue operations were under way. Doran gathered his reserves and joined the busy men. The whaler and both motor cutters were cleared for lowering. By some ironic twist of fate Nick found himself in the whaler, not an enviable position because pulling a whaler in a heavy sea is not an easy task.

The First Lieutenant was in charge of lowering the whaler. His orders were clear and crisp: "Turns for lowering," two seamen took the extra turns of the falls off the cleats; "Lower Away", they allowed the ropes to pass through their hands; "Avast Lowering", they quickly made the extra turns around the cleats and stood by. The boat was only a few feet from the water. "Out Pins", was the next order. It was answered from the boat "Forward Pin Out, Sir" and "After Pin Out, Sir". "Slip", yelled the First Lieutenant and the boat dropped on the crest of a wave. Now the Coxswain was in command, "Bear off the boat"; "Ship your oars"; "Oars"; "Give way together". The whaler slowly pulled away from the mother ship.

This was not exactly a new experience for Doran. He had been instructed in boat pulling during his basic training. The words of his instructor came back to him, "Keep your eyes in the boat; Watch the man in front of you; Pull with your back and legs, not with your arms." He pulled instinctively for what seemed hours, then he heard the Coxswain yell "Oars"—the order to stop pulling at last. For the first time he raised his eyes to see what progress they had made. The boat was almost alongside a small tanker which had sprung a leak and was sinking heavily by the bow. This means the transfer of the crew which in turn meant more boat-pulling, but he was willing and able. This was real life drama and he was playing a role in it.

The completion of the transfer found a very tired crew, but the Old Man's speech was more than a recompense for the energy spent. With a wardroom accent he said, "It is a great honor and privilege, indeed, to serve with such men, men, who, in an emergency are equal to the challenge. The seamanship displayed today was of the highest calibre. I am intensely proud of each one of you—Congratulations on a job well done! ! He turned and disappeared into the after canopy.

The words of the Captain had a strange effect on Doran. His stomach felt weak, his chest congested, a lump formed in his throat and tears filled his eyes. Suddenly he realized he was now a seaman. He brushed the offending tears from his eyes and stifled the sobs in their infancy. This would be a day he would never forget—He would remember it as the day he overcame seasickness, but principally as the day he became a real seaman. With the initiation over he began to acquire a sense of pride in his profession. He was now one of the Ship's Company and enjoyed the respect of his mates who now recognized him as one of their kind. While he was cleaning up in anticipation of shore leave that evening he reflected, "The Navy is a good life—a man's life."

—ERNEST LARKIN '55

THE SADHU

Bathed in crimson rays of the new-born sun,
A Sadhu (i) sits in meditation yoga-moved
To muse his long-due liberation,—for
Erring man, like the rising sun reincarnate,
Must suffer many births for past evil done.

"O Eternal Sun! Thou god of Zoroaster!
Elemental sign yet of nature divine,
Giver of life and motion, preserver of all!
Would as in thy radiance bathed
I would be one with thee! Then no more
Should I evolve in trappings of this mortal cumber.
Thou the Dispeller of Darkness, thou the Supreme
Guru,
Teach me by way of renunciation
Brahman to attain!"

Oblivious to the confusing maze about and
Atman-minded, this sentinel of early dawn,
Many hours in stiff meditative pose,