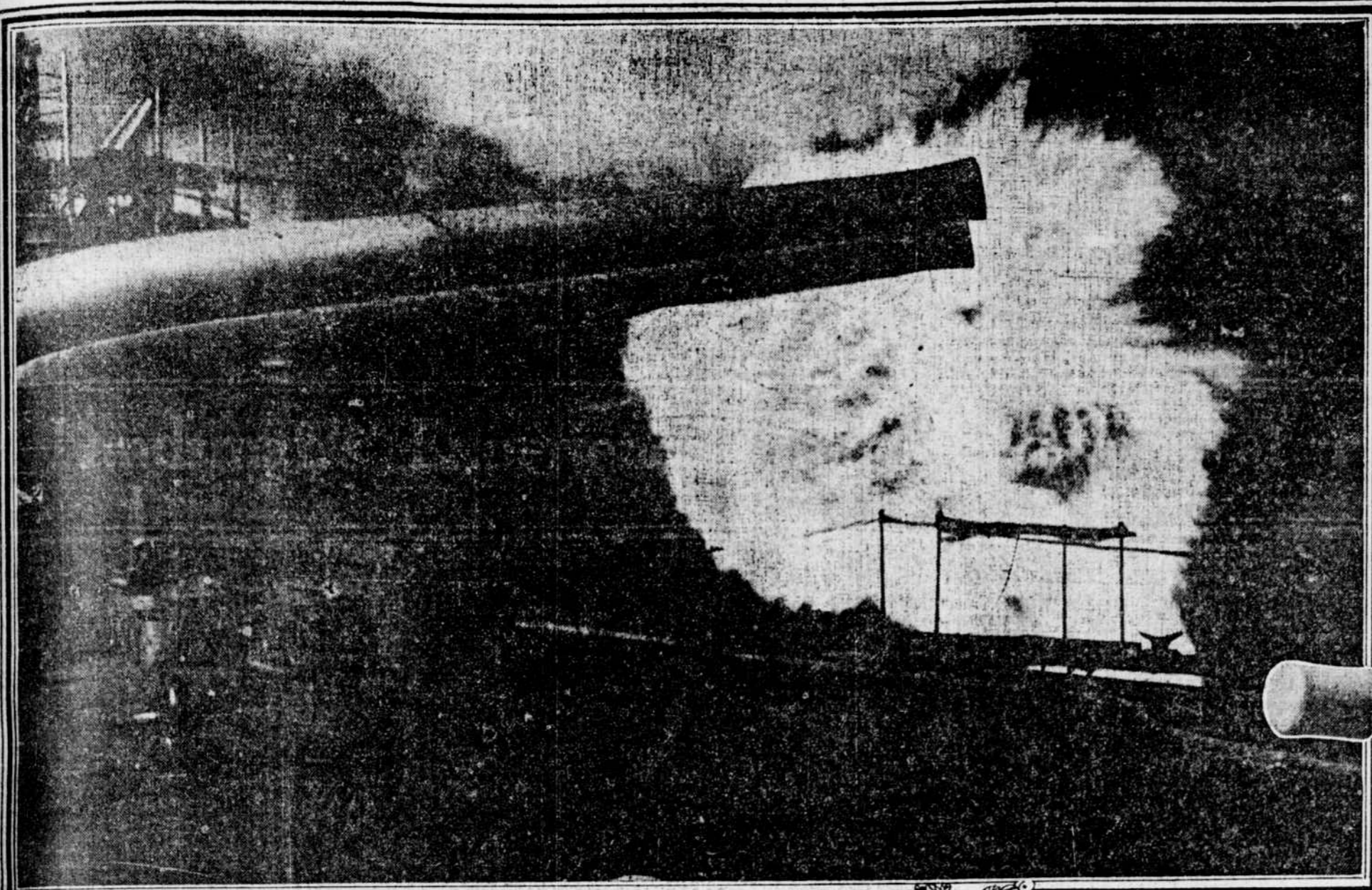


# A Landsman's Experiences and Sensations at Fleet's Target Practice



NIGHT FIRING OF 12" GUNS

**It Proves a Bit Terrifying and Yet Wholly Enjoyable To Be at Sea with the Great Forces Designed for the Protection of This Country and to See and Hear Them Unloosed, Even if Only in Mock Warfare.**

equipped department store. Their methods and systems of checking an inventory of these supplies could be used as models by the student of scientific management. There is absolutely no lost motion.

**A MACHINE-MADE ATMOSPHERE.**  
The magazines, way below decks, are examples of cleanliness and order that would make the most meticulous housewife envious. The atmosphere of these beautifully arranged rooms containing thousands of pounds of explosives is controlled by mechanical devices so perfectly constructed that the temperature and humidity at no time vary more than a fractional degree from the standard established by experts as being ideal.

On the way to the torpedo room one experiences rather queer sensations, having been informed of the eccentricities of the peculiarly diabolical instruments of warfare known as torpedoes. The small crew of five or six men who operate the torpedo tubes is drilling in anticipation of the torpedo firing that will be included in the ship's target practice. The facility with which these huge capsules of steel, containing a mechanism more delicate than that of a watch, are handled by the men trained for the job is amazing. Mr. Kipling could immortalize this torpedo room and make its exceedingly interesting bits of machinery converse in an astonishing dialogue.

Observing the ease with which the small travelling crane attached to the deck forming the roof of this room will pick up a torpedo weighing several tons and with unerring accuracy place it in its proper position in the tube from which it is to be fired, is nothing less than thrilling. To add to the difficulty, each of these torpedoes has been covered with a very generous coating of vaseline oil and other lubricants known as "slush," in order to protect it from the salt water through which it has to travel. This is necessary, as each of these instruments has cost the government between \$7,000 and \$8,000, and must be recovered after practice firing in as good and usable shape as the severe conditions to which they have been subjected will permit.

On the way up to the wardroom, again passing through the living spaces and sleeping quarters of the crew, the ef-

sanitary conditions obtaining here would make the proprietors of some of our most fashionable hotels blush with shame.

A quiet afternoon permits one to learn many interesting little details about the customs and expressions current in the navy. For instance, if a poker chip has been dropped from the table and you are looking for it (incidentally, you will need it) you should say that it is on the deck, not on the floor. Never throw anything over the side of a ship, and do not under any circumstance lean on the rail, which on this trip caused the writer no embarrassment, as the rail, or ropes representing it, had been removed when the ship was cleared for action.

If you should hear a noise from the bridge sounding like a fight between two bull terriers and an elevated railroad guard do not report to the first officer you meet that some one is being killed, for it is only the bosun's mate giving what he intends to be an order which seems to be of no importance to any one but himself. For artistically combining every dissonant sound the human ear has ever had to suffer from the average bosun's mate in the navy can without reservation be called efficient, with every letter in the word in capitals.

**NOW THE BIG TURRET GUNS.**  
After a few more drills by the turret crew, most of which have been sought by the men of the crew, as the officers seem quite satisfied with the efficiency already achieved from the drilling of the last six months, the ship is ready for the big event of the practice—the firing of the 12-inch turret guns. This is done during the day. At general quarters the day before the order compelling every man aboard ship to bathe and don fresh underclothing had been read, and soon after daybreak the anchorage is left and the division puts to sea.

The procedure and conditions in firing the big guns are practically the same as those obtaining in the firing of the 5-inch guns. The targets for day firing measure 21 by 12 feet, those used at night having been 15 by 12 feet. The repair parties in the small boats having been sent to the tug that is to tow them, and the ship towing the target having laid its course in accordance with orders from the flagship, the fleet of targets and ships gets under way, and a tenseness of feeling and interest immediately asserts itself in every department, for there is keen rivalry of the most wholesome sort between the crews of the different ships in a division in their efforts to excel in marksmanship.

Steaming in a perfectly straight line and maintaining the required distance



DAMAGED PRACTICE HEAD OF TORPEDO BEING INSPECTED BY LT. COMMANDER MADISON, ORDINANCE OFFICER

speed, we observe the Delaware astern of us, sheering from her course to enter the range. Every one is hoping that the Delaware will equal her splendid record in previous practices, for then, if our ship succeeds in doing better, something really worth while will have been accomplished. This sportsmanlike spirit of officers and crew adds to our pleasure.



INTERIOR OF TURRET SHOWING OPEN BREECH OF 12 IN. GUN

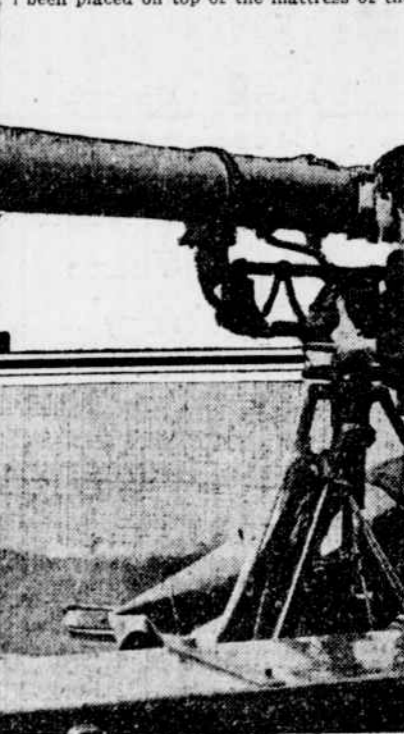
pass over reluctantly the picturesque features of a dreadnought in action, as viewed from another ship, and try to busy ourselves with other matters, awaiting the interesting moment when we shall begin firing. The time is approaching rapidly now, for we learn from the reports of the men reading the compass and range finder (which are now quite comprehensible, after our several days' experience) that we will soon enter the range.

The crews of the guns to fire on the first run are in their position, and one can almost feel the determined state of mind of every member of the human

and you notice that the nausea created by the seeming blow from the first blast is decreased, though you still have difficulty in keeping your binoculars from gyrating between your eyes and your mouth. Instinctively, you have acquired a more perfect muscular control of your body, and the terrifying, unpleasant effect is gradually lessened.

### TARGETS HAVE SUFFERED.

The firing having ceased and the ship having moved off the range, we note with the aid of binoculars that the two targets fired at are nearly shot to pieces. One turret has scored six hits in six shots, and the other surely five, and possibly six. Considering that the interval of time between the shots is figured in seconds only, the results of this firing seem incredible, but demonstrate conclusively that one superdreadnought of the Florida type could have successfully bottled up Cervera's fleet in Santiago and leisurely have sunk each or any of the Spanish ships that may have attempted to escape.



THE LARGEST RANGE FINDER IN THE NAVY

berth in each officer's room and all air ports have been closed. Subsequent events prove that the precautions are necessary.

It is suggested that during the next run we observe the firing from the main-top, meaning (if the landsman will permit the explanation) the top platform of the after basketlike steel mast. Reaching this altitude of approximately 125 feet



FIRING A 5" GUN ABOARD U.S.S. FLORIDA

machine from the men in the lower handling room, where the ammunition is placed on the electric hoists, to the gun pointer, with his eyes fastened to the rubber hood of his sight. We take up a position on the conning tower, immediately abaft the forward turret, the guns of which are to fire first, having taken the precaution to place a fluffy bit of cotton lightly in the ear. We conclude that not having been cautioned to stand on tiptoe, with mouth open, which seems in uninform circles to be considered necessary, there naturally is no efficacy in this precaution. Accordingly, we concentrate our attention on bracing ourselves on our feet as firmly as possible. At last the blast of the whistle, which has been preceded at a three-minute interval by officer's call on the trumpet, indicates that we are on the range.

### HEAVEN AND EARTH SHATTERED

A deathlike silence seems to pervade the whole ship. After a period measured only by fractional seconds—though it seems interminable—heaven and earth seem to be rent asunder by the blast of the two guns in the turret. The bewildering impressions created by this terrifying blast leave you dazed. You had hoped to follow those first two shots with your binoculars, but you become more occupied in trying to realize just where you are, and before arriving at any definite conclusions as to this the blast is repeated and two more shells are speeding on their way.

You feel as if some one with great blinding power has struck you a violent blow in the pit of the stomach with a heavily padded glove. This but adds to your bewilderment, and the psychological effect of the blast begins to assert itself. You feel dimly, grovelling, and have a desire to crawl on your hands and knees to your berth and there give up the hope of ever being able properly to comprehend this energy suddenly released and become terrible. After the third repetition of this blast from the guns, a momentary respite before the next turret is fired gives you an opportunity, of which you are sorely in need, to pull yourself together.

The firing of the second turret begins,

superstructure of the target raft. The damage done to the target by the flying splinters is almost unbelievable. The screen, made of heavy canvas, is torn to ribbons, and one then realizes why all wooden superstructure or top hamper is removed from a ship when she is cleared for action.

### A VICIOUS FLAMING TORCH.

One attempts to observe the muzzle of the gun as it is fired, and, though not exactly unsuccessful, the eye seems to be unable to watch the blast at its inception. The discharge itself resembles a vicious yellow, flaming torch of great dimensions, immediately supplanted by a balloon-like cloud of sickly, greenish-yellow gas which somewhat resembles smoke, but is immediately dissipated. Continuing to watch the muzzle of the gun, a stream of fire, more nearly resembling blazing liquid, is seen to be discharged a few seconds after the gun is fired. This is the burning gas that is ejected from the gun by the blast of compressed air automatically released when the breech of the gun is opened to reload. Since instituting this device flarebacks, as they are commonly called (meaning the premature explosion of powder in the gun while in the process of loading), have been practically eliminated as probable accidents.

Our attention is attracted by a ward room chair floating past the side of the ship. We learn upon descending to the deck that the chair observed from the main top had been thrown overboard



THE LARGEST RANGE FINDER IN THE NAVY

through the gun port in the ward room by the concussion of the guns in one of the forward turrets. Considering that the chair weighed between twelve and fifteen pounds, one may get a vague idea of the unsuspected influence on movable objects exercised by the concussion incident to the blast of one of these guns.

### THE FLORIDA'S GOOD RECORD.

The firing is over and we learn that our ship has done admirably. The final figures and percentages will not be ready for publication for several months, for the umpires have to make their report to the Navy Department and many considerations become a part of the problem of determining the exact percentage of efficiency in gun fire of each ship.

After the tense hours of suppressed excitement and hitherto unknown sensations, we are pleased to seek the comfort of our hospitable stateroom, there to meditate perhaps for a few moments on the revelations of the day. In retrospect our sensations lose none of their thrilling qualities.

We begin to realize that the unpleasant necessity of leaving the ship to be put ashore is rapidly drawing near. The hospitality of which we have been the recipient during the last week has wedded us to the navy, its officers and its men. We regret to leave them. From the moment we stepped aboard and were greeted with a welcoming smile and hearty handshake by Commander Sypher, the executive officer of the ship, we have been enjoying hospitality that could not be surpassed. And it is with great regret that we must bid farewell to the ward room mess.

### THE KINDLY HOSPITALITY.

It is difficult to acknowledge, either individually or collectively, the many courtesies extended to us by Captain Haries, of the marine corps, who made us at home in his quarters, and the ship's surgeon, Dr. Elliott, who is as gracious as he is handsome; Paymaster Sandford, who is always willing to interrupt his never ending activities to offer a bit of information; Lieutenant Norris, chief engineer, who explains in such an understandable way the mysteries of his department; Lieutenant Evans, who is an expert in cordiality as he proved himself to be in spotting; Fisk, whose ability to steer one through the mazes of departmental red tape proved an invaluable assistance. In such limited space the innumerable and never ending courtesies extended by every officer with whom we were shipmates? For it would mean the repeating of the entire roster of ship's officers and an individual acknowledgment to each for their courtesies, difficult to describe, but never to be forgotten.

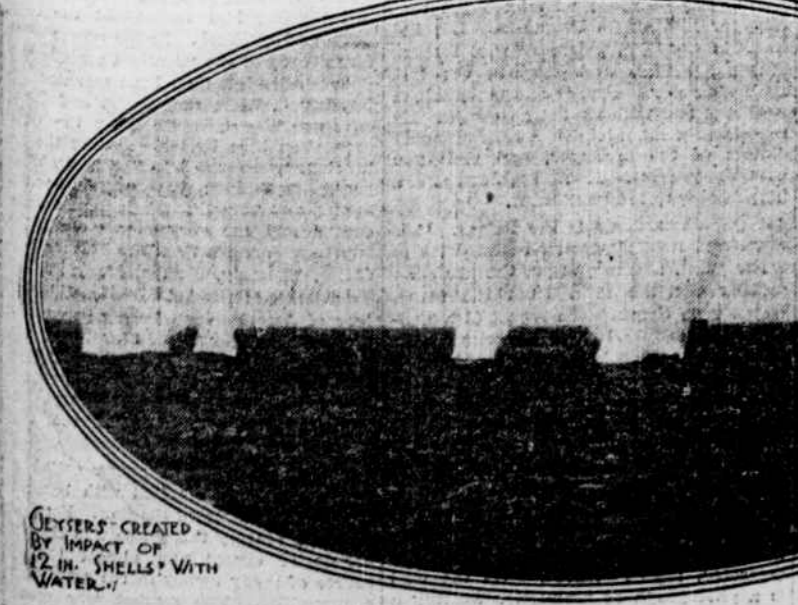
Our boat is alongside. We start on our homeward trip fairly bubbling over with enthusiasm, pride and love of country. As our floating home of the last week with its pleasant memories drops behind the horizon we can in our fancy see in relief against the sky the outlines of our ship dissolve into the three words which may be justly termed the keynote of success of our present day navy; and of which the United States ship Florida is an unsurpassed example—ENTHUSIASM, EFFORT, EFFICIENCY.

### THE CUT.

Lord Grey de Ruthyn, who is a simple rancher at Roundup, Musselshell County, Mont., is so enamored of Western life that it is doubtful if he will ever return to claim his proud and ancient title "Travelling in Montana," said a New York editor, "I met Lord Grey de Ruthyn when he was Cecil Clifton. He expressed then a great scorn for your aristocrat or snob."

"Talking about aristocrats snob over a pipe and glass in Musselshell, the future Lord Grey de Ruthyn gave a good laugh and said:

"Why, the English aristocrat is so ridiculously exclusive that, in shaving, he will often cut himself."



HELLERS CREATED BY IMPACT OF 12 IN. SHELLS WITH WATER

iciency of arrangement and inspection is emphasized by the scrupulous cleanliness. The ship's galleys, containing burnished pots and pans, are irresistibly fascinating and inspiring. The cleanliness and

from foremast to foremast of each ship with mathematical nicety, the division presents a thrilling topic for yet another story which cannot be touched upon here. Approaching the range at standard

The booming of the Delaware's guns indicates that the firing has commenced. Viewed from our ship, this is a most interesting proceeding, but we are more keenly interested in what we shall do, and