

CHAPTER XIITHE SLUMP !

Soon after I arrived home from Bombay my friend, Dick Daniel, rang me up and said he had shown an article I had written to Cecil Nottey, the advertising manager of Harrods, who said he would like to meet me. I went to his office and as a result was offered a job as a copywriter in the advertising department of the store. I had, of course, reported to the P & O Head Office and while there Mr Acton said that a number of other ships were being laid up or sold. In any case the fleet had been reduced during the time of my service from something like sixty vessels to little more than thirty. It is true that the tonnage had probably increased as all the ships were larger but a large vessel only carried one more officer than a small one so the number of jobs available had decreased considerably. This seemed to be the recognised pattern in the merchant service. During and immediately after a war there would be an enormous demand for crews and almost certainly a shortage. Then gradually - and not always so slowly - the demand would lessen and mates and masters would be two a penny. Then another war would threaten and ships and men would be vitally needed and the men, in many cases, dragged back from the comfortable shore jobs they had painstakingly achieved to become sitting targets for all the beastliness the enemy could devise. It was not really a rewarding way of earning a living.

Mr Acton told me quietly that I would take my turn with other officers for employment but he went on to point out that owing to the fact that I was really surplus to requirements when I joined the company I was right at the bottom of a long list of mates who had joined in the couple of years before me. This meant that my chances of promotion were poor. At the time I was on top Third Mates pay of £17.10s. a month, less National Insurance, of course,

for the welfare state had started, albeit in an extremely modest way. What I was being told was, it seemed, to find another job if I could and, as I liked writing and had a leaning towards advertising, the Harrods' job seemed a reasonable bet. The only snag was the pay. As a completely untrained beginner Notley said he could only pay me £2.15s.0d a week. I would be living at home but fares would take about 5s a week and lunches another 6s.6d. I should have to give my mother 30s. for my keep, leaving 13s.6d spending money. I asked my parents what they thought and they suggested that I should give it a trial. This did not mean cutting adrift from the P & O as Mr Acton had said I could go on leave for as long as I liked - without any pay, of course.

So I went to Harrods and being as adaptable as most seamen I soon settled down and found that I had a pleasant lot of colleagues. Notley himself was an extremely charming, able man and we became good friends. Indeed, I had much to thank him for later on although in the event, mainly owing to the war, things did not work out as well as I hoped.

Dick Daniel and his two sisters ran a commercial art studio and did a good business with most of the London stores and I saw quite a lot of them. Captain Daniel, Dick's father, was Marine Superintendent of the Royal Mail line and always seemed to me rather stern and unbending. This was in complete contrast to his son, who was quite one of the most gay and pleasure-loving people I have ever met. His carefree attitude later proved to be his undoing.

When they lived in Royal Crescent, Notting Hill, the Daniels had another seafaring family as neighbours, of which the head was Captain Robertson. He had two sons and one, Stuart, became well-known as a singer. There was also a daughter, Margery, who became

even better known as Anna Neagle. Dick was very keen on Margery Robertson but, possibly luckily for her, she did not respond and although he chased all over the country when her show was touring (she was then one of Mr Cochrane's young Ladies) he eventually accepted defeat.

At Harrods I became associated with the production of their rather glossy magazine catalogue 'Harrods News' and spent a lot of time at the printers passing proofs and making last minute alterations, the latter being very unpopular, of course. The firm concerned was Hutchings and Crowsley in the Fulham Road, owned and run by Leonard Hutchings with an elderly but very efficient manager named Worboys.

Printing got quite a grip on me and I loved the clatter of the Monotype machines and the purposeful rumble of the big flat-bed presses. Printing, although probably one of the first real mass production techniques, differed from others in that every job was a challenge and produced new problems. It is, in fact, a real craft.

After a few months at Harrods I got a letter from Mr Acton of the P & O Officers department telling me that there was a vacancy for a district inspector of life-boats with the R.N.L.I. if I cared to put in an application. This was a good shore-based seafaring job and a worthwhile one so I decided to apply. I wrote round to various people for references, amongst them the Chaplain of the Savoy, Admiral Henderson, Cosmo Graham and the Captain-Superintendent of Pangbourne. All came up with very handsome recommendations and the result was that I was short-listed and it began to look as if the job were mine. But then a most extraordinary coincidence occurred. I was waiting in an ante-room for what I imagine was the final interview by the R.N.L.I. Selection Committee when the Deputy Chief Inspector came in with a telegram

in his hand and said "I am afraid I have got some bad news for you. We have just heard that his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (then President of the R.N.L.I), who is returning to this country in the 'Rawalpindi', has asked for the selection of a district inspector to be delayed as he would like one of 'Rawalpindi's' officers, named Micheltmore, to be considered. As, of course, it would be almost impossible for the committee to appoint someone other than His Royal Highness's nominee, you will appreciate that there would be little chance for you. However, if you wish to remain on the list of candidates, you may do so".

I knew Micheltmore, of course, as we had been shipmates in 'Rawalpindi' together. He was a Lieutenant-Commander, R.N.R. and about ten years older than I. He was a very efficient officer with a lot more experience. It was clear that it would be a waste of time to come up again in another short list in which he was included so I bowed myself out politely.

My father was absolutely furious and said some very harsh things about the way the R.N.L.I. did business. I believe he wrote and told them what he thought but I could see their point of view, unfortunate as it was for me.

Not long afterwards Cecil Notley began to find things difficult at Harrods and as Dick Daniel had offered me a job developing the advertising side of his business I left Harrods and joined Daniel Studio.

Not long before Dick had had a bad motor accident in which he broke his neck and amongst other things developed a mastoid infection. He was very ill for some time and when he was able to get about had to wear a support for his head. He still kept as cheerful as ever and shared a flat with two friends, Denis and Terence Reavey. Denis was a contact man for Daniel Studio.

Fairly soon it became clear to me that there was not much of a future for me in Daniel Studio but I married Vera Ferris in May, 1930, so I had added responsibility. In order to make a little more money - I was being paid £5 a week - I bought a small platen printing press and installed it in a shed in the garden of our flat in Lynton Road, Acton. My friend, Ernest Benson, always known as Ben, joined me in the venture and we were soon busy doing small jobbing and advertising printing. So much so that we had to employ a lad to help and then began to look round for larger premises. These we found in a basement under a music shop and before very long I had to make up my mind whether I could take the plunge and become a printer full time. There was not a lot of choice. Daniel Studio was very near to going out of business as one of the sisters had married and Dick was not fit enough to carry on. He had now developed lung trouble. The slump was at its worst and jobs very hard to come by. I took the plunge and Lynton Press Ltd. started its hopeful career.

We had little or no money but lots of enthusiasm, energy and good ideas and soon we took over first the music shop and eventually the whole building. We had an excellent art and silk screen department with a talented artist, Taffy Steed, who was completely deaf. We did a lot of work for Eastmans, the cleaners, Callard and Bowser and many well known firms. Cecil Notley had started his own advertising agency and gave us a lot of business. But all our machinery was on hire purchase and as soon as one machine was paid off we bought another so we faced a fearsome bill every month. At the end of a couple of years hard work we found we had not quite made the £7 a week we paid ourselves. In fact, several of our staff had done better. What we really needed was a bit of capital but this was difficult to come by in those depressed days.

Harold Wesley, of Harold Wesley Ltd., a very large firm of stationers who did an enormous trade with Woolworth's, was very friendly and put up £200 when we were in dire straits. He was always encouraging and often said "Time is on your side" but as it turned out, it wasn't, as we were rapidly approaching a war.

Our firstborn, Jill, had arrived on the 21st March, 1931, and Angela in May, 1934. In 1935 we moved to a very pleasant new house at Ruislip. Not long afterwards Lynton Press opened a shop in Ruislip. It was not very successful as it did not get enough supervision and the takings never seemed to match the stock replacement, so it was eventually closed down at a fairly considerable loss.

After I had been on shore for a year I received a letter from the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen to say that unless I signed on a sea-going ship in the near future I would be retired from the Royal Naval Reserve. This seemed absurd to me as the indications were that a war was not far away and I knew that my training must have cost the nation a good deal of money. I replied saying just that and suggested that if the R.N.R. was going to insist on this rule, I would like to transfer to the R.N.V.R. Much to my surprise, I received a reply very shortly saying that I was to attend an interview in H.M.S. President, the headquarters of the London Division, R.N.V.R.

I duly appeared at the interview and was accepted as a Lieutenant, R.N.V.R. and was gazetted as retired from the R.N.R. and as joining the R.N.V.R. on the same day, thereby achieving unbroken service. I had at that time nine years service in the R.N.R. I eventually served twenty-years in the R.N.V.R. giving me a total of twenty-nine years service, of which six were in war-time.

As an R.N.V.R. officer, I did training in H.M.S. 'Rodney', H.M.S. 'Skate' and a re-qualifying signal course at the Signal School, Portsmouth.

I arrived on board 'Rodney' under the impression that as an R.N.V.R. officer, nobody would expect me to know anything or do anything, as any R.N.V.R. officers I had met doing training usually had a very easy time. I was sadly mistaken. As I walked into the ante-room in 'Rodney' I was met by a familiar figure I recognised from 'Furious' and told, "You've got first day-on tomorrow!"

Tomorrow was Sunday and it meant that at 0830 I was on the quarterdeck in frockcoat and sword, white kid gloves and telescope under arm, trying to remember what special duties I must be prepared to carry out before, during and after Sunday divisions in a battleship. Before I had time to take fright at the possibilities, a stern figure appeared from one of the hatchways and Captain John D. Tovey approached me with anything but a welcoming look on his face. In a few short, sharp sentences he criticised the state of the ship as it appeared to him at that moment. Points he made, I remember, were that the port whaler was not properly stowed, one of the awnings had some slack lanyards, a side-boy had a dirty cap cover and what did I think I was there for?

Instead of merely saying 'Aye-aye, sir' and sending men scuttling about in all directions, my time on shore so far made me forget myself as to say,

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I have only been on deck five minutes and after two years without naval training it takes a little while to adjust".

"If you mean you are not capable of carrying out the duties of officer of the watch in a battleship, I must ask you to surrender your watchkeeping certificate".

"I'm quite capable of carrying out my duties, sir, but I have not yet had time to walk round the ship. I came on board at ten o'clock last night".

Captain Tovey said no more and walked away. As far as I can remember the rest of the watch passed off smoothly enough. But next day 'Malaya' came up harbour and without a second thought, knowing she was senior ship, I called for the bugler to sound the 'Still'. 'Malaya' merely piped 'Still', which rather surprised me as it was usual for cruisers and bigger ships to use buglers rather than the bosun's call.

Within seconds Captain Tovey was on deck enquiring angrily why bugles were being blown. I replied that it was the normal procedure to the best of my knowledge and he acidly pointed out that an Admiralty Fleet Order had altered all that over a year ago. I thought he was about to revert to the subject of my watchkeeping certificate so I hastily suggested that that was just the sort of thing I was doing my annual training to learn. This appeared to mollify him and he retired.

That was not all. Another morning when the ship was lying alongside in harbour the Yeoman of Signals reported that the Colonel-Commandant of Royal Marines was about to call on the Captain and was even now coming along the quay. At that moment the Chief Yeoman appeared on the quarterdeck with the Kings Regulations and Admiralty Instructions in his hand and in response to my 'How do we greet him', he replied:

"Guard and band, sir. Two bars of 'Rule Britannia'." Never having met this delightful piece of protocol before, I thought he was pulling my leg but there it was, in black and white. The Captain had been informed, guard and band assembled and up the gangway came the senior Royal Marine Officer of the port. Crash went the muskets, as the guard came to attention and presented arms. Britannia ruled briefly for two bars. 'What idiot decided to do that?' said Captain Tovey in an aside. The Chief Yeoman pointed confidently at K.R. and A.I. Of course, it had to be me again.

One bright Sunday when it so happened that I did not have a day on, I decided to visit the river Yealm, which I had never seen. On shore I found a large motor-boat offering a trip to the river Yealm for the reasonable sum of 4/- so I embarked. It was blowing rather fresh and when we got under way the skipper of the boat decided it would be too rough outside the breakwater and turned the trip into one 'round the fleet'. For my 4/- all I got was a good look at 'Rodney', of which, at the time, I felt I had seen enough.

Doing naval training meant giving up my annual holiday, which although not so bad for me, was a bit hard on my wife and family. For this reason I was usually a bit adrift with my training but the Admiralty did not seem to mind as long as you were not more than three weeks ~~adrift~~ *behind*.

I did training one year in the destroyer 'Skate' and ^{*another year*} I re-qualified in signals at Portsmouth. On this occasion my wife and family were in ^{*rooms in*} ~~digs~~ Southsea but as I was fully occupied from about eight until four-thirty every day they did not see much of me.

Ben remained a bachelor and lived in digs. On one occasion he had been to a very cheerful party and asked me to drive him home. It so happened that he had changed his digs the day before and had a little difficulty in directing me to the new place. When we turned into the road at about one o'clock in the morning there was a policeman standing by a lampost on the corner. He appeared to take no notice of us at all. After a tentative 'This one?' 'No, that one' from Ben we pulled up outside a semi-detached, respectable looking house in King Edwards Gardens, Acton, and I accompanied, ~~him~~, if not assisted, Ben, to the front door. After searching his pockets for some time he swore quietly and said 'I've lost the key'. 'Well, you can't wake them up at this time of night' I pointed out, 'or you'll be looking for digs again in the morning. Are you sure this is the house?' 'Yes, of course', said Ben.

long as
"Right then, as/the copper isn't looking, I can easily force the catch on this window".

It was a sash window and my knife slipped the catch back without any difficulty. Ben put his leg in over the sill and next moment disappeared inside with a resounding crash; he had obviously knocked a table over. I followed after a glance at the policeman, who was still contemplating the middle distance from his lamp post. Ben was grumbling about them moving the tables since he had breakfast that morning. "Wasn't one there then", he said. Together we crunched across spilt lump sugar, having set the table back on its legs and closed the window.

Ben's room was on a sort of half-floor landing at a turn in the stairs and he opened the door and switched on the light. There were quite a lot of clothes lying about, which seemed to puzzle him but it did not puzzle me as I was looking at the bed. It was occupied and on the pillow was a rather attractive head with curly dark hair.

"This isn't my room", said Ben, "or if it is, they have put someone else in it".

The body in the bed did not stir in spite of the light being on and a certain amount of conversation. It was clear to me that the upset table and the girl in bed added up to this being, regrettably, the wrong house. I beckoned to Ben and we crept out, switching off the light after one more interested glance at the occupant of the bed.

Downstairs and out of the front door. The policeman still at his vigil. "This is it", said Ben triumphantly, going next door. Not un-naturally I asked if he were sure. "Of course", he said. The window catch yielded as easily as the first one. No table this time. No girl either, so I went home wondering whether it would have been worth while having a look in all the other houses.

The policeman was still there as I drove past. I am surprised he did not get cramp.

Another Lynton Press adventure took place at a Callard & Bowser staff dance. Benson & I had been invited as the staff, being mostly female, needed some additional men as partners. It was quite good fun and round about midnight I went to the car park to collect the car. It was not locked and as I got in I heard a sound from the back which made me look round. There was a dark shape on the seat, apparently human and breathing oddly. I got my torch and shone it on the figure. It was a coloured girl, obviously sleeping it off. I shook her but it had no effect whatever. She was almost in a coma. I went in search of Ben and our host, assuming that the girl was a Callard and Bows-er employee but when various members of the staff arrived and inspected the girl they were all sure she was a stranger. Somebody presumably brought her to the dance but a quick questioning of all those remaining failed to produce anyone who would admit to knowing her.

It was a cold winter night, freezing hard, so we could hardly dump her in the open. Nor did any of us fancy taking her home and trying to explain how we got her.

"There's only one thing to do and that's take her to the police", I said, "And you" - to our Callard and Bowser host - "will have to come too and vouch for us". Reluctantly he agreed and we set off.

At Greenford police station we got a very cool reception and it was soon made quite clear that none of us was going to be allowed to leave until our unwanted passenger had recovered consciousness, in case she wished to prefer a charge against us. As it was well after midnight and my wife would certainly be expecting me home, the situation began to look serious. Also, there was always the possibility that from sheer perversity or necessity the girl would make a charge, in which case we were in a very unpleasant situation.

A doctor and a policewoman had been sent for and very gloomily we sat and waited. The doctor said that as far as he could tell the girl was deeply intoxicated but otherwise unharmed and asked us what she had been drinking. We replied rather testily that we did not know. Under the ministrations of the policewoman the girl began to show signs of returning consciousness and eventually she sat up and moaned. She obviously felt like death. But when questioned by the police as to how she came to be in my car, she said at once that she felt bad and got in to lie down. She also gave the names of the people she had been with and exonerated us from any blame. Indeed, she apologised for what she had done.

Rather reluctantly, we thought, the police sergeant let us go. He had already taken our names and addresses and I think he would have liked our finger-prints for good measure.

What did my wife say? "A likely story!"

Early in 1938 Cecil Notley invited me to meet Leonard Hutchings of Hutchings & Crowsley Ltd. (the printers of Harrods News) who offered me the post of General Manager of the works at a salary of £500 a year and with the prospect of becoming joint Managing Director with him. I discussed the situation with Ben and also went into the Lynton Press aspect with Leonard Hutchings. It was agreed that if we got on together the two businesses might be merged.

The European situation was steadily becoming more and more inflamed. The press seemed intent on provoking a war as they seldom missed an opportunity of saying in no uncertain terms that Hitler must be stopped. While this was a reasonable attitude to hold there was little to be said for stating it in terms, particularly while it was clear that Great Britain and France were in no position to enforce these proposals. It would have been far better to have played the situation down while making every preparation for the inevitable conflict and then to have hit hard. As it was, there was an awful

lot of brave talk but very little chance of backing it up. There is very little to be gained from talking common-sense to a madman. Indeed, the press and some well-intentioned but ill-advised, high-minded people share a lot of blame for the bloodshed and beastliness of the last war. It is easy to sacrifice others for your principles.

I pointed out to Leonard Hutchings that as a Lieutenant in the R.N.V.R. I was liable to mobilisation practically at any moment and I had not been long at Hutchings and Crowsley when in fact I was called up for the Munich crisis.

One morning I received a telegram telling me to report to H.M.S. 'President' - headquarters of the London Division, R.N.V.R. immediately. I arrived on board just before lunch and was met by Lieutenant Commander Harris, the Officer Instructor of the London Division. In reply to my eager enquiry as to what was afoot, he told me to hold my horses and called to Hardy, the wardroom steward, to bring two large whiskies. When these arrived he said "Hold on to that drink, you are going to need it. You are flying to Singapore tonight!" I did need that drink - and another. And although I had given up smoking eighteen months before, I was soon smoking like a chimney. My instructions were to go home to Ruislip, pack a suitcase and wait for a 'phone call, as I should be flying from Northolt, only a mile away from my home.

Still in a daze, I went off home to break the news to my wife. Later on, one got used to sudden moves all over the world but at that time, having lived a fairly peaceful domesticated existence for some years the prospect of a sudden breaking up of the family and the possibility of plunging straight into war many miles from home, was quite shattering.

On my return my wife took the news quite calmly and as far as I can remember did not shed a tear. I packed my suitcase and we then could only sit and wait. The children were put to bed without

any goodbyes being said and we were all very matter of fact about the biggest crisis in our family life.

It was just as well, as the night passed without any phone call. I had told Leonard Hutchings I was off and the business was back in his hands again. So the next day went by in normal fashion, except for more and more disturbing news of the European situation. The weather was warm and sunny.

Still no telephone call and we went to bed wondering whether it was worth while trying to sleep with the feeling that the summons must come at any minute. In fact, it was so hot and still it was practically impossible to sleep. Suddenly there was a ring at the door and going down I found a boy with a telegram in his hand. I opened it and read:-

"Report for passage to Egypt in S.S. Aquitania at berth 46/47 Ocean dock, Southampton, to Sea Transport Officer between 1100 and noon on twenty-ninth September label baggage name of ship destination cabin or baggage room. Director of Sea Transport".

So that was that. I got up and dug out my cabin trunk and hastily packed tropical gear and all the clothes I had not been able to get into my suit-case. Whether I got any sleep that night I cannot remember but I caught a train at Waterloo about 8.30 next morning.

To the casual observer this might have been a perfectly normal train filled with very ordinary business men. But to the expert eye the number of identical service trunks, sword-cases and suit-cases indicated something quite different. In the train we all read our papers and, except where friends and acquaintances were travelling together, there was little or no conversation. I did not hear the word 'war' mentioned once.

Arrived at Southampton, there was a scramble for taxis to the docks and we were all soon on board the stately 'Aquitania', her four tall funnels overshadowing the sheds and cranes of the docks. I found myself sharing a three berth cabin with two other London Division R.N.V.R. officers and at once life began to take on a more cheerful aspect.

We made up an R.N.V.R. table in the 1st class saloon and as one of our number, I think Kenneth Leavey, was connected with the ^{UVE} ~~Vene~~ Cliquot organisation, we did not lack for champagne on the appropriate occasion. The food was superb and once again I found myself living an entirely different life in very different surroundings from those I had experienced during the last few years' struggle for existence in a slump-ridden world.

Off the Nab our escort joined us, two 'R' class battleships - possibly 'Revenge' and 'Royal Oak' and four fleet destroyers. We must be considered valuable was the general, rather smug, comment.

Somewhere off Gibraltar our battleships left us and we proceeded into the Mediterranean with the destroyers. Soon afterwards came the news of Munich and 'Peace in our time' but 'Aquitania' proceeded steadily on her way east. The atmosphere on board was now completely carefree and the rumour was that the ship would proceed to Port Said, disembark army units returning east from leave and then return to England via Malta. This proved to be accurate.

There were many amusing incidents on board, most of them homeward bound, when we had a number of wives and nursing sisters who joined at Port Said and Malta. One R.N.V.R. lieutenant was ceremoniously de-bagged for paying too much attention to married women and I have no doubt some romances were more successfully pursued.

There was a wealth of talent on board and one or two excellent concerts were held. One of the most amusing incidents occurred in the verandah bar where, in a general lull, a rather elderly naval officer could be heard telling a story of his days as a midshipman.

A young sub-lieutenant standing close to me leant towards him and said:- "What was it Nelson said to you, sir?"

Incidentally, the ship was drunk dry of Plymouth gin and probably every other variety, too. The verandah barmen, veterans of much hard, ocean-going drinking, expressed surprise and admiration for the ability of their unusual guests.

'Aquitania' returned to Southampton and prepared to revert to her normal north Atlantic run while we all went home again. At least, those of us that were not in the regular army. There were no active service naval officers on board, only naval reserve and retired officers, who had been recalled.

It was a little difficult to settle down to printing business again and I was busy two nights a week helping to train ratings in H.M.S. 'President'. In spite of the assurance of peace in our time, most people seemed to think it was only a brief postponement of the conflict.

I well remember several eminent business men in Acton getting very huffy at any endeavours to convince people that we had little time to prepare for war and one in particular made unpleasant remarks about 'jitterbugs'. I have no idea whether he enjoyed eating his words. I certainly had no time to say "I told you so".

Things went well at Hutchings and Crowsley for some time and I was issued with some shares and made joint managing director with Leonard Hutchings. His son, Bob, was also in the business and it was fairly clear to me that my main purpose was to bridge the gap between him and Leonard and keep the business going until he was old enough and experienced enough to take over. However, I got on well with Bob and decided to risk being thrown out when he came to power.

In June, 1939, my family and I went off to Salcombe for a fortnights holiday, during which we had little summer weather and some of our dinghy sailing was pretty tough but the girls seemed to

like it. I am not so sure that my wife did!

On my return, I found things had changed somewhat at Hutchings and Crowsley and I could not help feeling that the now fairly certain mobilisation was affecting my position as Managing Director. Bob Hutchings had joined the R.A.F. reserve - he was killed flying fairly early in the war - and Leonard Hutchings looked like being on his own again.

In July I joined H.M.S. Kempenfelt, a destroyer in the reserve flotilla at Portsmouth and we promptly put to sea on an exercise which took us up to the Friesian coast 'dragging our coat' as someone put it! 'Sloppy' Williams was our captain and when I joined he told me I should keep watch with the navigating officer, who had been a cadet in a P & O ship in which I was Third Mate. The navigator promptly informed the captain that as I had taught him navigation in the P & O company it would be embarrassing for him to have me on watch with him. This seemed to upset 'Sloppy' Williams somewhat and he said rather huffily, "All right, in that case he can keep the middle watch on his own". The result of this was that I found myself on 'Kempenfelt's' bridge, steaming up channel at 25 knots with three other destroyers disposed to starboard in quarter line. As we were 'darkened ship' and none of the other shipping could see us it was just about as hair-raising a situation as I have ever experienced at sea. However, I soon got used to it and eventually 'Sloppy' Williams said that if the ship went into full commission on return to Portsmouth he would ask ^{for} me to remain, which I took to be a compliment.

While in 'Kempenfelt' we did a full calibre shoot with our five 4.7" guns. I was in the transmitting station where all ranges, deflections and orders to the guns are co-ordinated and passed. There were a number of R.N.V.R. ratings doing various jobs and the gunners mate was explaining to one of them that all he had to do was start his stop-watch when the first salvo went off and stop it on the

order to cease fire. The gunners mate noticed a look of uncertainty on the lad's face and explained once more. "Got it?" he said. The rating nodded. Presently the orders began to stream down -

"All guns follow director".

"All guns load".

"Range 11,000 Deflection 5 right".

"Salvoes".

Then came the ^{clang} ~~day~~ of the firing gongs and off went the salvo. The ship shook violently and literally jumped in the water. Dust came down off ledges and small objects flew about all over the place. More orders and then the second salvo erupted as the vibration of the propellers indicated an increase in speed.

The gunner's mate looked at the lad with the stop watch.

"You haven't started it!" he called out reproachfully.

"Why, has the salvo gone off?" asked the young rating in surprise. The gunner's mate gave vent to an expression indicating both amazement and admiration.

"You'll do, son", he said, philosophically. "I can see no one is going to frighten you."

On return to Portsmouth a rather unpleasant surprise awaited us. Kempenfelt was going into full commission but not with her present crew. She was being transferred to the Canadian navy, where she became the "Assiniboine".

For my share I got another far east appointment as 1st Lieutenant of the minesweeper "Stoke" in Singapore. As soon as my father heard this he said that my mother was very ill and he felt it would upset her seriously if I left at once. I went to the Admiralty and was told I would be given a temporary appointment in home waters but that I could not be kept at home indefinitely.

The gun shadow of war was close at hand.