

**PREPARING FOR ACTION.**

How it is Done on Board a British Man-of-War.

"Quarters for action!" cries the commanding officer; and the sound of the familiar bugle-call is instantly succeeded by what would appear to the uninitiated a scene of wild confusion. Indeed, any such individual who might happen to be present would do well to get safely behind a big ventilator or some other substantial object for a few minutes, and so avoid the risk of being bowled over by the rush of stalwart marines and bluejackets who are repairing to their allotted stations, at which it is a point of honor to arrive in as few seconds as possible.

There is a vast amount of method, however, in this seeming chaos, for every man and boy in the ship knows exactly where to go and what to do, thanks to the constant exercises and painstaking organization which have long been the incessant care of the captain and his subordinates. From the first hour of her commission, the officers and crew of each vessel are berthed and stationed with this one object in view. Once a week, or at shorter intervals if necessary, there is a regular field-day, when a mimic battle is fought with an imaginary foe, who is represented as attacking in every conceivable manner with guns and torpedoes, to say nothing of the ram; all imaginable disasters are supposed to occur, and are met with the orthodox counter-stroke or antidote. The care and forethought bestowed upon these exercises depend in some measure upon the officer in command; but the regulations prescribe essentials, and periodical reports are required by the authorities.

Realism, however, can only be attained in a limited degree on such occasions, as compared with the actual preparation for action in time of war; just as an encounter with foils or single sticks differs very essentially from a duel with real weapons; and in order to arrive at some comprehension of the matter, let us imagine ourselves on board one of our latest battle ships, in sight of the enemy. The bugle has sounded, the short period of apparent confusion is over, and every man stands silent at his station, awaiting the next order.

In the event of actual hostilities, there are certain preliminary preparations which would be made, if possible, before leaving the dock-yard. Everything of a purely ornamental character, in the officers' quarter and elsewhere, would be got rid of. Light structures which would partially mask the fire of some of the guns would be removed. Utility of the grimest description is, in fact the order of the day.

Now we can go round and "inspect the quarters," as the phrase runs, and see what sort of welcome we have prepared for the enemy. Commencing on deck—or aloft—there are, on each of the two big steel masts, two "tugs" or platforms, armed with small guns, the men being partially protected by a steel mantlet. Good shots and cool hands are selected for these posts, and the deadly Maxims and quick-firing guns should play

great havoc with any approaching torpedo boat, or exposed men on the enemy's deck. Then there are the four big guns which form the main armament, each pair in its barbette, protected by 14-inch armor of the best description. The loading and working of these guns is performed by hydraulic machinery, for the shell and cartridges are too heavy to carry about; but the mechanism has been brought to a great state of perfection, and the guns can be loaded and fired twice within the minute.

Just behind and above the foremost barbette is the conning tower, the captain's post in action. This is a heavily armored little house, containing steam steering wheel, and means of communication with the engine room and the barbettes, the lower gun battery and the torpedo tubes, as well as the directors," by means of which the guns can be fired, or the torpedo despatched on its deadly errand.

Round the upper works are numerous quick-firing and machine guns, arranged so as to fire in every possible direction; a good many of them are manned by marines, who are often very good shots.

Going below, we find ourselves in the battery of 6 in. quick-firing guns, six on each side; very formidable weapons these, though they look like mere pigmies in comparison with their big brothers in the barbettes. They can each fire, if smartly handled, from twelve to fifteen or more rounds a minute, each shell weighing 100 lb., and being capable of piercing a very considerable thickness of armour. Every man, after seeing his gun loaded, or other preliminary duty accomplished, provides his proper arms, whether rifle or cutlass and pistol, and places them in an appointed place where he can get them in a moment if necessary; for the possibility of a boarding match and personal encounter is not forgotten in the exercises.

The ammunition supply is maintained by a special party, under efficient superintendence, for this is, of course, a most important matter. The guns must never be kept waiting for shell; and yet there should not be an undue amount of explosives about the deck. Tubs of water and sand are freely disposed about the decks, the former for drinking, the latter to give a good footing in case of slipperiness from any cause—and we know that in any sharp action there is likely to be a ghastly enough occasion for its use—and fire hose, are screwed on everywhere.

Let us not forget the chief engineer and his staff. Forget them? Where should we be without them? Great are their responsibilities in action; already the boilers are under "forced draught," to give an additional knot or two of speed—not for running away, though; the special men are at their various posts; the water tight doors—over 200 in number—are closed, the engines are running smoothly and swiftly.

Each of the submerged torpedo tubes has its long wicked-looking steel "fish" ready in position, a small knot of skilled men standing by to train the carriage at the required angle.

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In as secure a position as possible the surgeons are assembled round the grim-looking table, with the non-combatant officers standing to assist them.

We are rapidly approaching the enemy; all preparatory signals have been made; and now another flutter of bunting goes up on board the flag-ship. What is it?—engage the enemy? Not yet, but the word is soon passed along, amid loud cheering, that the admiral has signalled "Remember Trafalgar!" And this is a good final preparation for action.

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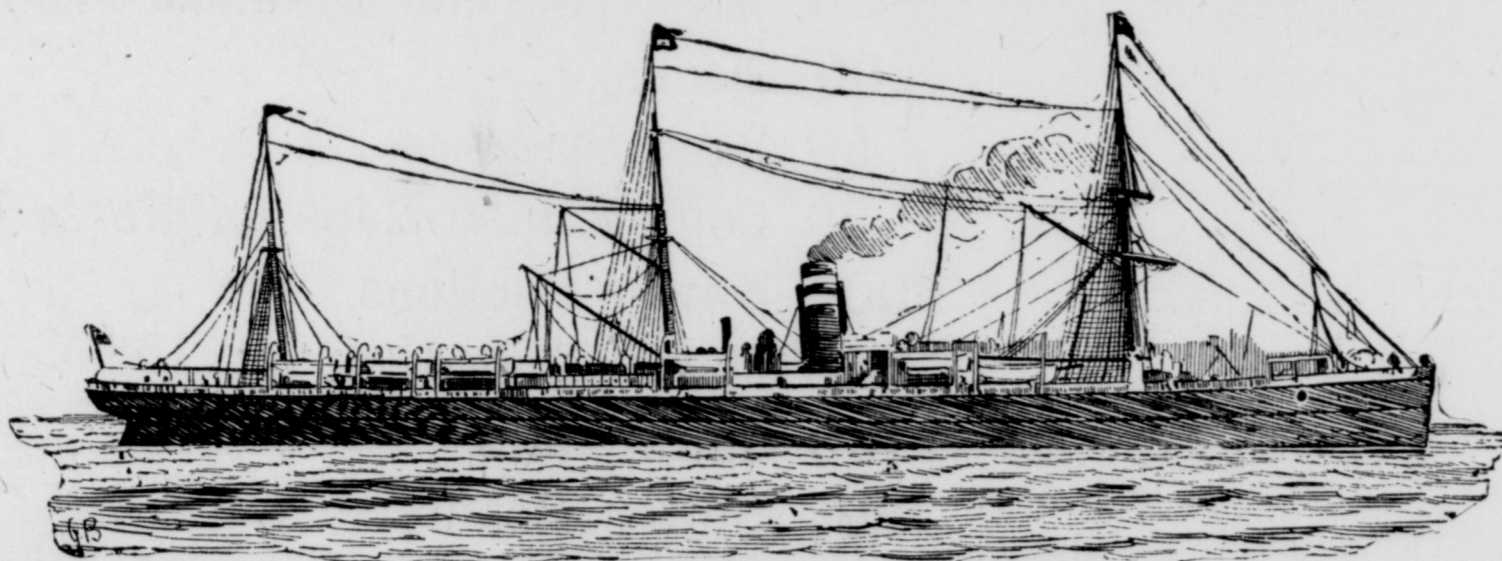
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**ROYAL MAIL STEAMERS.**

**The Beaver Line S. S. Gallia.**

A Magnificent Steamer.

The arrival of the Royal Mail Steamer Gallia, of the Beaver Line, at Montreal recently, drew forth favorable comments from all the shipping journals of that port as well as from the daily press. The Gallia is the steamer of the Beaver Line which attracted so much attention in St. John last winter by her remarkably fast trips, and she is evidently sustaining her reputation on the St. Lawrence route. The Montreal Gazette, referring to the steamer remarks:—

Although the Gallia is comparatively a new boat to the St. Lawrence trade, she has had a record of being a favorite boat with transatlantic passengers, having been an excursioner, and consequently fitted up with the usual luxuries of this venerable line.

During the past two seasons there has been quite a revolution in the steamship business, not only as regards tonnage, but also because the scenery of the St. Lawrence route is fast becoming second to none for its beauty. The old saying that competition is the life of trade is fully demonstrated by the latest acquisition to the Beaver line fleet, and the management have evidently realized that while many travel for pleasure, "there are others" who are anxious to combine business with the former.

Since the opening of navigation the passenger lists of the several lines have showed a marked increase in numbers and the numerous enquiries from all points is testimony

that Canadians are beginning to take a practical interest in Dominion shipping and thus helping her to keep her enviable reputation of being the premier colony. As the Beaver line is at the present time the mail carrier, it is only natural that the eyes of the public should be centered upon every movement of the present contractors, and when the Gallia came alongside her berth very flattering remarks were passed. The Gallia besides being considerably larger than the balance of the fleet, is made especially attractive by her long promenade deck, which prevails without obstruction the whole length of the ship. As this is a new feature of the St. Lawrence, it made quite a favorable impression and the passengers were more than once enabled by its length and breadth to enjoy an impromptu dance.

As a passenger boat she can hold her own. The handsome saloon, which has accommodation for the whole of her first-class cabin passengers at one sitting (numbering 150 seats) extends to the whole breadth of the vessel. The decorations are not only handsome, but are also somewhat original, the panels being of Japanese lacquer. These are set off by rich upholstery, curtains and handsome mirrors, the scene as one descends from the main staircase being not only pleasing to the eye, but makes one think of the luxury of the modern day traveller as compared with the passenger steamer of a few short years ago.

Keeping pace with the improvements, the second cabin passengers have not been forgotten, and the comfortable quarters assigned to this class of travel cannot fail to be appreciated. As in the first cabin there is no "second sitting," which not only facilitates matters by giving the passenger a much longer time to enjoy his food, but it also

serves when nearing port an opportunity for them to write their correspondence. Away from the second saloon there is a cosy smoke room, while he is also able to vie with the first class by enjoying a salt water bath at his leisure. The sanitary arrangements in this section, as in all parts of the vessel are perfect.

Of the many retiring nooks for a quiet read or chat perhaps the ladies' retiring rooms are the prettiest, being upholstered in electric blue velvet and panelled in Italian marble, but the male passengers declare that they will swear by the cosy and well ventilated smoke room.

The staterooms are consistent with the dimensions of the vessel, the berths being fac-similes of the New York liners Teutonic and Majestic, being spacious, well ventilated and fitted with the most modern washstands, the water being at the command of the passenger at all hours.

Excellent accommodation has been provided for the steerage passengers. These quarters are situated forward on the main deck, are light and comfortable and of easy access to the liberal portion of the deck reserved for them.

The vessel besides being fitted with electric light, has also been provided with cold storage compartments of the most modern type. Her dimensions are as follows—430 feet in length; beam 45 feet; with a depth of 34 feet. The engines are 5,000, indicated horse power. She has eight boilers of the most modern system, and has 24 furnaces.

The next sailing of the Gallia from Montreal will be on the 6th of July. Those contemplating a trip to the continent this season will do well to engage their berth by this steamer as the time is most auspicious for an ocean voyage.