

BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES.

Visit of the Colonial Contingents to the Fleet at Spithead.

DESCRIBED BY THE HERALD'S SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

Our Boys Greeted With Great Enthusiasm by British Jack-Tars.

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June 30th will long be remembered by the members of the Colonial coronation contingents, for on that day they went to Spithead as the guests of the Imperial authorities and saw one of the greatest spectacles they have ever been privileged to witness—a fleet of 113 ships of war, the cream of Britain's navy. It was certainly a grand sight, a great object lesson, and an excellent illustration of the power behind the old flag, which protects the commerce and subjects of the greatest empire the world has ever seen.

The colonials were favored with glorious weather for the trip, and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all hands. Reveille was sounded in camp at 3.30 o'clock just as day was breaking, and in less than an hour the men were sitting down to breakfast at the palace. At five o'clock they were ready to march, the whole crowd of colonials numbering over two thousand. Four special trains were in waiting at Alexandra Park station, and the first one with the Canadian cavalry on board got away at 5.30. The Canadian dismounted men started next, and the Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and colored troops were on the move shortly after six o'clock. It was a jolly crowd who were looking forward to a day of great sight seeing and were not disappointed.

The distance from Alexandra Park to Southampton is in the vicinity of 150 miles, and it required four hours to make the trip, and such a delightful trip it was. We travelled right across London from North to South, crossing the Thames by Blackfriars Bridge, and some idea of the magnitude of the great metropolis may be gained from the fact that we were just an hour and ten minutes getting to the southern extremity. Londoners are early risers and few houses did we pass that smoke was not issuing from the chimney. There were quite a number of people about the streets too, and they gazed in wonder at the long train and its load of joyous, uniformed occupants, and from many of the doorways and windows women and children could be seen waving handkerchiefs. Getting out into the beautiful country district intersected by the London and Southwestern Ry. (by which we were travelling) the fragrant aroma of new mown hay was wafted in through the open windows. Gazing out we beheld long stretches of beautiful level country on either side of the railway, and could see the farmers at work cutting their hay. In many cases the crop looked very light, and would be rather discouraging to a New Brunswick farmer, but here everything goes in the agricultural line. The beautiful fields of grain and roots, the neat hedges, and the herds of cattle and sheep peacefully grazing in remarkably rich pasture fields all elicited expressions of admiration. To travel through England on a fine day when the leafy month of June has summoned all the splendors of a northern summer, is a pleasure indeed, and there is so much to gaze upon that is new to a Canadian that, naturally, time passes very quickly. England is a land of flowers, the sight and fragrance of which add to the delight of summer travel. Roses, poppies, buttercups and daisies can be seen on every side, great patches of them, and they add materially to the attractions and beauty of the landscape. The farm houses and buildings are mostly of brick, but occasionally we pass a cottage with a thatched roof, a very odd looking habitation to be sure. Near some of the railway stations that we passed I noticed large quantities of coal, composed of large lumps piled on the ground like cord-wood, with the wide ends and top white.

washed. This is probably done to enable the owner to discover whether any of his coal has been lugged away during the night. We passed one or two small lakes on the trip, and a few streams, but no large rivers, and in one of the lakes a large flock of white swan could be seen floating majestically on the surface of the water. All the railway crossings in England are overhead, with solid masonry foundations, and the highway bridges, those that are noticed along the line of railway, are very old structures with arched abutments, very substantially built.

Ten o'clock found us in Southampton, the great steamship terminus of England, and the port from which sailed the numerous transports which carried the English troops to South Africa during the late war. We were hurried through the city right down to the docks where we left the cars and went on board the 'Allan Line steamer Bavarian, which only a few days before had arrived from South Africa with over two thousand British and colonial troops, who were brought home to take part in the coronation procession. The Bavarian had been engaged to take the colonials to Spithead, some fifteen miles down to what is called the Solent to view the fleet, and as soon as the trains arrived we went on board, the first batch of the Canadian contingent having preceded us. There are not as many docks here as in Liverpool, but the number is not small by any means, and most of them were occupied by huge ocean steamers. The handsome white boats of the Castle Line which ply between England and Cape Town were to be seen on every side of us. There were also steamers from other lines which ply the Southern seas lying in the docks, while out on the stream a squadron of beautiful yachts, nearly all large steam craft, loomed up conspicuously.

We had to wait some time for the balance of the Colonials to arrive and it was nearly noon before the big liner got in motion. The native Indian troops from Hampton Court, numbering 1,100 in all, reached Southampton in advance of us and went on board the Roslin Castle, which had been engaged for their use. This boat got out of dock first and led ours down the river. A number of excursion steamers, loaded with pleasure seekers, and several steam yachts, tooting their whistles, followed in our wake, making quite an imposing and noisy procession. An excellent dinner, which included among other things a bottle of allsops, and a cigar for each man, was served on the transport and proved very acceptable, for there was quite a gap between breakfast and dinner and all were pretty hungry.

After dinner the troops returned to the docks and took up positions whence they could obtain the best view of the waters and landscape. A mile or two below Southampton we passed Netley Hospital, an institution well known by reputation in Canada—an institution where many Canadian soldiers, invalided from South Africa during the late war, were nursed back to health and strength. It is a mammoth red brick structure, with extensive and well kept grounds and occupies a commanding site on a high hill overlooking the salt water. A few miles further down we passed the Isle of Wight, and steaming in quite close to the shore obtained a good view of Cowes, a name very familiar to the millions of people who followed the bulletins during the illness of our late Queen. It is a pretty little city situated close to the edge of the water with a high bluff for a back ground. Most of the buildings are of brick and seem to be quite uniform in size. A short distance below Cowes we caught a glimpse of Osborne House, where a few months ago Queen Victoria passed from earth, terminating the longest and most glorious reign in English history. Osborne House is located in the midst of a beautiful grove of trees and we could see little more than the towers and portions of the roof.

The distance from Southampton to Spithead, our destination, is about fifteen miles, and we scarcely more than got started before we beheld a cloud of smoke in the distance, which we knew came from the funnels of the mighty fleet lying peacefully at anchor in the Solent. As we approached nearer we could make out the masts of the ships, a whole forest

of them, and soon the yellow funnels and big black hulls of the crafts lying at the head of the column began to loom up. It was a grand and inspiring sight, and to borrow a phrase from my old friend Major Cropley, caused the blood to surge wildly through our veins. Thanks to the naval authorities every man on our transport had been provided with a printed chart containing the names and showing the position of the different ships, and by the aid of this we were able to place any of them at a glance. The fleet was drawn up in five lines, each of which extended a distance of five miles across the blue water, making a total of twenty-five miles of warships. In the three centre lines were battleships and cruisers of the 1st and 2nd class, the battleships coming first, and the other columns were composed of third class cruisers, torpedo boats, torpedo boat destroyers, torpedo gunboats, training ships and foreign men-of-war. The Royal yacht Victoria and Albert also had a place in one of the outer lines. The sailors and marines of the different ships had evidently been apprised of the coming of the colonials, for as the Bavarian steamed up within hailing distance of the first ships of the column, we noticed the crews assembled on the forward decks, and they greeted us with rousing British cheers. And don't forget that British Jack tars know how to cheer, and so do the colonial troops, for the response from the decks of the transport, making due allowance for the difference in numbers, was as hearty and enthusiastic as the cheering on the warships. The Bavarian made three trips through the fleet and the colonials exchanged cheers with the crew of every ship as they went along. As we steamed by the battleship London, the flagship of the fleet, a stately Canadian perched on the upper deck of the Bavarian, struck up Rule Britannia. It caught the crowd at once and everybody who could sing or make a bluff at singing, joined in. Never was this patriotic old song sung with greater vim and never was it sung on a more appropriate occasion. The crews of the battle ship looked on in wonder and admiration, and when the last notes died away gave vent to their feelings in hearty cheers for the colonials. When the cheering had subsided the band of the London Corps struck up Soldiers of the King and kept it going until our ship got out of hearing. As the Bavarian rounded the head of the column and approached the magnificent—a twin ship of the London—the colonials sang with great vim "The Red White and Blue," and were answered by the crew and band of the big warship. The bands of several of the other ships turned out as the Bavarian approached and greeted her with patriotic airs, while the crews from positions on the decks, in the riggings and portholes, cheered again and again. The Colonials cheered and sang in reply until they became hoarse and weary from their exertions. Everybody joined in the demonstration, while, black, brown and yellow troops, vied with each other to see who could make the most noise. A good percentage of those on the transport could not understand a word of English, but they could cheer just the same. The big Maoris from New Zealand, were the most demonstrative of the whole bunch and probably shouted the loudest. The whole show seemed to please them immensely and they, as well as the big Sikhs from India, fairly danced for joy.

Among the ships which we were privileged to exchange greetings with at very close range, besides the magnificent London, were the battleships Resolution, Empress of India, Prince George, Mars, Majestic, Revenge, Resolution, Jupiter, and Hannibal, all of which have registered tonnage close to 15,000. We also passed the battleship Camperdown which sank the Victoria in the Mediterranean a few years ago, and a number of big cruisers including the Ariadne, which is shortly to relieve the Crescent as flagship of the North Atlantic Squadron. The mighty dogs of war lying at anchor made a most impressive sight and one which those who witnessed it can never forget as long as they live. And just think of it, the fleet we saw was composed of only the channel and home defence squadrons, or not more than one fourth of the whole British navy.

Much to our regret most of the foreign ships of war, including the United States battleship Illinois, which had assembled for the review, sailed for home on the day preceding our arrival at Spithead and only five of them did we see. They represented respectively the navies of Russia, Norway, Austria-Hungary, Chili and Spain. We did not go very close to

any of them, but close enough for their crews to hear the enthusiastic greetings exchanged by the British jack-tars and colonial troops. The attention of the colonials was centred upon the floating batteries, representing the greatest naval power on earth, the mistress of the sea, and they had no time to waste over the other fellows, even though their mission was one of peace. It would be interesting to know what the big Russian men-of-war for instance, thought of the demonstration of which they were silent but interested spectators. We passed quite close to the city of Portsmouth, Britain's great naval station, and could plainly see the big guns of the forts.

It was five o'clock when the Bavarian set out to return to her dock at Southampton, and supper was served to the troops during the run up. A number of crowded excursion boats and steam yachts followed in our wake, and one of the yachts which displayed a Shamrock flag from its masthead was pointed out to us as being the property of Sir Thomas Lipton.

The band of the Highland Light Infantry accompanied the colonials on the Bavarian and rendered an excellent program during the trip.

We docked at six o'clock in a pouring rain storm, and half an hour later were on our way back to London. We were pushed along at a lively clip and at 10.30 o'clock were at Alexandra Palace, where we found a hot supper awaiting us.

During the run to Southampton I had an excellent opportunity to size up the Indian and African troops and may have something to say concerning them in a future letter. Tomorrow the colonials are to parade before the Queen and Prince of Wales at