



Letters
OF
Frederick Southam Ker

SUB-LIEUTENANT R.C.N.V.R.

1940

To Maxine Bruce - from
Trudis mother.

September. 1941.



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Frederick Southam Ker

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[PRIVATELY PRINTED]

FOREWORD

FREDERICK SOUTHAM KER was born in Vancouver on April 8th, 1920, the eldest son of Frederick Innes Ker and Amy Southam Ker. He was educated at Hillfield School, Hamilton, and Upper Canada College, Toronto. In 1937 he entered Trinity College, University of Toronto, and was about to complete his third year in Honour Arts when he, with fifty other young Canadians, was offered a commission in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, with a special arrangement whereby they were to be trained by the Royal Navy in England and then serve in Royal Navy ships. The University of Toronto granted him his year without writing the examinations, and on April 12th, 1940, he was appointed Acting Sub-Lieutenant in the R.C.N.V.R.

He left Canada on April 26th for the King Alfred Training Establishment at Hove, England, where he received his preliminary training. On June 18th he responded to a call for volunteers for special service in France, and was assigned to the destroyer H.M.S. Vanquisher, and put in charge of a demolition party for action in the French Bay of Biscay ports. On July 1st he was drafted to the corvette H.M.S. Godetia, a convoy escort vessel. He was killed in action on September 6th, 1940, and is buried at Girvan, on the west coast of Scotland.

These letters, written home while on active service, have been compiled and edited by his mother, in the hope that for his family, and especially his brothers and sisters, they will help to preserve a proud and happy memory.

*Yet, O stricken heart, remember O remember
How of human days he lived the better part.
April came to bloom and never dim December
Breathed its killing chills upon the head or heart.*

*Doomed to know not Winter, only Spring, a being
Trode the flowery April blithely for a while,
Took his fill of music, joy of thought and seeing,
Came and stayed and went, nor ever ceased to smile.*

*Came and stayed and went, and now when all is finished,
You alone have crossed the melancholy stream,
Yours the pang, but his, O his, the undiminished
Undecaying gladness, undeparted dream.*

*All that life contains of torture, toil, and treason,
Shame, dishonour, death, to him were but a name.
Here, a boy, he dwelt through all the singing season,
And ere the day of sorrow departed as he came.*

R. L. STEVENSON 1881.

R.M.S. AKOROA,
Sunday, April 28th, 1940

Dearest Mum and Dad:

Things have happened in a very surprising manner since I left you on the station platform at Montreal and I must say that the excitement and surprise of the last few days' happenings have in no way detracted from the enjoyment.

Once on the train I immediately got acquainted with my various friends-to-be. With no exceptions they seem to be of sterling character, and as one of them puts it "we are a hand-picked lot!" There are people from Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Halifax, St. John, N.B. and Sydney, N.S. (although the Maritime element was not on the train at first).

My first immediate friends—and I might add they are my particular friends right through to the moment of writing—are Doug Symons, whom you met on the platform—tall and fair-headed chap—and Stan Moxley, both of Toronto. Doug is a graduate of Trinity College and Stan is an Englishman who has been out in Canada for some years, but whose parents live in England. He is a very amusing bird, knows many people I know in Toronto and elsewhere, and looks like Disraeli (although he is not a Jew). Of course I have been with these birds for a matter of four days only so I don't really know whether they are likely to remain my particular cronies, but I imagine they will.

Well, to take up where I left off; when I left you on the platform I sat around with my co-mates for some time, and went to bed at about eleven-thirty.

When I woke up the following morning we were passing through some lovely hilly country, it was a sunny day and there was a good deal of snow on the ground. I imagine that it was the Gaspé country, or at least the western part of it.

After breakfast the scenery changed and we passed along the shore of the Bay of Chaleur and the Restigouche River.

I spent the day talking, reading and sitting in the observation car. The time went fairly fast and before long we arrived at Moncton, where Doug and I went for a walk up town. We did the same at Truro, N.S., where the train stopped for about twenty minutes.

Soon we approached Halifax, and as we came near the city we had to go through our first war experience—a blackout. It was not as bad as it sounds as the only thing was that the window shades were drawn, but it gave me a strange feeling.

On the platform at Halifax were a group of naval officers, among them Hugh Henderson, a fraternity brother of mine, who had heard that I was passing through and had come to meet me. I said, "Hugh, old man, I hope I'm going to see something of you during my stay in Halifax—How long am I likely to be here—ten days or two weeks?" To my surprise he answered that we would be there about twenty minutes! He took me to the telegraph office where I sent you a hasty telegram, the contents of which were supposed to convey the impression that I was leaving immediately—but of course I don't know what sort of emasculated version reached you, or when.

We claimed our baggage and it was loaded on a truck. A roll was called by an officer and then we followed him (walking, not marching) through the streets, through the barbed-wire entanglements and sentries, past the box-cars that block the view of the water-front, and right down to the harbour. Twenty minutes after stepping off the train at Halifax we were on a steam tender, wending our way through the ships of the harbour. All was dark and the ships anchored in the roadstead were all blacked out. In the starlight they looked like the kind of thing you see in the movies—in fact the whole business was rather like a movie.

We passed several merchantmen at anchor and finally came alongside a sizeable ship which I did not recognize. I

asked one of the ratings on the tender and he told me that she was a New Zealander, but that was all he knew. After a little trouble coming alongside (I could have done better myself!) we made fast at the bottom of a long companion ladder leading up the side of the ship. A group of officers stood at the top giving a lot of unnecessary orders, and a steam valve at the side of the ship puffed clouds of blinding steam in our faces as we struggled, with our baggage, up the companion way.

The ship is not the luxury liner I had anticipated would be our means of transport, but she is not bad and I have come to like her. She is about sixteen thousand tons, has a single funnel, is painted black with buff superstructure, does about fifteen knots, is a British ship that runs normally to New Zealand (whence she has just come) and her owners are Shaw-Savill. Apparently she was a luxury liner in the last war, having been launched in 1914. She is generally speaking a pretty ship with good lines, and although not luxurious by our present standards is immaculately clean and has an air of good solid comfort which I find much to my liking. She stopped in at Halifax on her way from New Zealand to England. There is a group of New Zealand airmen aboard (eleven officers and twenty-seven men) who are going to train in England. They are excellent chaps, all of them, and already we are all good friends.

Once up the companion-way we reported to the main lounge where we were paid \$226.00, which includes pay arrears and uniform allowance, and then were assigned to our cabins. My cabin-mate is a Maritimer called David Barrington. He is at present quite seasick.

Once established (this is still Friday night) we had coffee and sandwiches and then went out on deck to watch us drop our tender, pull up our anchor, and steam out of the harbour. After that I went to bed.

I slept like a top and was awakened at seven thirty a.m. (ungodly hour) by the cabin steward, who brought a cup of tea, and was a little over-hearty for such a time of day. I drank the tea and then went back to sleep.

Arising formally at 8.15 I proceeded down to breakfast at 8.30 and found that I am going to have to revise my ideas about food to fit with those of Englishmen. The food is good but shall I say "different?"

After breakfast I went out on deck. I should explain that we were not convoyed. The convoy had left the day before and we had to depend on zig-zagging at fifteen knots to catch up with it. Our ship was alone and it was a beautiful day with very little wind.

I went aft to the poop where there is mounted a naval gun on a large and prominent gun platform. The ship is further armed with depth charges and machine guns for anti-aircraft use. I had a long talk with the gunner, who is a New Zealander, and is fed up with the inactivity of this war. He tempts Providence freely by hoping for a submarine to pop up!

After lunch I settled down for a three-hour nap, and when I woke up the convoy was in sight, about two miles ahead. It was a grand sight in the evening sun. Forty ships of all nationalities escorted by an armed auxiliary cruiser and two Canadian destroyers. I do not think that the censor would allow me to say how the convoy is arranged or lined up, but suffice it to say that it is a grand sight. Since this ship carries depth charges she is a flank vessel, on the starboard flank. The telegraphs of all ships are sealed and cannot be used except in an emergency, and all signalling is done by flags and morse light at night. At night every ship is blacked out and you would never know they were there were it not for the occasional dot-dot-dash from the flagship's signal lamp. The only trouble with this convoy is that the damned thing travels at only nine knots, zig-zagging all over the place, and it is going to take at least two weeks to get across.

We had a sing-song on Saturday night, and after a walk on deck I got to bed about twelve-thirty.

Sunday morning I got up a little later than usual and thus missed breakfast, which was rather annoying. It was a lovely day but a strong wind sprang up which continued all day from the east and whipped up good-sized seas. The sky

was overcast and the ship tossed quite a bit, but the day was uneventful. I am now sitting in the writing-room and it is 10.30 p.m. I am going for a walk on deck and then to bed. I shall continue this letter as an account of my voyage, and post it as soon as I get to England.

Monday, April 29th.

I did not sleep very well last night as the ship was tossing and rolling pretty hard, and she creaks in every joint like an old rocking chair.

The present set-up is rather amazing. I remember that when I was seven or eight years old I used to read those "Illustrated London News" histories of the last war. I distinctly remember some drawings of a convoy, seen from the deck of one of the ships on a dark and stormy night. Little did I dream that I would experience that identical picture under almost identical circumstances. It is just a case of repetition of history, but the sensation it gives me can better be felt than imagined.

Life aboard is fairly pleasant and I am resigned to taking perhaps another two weeks before we arrive in England—if we ever get there. We have had to slacken speed again this morning as there was a little trouble last night with the convoy. The Commodore's ship signalled, by light, to change course twenty degrees port. The signal was apparently missed by the rear ships in the convoy, and when we turned in the required direction they kept on going in the old direction, with the result that they were nowhere to be seen this morning. Due to the heavy seas, and to accommodate some old tankers that are along with us, all of whom periodically disappear from view under a cloud of spray and a veritable Niagara of green water, we have cut our speed to five or six knots. I understand that we shall pick up the lost ships to-morrow at some pre-arranged rendezvous. The Lord only knows how many ships will get lost to-night!

The day has been uneventful. I have eaten and slept, read and studied Morse code, and talked to New Zealanders until I have practically acquired their accent. One or two of the lads on our group have been seasick but I have never felt better in my life. It is now about ten o'clock and after a walk on deck I shall trot off to bed. . . . See you to-morrow.

Tuesday, April 30th.

I am getting into the habit of rising at seven-thirty a.m. and running for about half a mile on deck with Moxley. We are well into the gulf stream now and it was very much warmer this morning. The wind had abated, although the sea was still running fairly high. The most notable feature of the day was a pea-soup fog which screened the other ships from view. The only evidence that they are present at all is the sound of their fog horns. Judging from the variety of sounds it has been estimated that we are in company with about nine of our original outfit. The rest of them might be anywhere, but the ship's officers seem confident that we will meet them sometime, somewhere, before we reach England. We will probably be another fortnight before we get there.

I have spent the day profitably learning Morse code—already I am fairly proficient. To-morrow I start in on semaphore signalling. In general, however, the day has been uneventful, though not tiresome. The company is congenial and I am enjoying myself.

Wednesday, May 1st.

It has been very warm and humid all day, with low visibility due to a light rain. When I got up this morning the remnants of the convoy were six ships, in addition to ourselves. We very rapidly lost four of these, but the other two hung round in more or less desultory fashion for most of the day. Apparently the various captains are beginning to get worried about the absence of our other ships. The afternoon was spent in Morse and flag signalling between our three ships and suddenly we increased speed, and, leaving the other two

to their fate, we dashed back towards Canada. We did not find anything, however, and after a couple of hours of futile search we lit out for England once more. At this rate I estimate we should reach Britannia's shores sometime about the middle of August.

I spent a more or less profitable day practicing my newly-acquired ability in sending and receiving Morse code.

My piano-playing, such as it is, has made quite a hit aboard so you may well gather that there is a shortage of musicians.

I am starting to-night to master the fine art of semaphore signalling.

I hope that you are not worrying about not hearing from me for all this time.

Thursday, May 2nd.

To-day has been the worst day yet—wet, muggy and warm, and the ship rolling in a beam sea. We are beating along towards England at fourteen knots, and have been all day. Not a ship is in sight. Rumour has it that we have given the convoy the bird and are making for England by ourselves. At this rate we should arrive in the Channel about next Tuesday, D.V. I am anxious to get there and do not thrill at the prospect of many more weeks aboard.

Friday, May 3rd.

I slept very poorly last night as we ran into a northeast gale with terrific seas. The ship literally stood on her ear and I did much the same in my bunk—strangely I did not feel one bit seasick.

The day has been terrible with the gale still in full swing. We have definitely abandoned the convoy and are heading for England at a good speed. We take the large seas green over our foredeck, and the spray drenches everything.

We are expected to be off Land's End Tuesday and may disembark at Portland(?). I spent the afternoon assembling gas masks which we must wear as soon as we get to England.

We are at present rehearsing for a sort of ship's concert, to be held to-morrow night.

Incidentally, no one dresses for dinner on this ship and you should see some of the costumes we wear for breakfast!

I understand that our training school is to be H.M.S. King Alfred at Hove.

Saturday, May 4th.

I said that the seas were bad yesterday but they weren't a patch on what we have had to-day. The wind blew a forty-seven mile an hour gale and you could not stand up on the boat deck. It was very interesting to watch the seas coming green over her bows, and several windows were broken on the promenade deck.

With the Air Force officers we staged a sort of extravaganza to-night, which made up in spontaneity what it lacked in rehearsal. I enclose the menu from the dinner (note the boiled rice "a la Ker") and I wish you would keep it for me.

Sunday, May 5th.

I again spent a very uncomfortable and sleepless night but I was up for my usual cup of tea at seven-thirty, and my daily salt-water tub.

The ship is now in the war zone (still by ourselves) and as preparation against air attack all the corridors on our deck have been strewn with fire hose. I hope that it won't have to be used, but every day we get reports of ships being attacked and some of them sunk off the south coast of England. The captain says we are better off without the convoy.

Monday, May 6th.

I slept beautifully last night as the storm had ceased, and when I went for my usual run this morning, on deck, it was a fine day with the sun shining, and the sea stirred by only a slight breeze.

We are getting near England now and I can hardly wait to set foot there. No one knows where or when we land, but there is a rumour that we may dock on Thursday.

The ship is prepared against enemy attack and sandbags have been put all over the bridge. The thing I fear most is air attack, rather than submarines or mines—but that remains to be seen. The weather has been lovely all day and I have just come in from a walk on deck. I saw a beautiful sunset.

Tuesday, May 7th.

Another beautiful day. I skipped breakfast and got up about nine o'clock. We have seen numerous small ships in the distance, and the sea has been calm. I spent most of the day walking on deck and reading. Although we are in the heart of the danger zone we saw no periscope! We have not sighted land as yet but we are supposed to pass Bishop's Light, Land's End, to-morrow morning. Presumably we dock at London some time Thursday.

Wednesday, May 8th.

We are in the Channel to-day, and I got my first glimpse of the English coast, the Seven Sisters.

With one exception the day passed uneventfully. I had just retired for my afternoon siesta when there was a great roar overhead. I dashed on deck and saw a large R.A.F. Avro Anson bomber, completely camouflaged, roar past. It circled around us three or four times and then dived straight at us, coming so close alongside our ship that it was no higher above the water than our top deck. We could see the crew's faces plainly as they waved to us. We could even feel the wind from her propellers as it was a still day.

We should be at the Downs Contraband Station early to-morrow morning. Rumour has it that we are to be put off at Tilbury Docks, and we shall probably spend the night in a warehouse.

Saturday, May 11th.

I have been getting behind in the installments of this letter so the best I can do is to finish it off quickly and post it. I have just run through it and deleted censorable matter.

We landed at London. Things that amaze me are the peculiar shade of bright green on all trees and grass, chimney pots, the good weather (for it has not yet rained), the friendliness of the people, the tidiness of the countryside, the balloon barrage and other war preparations. A letter like this cannot possibly give you all my impressions.

There are only a few things to add before I write again next Wednesday: We had no leave but came straight to Hove, where we have already started training. We get leave every weekend, except this one, from now until the end of our training. I am living in a billet with no hot water but this town is lovely. I bought a bicycle this afternoon. I'll tell you all the rest later.

Love,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. KING ALFRED,
Hove, Sussex, May 17th.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

I am sorry that I had to be so disconnected at the end of my last letter but the rush and bother of settling down here prevented me from giving you a fuller account, and posting the letter as soon as I intended.

Right now I am enjoying life to the full. I am in the very best part of England. My billet is nothing much but Hove is lovely. I am right down by the sea and we have had only sunshine in all the time I have been here. I have had to revise my ideas about English weather.

The training establishment is a regular gilded palace. It is modernistic, still in the process of being completed, and is beautifully situated right at the water's edge in the very nicest part of Hove. The Esplanade (a sort of boardwalk, only nicer) runs along beside it, and the sea breezes cool us as we parade on a large expanse of hedge enclosed lawn. The Establishment was intended to be a municipal bath of very high class, and is extremely modern. The Navy took it over at the outbreak and has converted it for its present purpose. It couldn't be better—in fact it is magnificent.

The training, while it lasts, is stiff but the hours are reasonable and I have never been treated so much like a gentleman in my life! A typical day starts when I get up at seven-thirty and shave. Breakfast is at eight (the food in the mess is wonderful) and at nine are Divisions and prayers. Then we start the day's routine of training. Our first training was respirator drill (gas mask). We have service masks which must be carried with us wherever we go—we practically go to bed with them! The first day we had them we had to test them by getting into a van full of strong tear gas with the respirator on. You couldn't smell a thing until you got the order "respirators off," and then we choked and cried for about ten minutes with the gas fumes. That doesn't mean that we

stayed there breathing the gas for ten minutes. We took off the masks and breathed about two lung-fulls, and that was enough. In the open air we gurgled and spluttered for ten minutes until the effects wore off, and we were none the worse for the whole experience.

I never realized until now how lucky I am to be in this place. It is absolutely top-hole as far as training places go. There are a large number of officers (all sub-lieutenants and midshipmen) of all ages from about eighteen to thirty-five and they are an extremely aristocratic bunch. It is the most sought after and honoured job imaginable—nothing like it in Canada. After two or three months in this place they claim that you are a first class naval officer, though not fully trained.

I am not yet in uniform but that is because Gieve's is rather slow. My uniforms are to arrive to-morrow or the next day. Each officer has two uniforms which look exactly the same but which are made of different cloth. One is for service and the other for wearing around when not training. We carry silver-headed walking canes.

I seem to be digressing from my description of the day's activities. After a morning of drill and lectures, with a fifteen minute recess at eleven, we knock off for lunch at twelve. From twelve until one-thirty is spare time when we can go where we please (uptown, etc.). At one-thirty a bugle blows and we fall in for the afternoon training which lasts until four. At four we have tea, and from then until nine the following morning we are free to do what we want, provided we don't go outside a ten mile radius of the town without leave.

Officers are automatically honorary members, with full privileges, of every club in the district. There are excellent tennis courts owned by the Establishment, bowling greens, golf clubs, sailing clubs, fishing clubs, riding stables, at which we get a reduced rate, and a hundred and one other things we can make use of after hours. I played tennis yesterday afternoon, cycled on my new bike this afternoon and will ride to-morrow, D.V. All in all the whole thing is a bit of a rest cure!

They are very good about leave here. We get leave every week-end from Saturday noon until Monday morning and are encouraged to go away to London, etc. When in uniform your train fare to any part of England is automatically slashed in half. I am going to London this coming week-end to meet all the people to whom I have letters of introduction. I have already written most of them (Mrs. Bouverie, Mr. Ardern and Mr. Pangman) telling them that I am coming.

Last week-end was the only one on which we could not get leave as we were to be introduced to the mysteries of the Establishment. On Sunday afternoon I took myself, on my bicycle, up over the Downs and along a lovely country road. I kept going from two'oclock until nine at night. On my way I saw three little country churches dating back to the Conquest (I attended Evensong in one) and the ruins of an old Norman castle. Just the kind of thing I had dreamed of doing all my life! I then had dinner at a road side inn over five hundred years old (not the dinner).

Wednesday.

I reaped a rich harvest of mail this morning in response to my letters to the Pangman, Bouverie and Ardern clans. Invitations from the last two and two enclosed cables from the first—one from you and one from Gramps. By the way, I hope these letters are being passed on to Gramps and Grandma. I had been worried lest you hadn't received my cables.

I am going to London this week-end and shall stay chez Mrs. Bouverie, and I am going to stay with the Arderns next week-end.

Well, there is little more to say excepting that I was in swimming this afternoon and I shall be in uniform to-morrow.

Until next Sunday,

Love to all,

FREDDIE.

HOLME HOUSE,
Regent's Park,
London, Sunday, May 19th.

Dearest Mum and Dad, and Grandma and Grandpa:

Well, I'm in full uniform now and I think I can flatter myself that I look alright. I shall have my picture taken this week and send it to you immediately.

Since my last letter much of interest has happened. Last Thursday Sub-Lieut. Hardy took a bus-load of us Canadians over the Downs to his country house, a perfectly lovely place hundreds of years old, set in a beautiful estate with one of the finest English gardens I have ever seen. We had a swim in the lake and spent a good deal of the time wandering through his woods, of which he has acres.

This week-end I am in London, staying in the most palatial house I have yet been in. It is in Regent's Park, with about seven acres of lawn facing on a little stream on which people paddle up and down in boats.

Mrs. Bouverie, my hostess, is rather an amazing person. She is quite young, very beautiful, was previously married to an American but divorced him, and is now married to the Hon. Peter Playdell-Bouverie. She is a great friend of all the Royal family, particularly the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and has known the Queen for years. She is going to take me over to the Palace to meet her sometime!

I came to town with a Toronto lad, Doug. Symons, and Mrs. Bouverie insisted that he also should stay the week-end. Last night she took us to a play, "Funny Side Up," with Florence Desmond, and to a night club after that. This morning Doug and I went to the Temple Church, which is very beautiful. The King's private secretary, Sir Eric Neville, was

here for lunch, and after that we went to the Zoo, which is only about half a mile from here. Then Doug and I went to the thé-dansant at the Dorchester Hotel. It is what they call the Officers' Club and is open to all officers of all the services. Young ladies, ranging from peeresses to chorus girls, do their bit of war work by entertaining as dancing and tea partners. You will be glad to know that the ones we escorted home were more peeress than chorus!

Really, I am having a wonderful time, and everyone in England is very nice and most obliging. There is a certain amount of apprehension about the situation in France at this moment, and Sir Eric says that it is quite as serious as in 1918. By the time you get this letter it will probably be clearer one way or the other—let's hope it's not the other!

Quite aside from all this frivolity, which seems to occupy most of this letter, I am working very hard all week and already am pretty proficient with the sextant. I can do Morse and semaphore with the best of them, and am learning rapidly how to dismantle a six-inch gun.

You have no conception of how the English people, particularly the women, have thrown themselves into this war. The country everywhere is a veritable armed camp—people in uniform, balloons floating serenely over London (hundreds and hundreds of them), sandbags and anti-aircraft guns wherever you go, gas masks, rationing, and complete optimism. I enjoy every moment of it and would not have missed it for the world even if I should get bumped off—which I won't.

The weather has been uniformly beautiful, with sunshine and warm breezes every day, everything green and flowering, and everyone extremely nice. The whole thing is a perfectly marvellous experience, and although I would like you all to be over here with me I have never had a single pang of homesickness, the reason being that I am quite at home here.

It is about nine o'clock and the sun is setting. I can hear the shouts of the boaters on the lake, and I am about to go downstairs for a few sandwiches before catching the ten o'clock train back to Hove.

So until next Wednesday,

Love to all,

FREDDIE.

P.S.—Holme House is enormous and built on Georgian lines. My room is massive, furnished with genuine Georgian furniture—a huge double bed, two telephones (one for the house and one for outside). Mrs. Bouverie insists that this be my home every time I'm in London (which it won't), and guarantees that the next time I'm here she will get me the prettiest girl in London to take out.

H.M.S. KING ALFRED,

Tuesday, May 21st.

Dearest Grandpa and Grandma :

I think that the best way for me to write home is to write to you and Mum and Dad jointly. In this way I can say all I have to say in longer letters, without the necessity of repeating myself. But I must thank you for your cable which I received some days ago.

As you will gather from my earlier letters life here is extremely pleasant. The training, though intensive, is not arduous, and everyone in the whole country is extremely kind to a Canadian. I have a bicycle and spend a good deal of my spare time chasing about the rural districts, visiting old castles and churches. England is up to, and in fact beyond, my wildest expectations.

I do not, of course, remember what the spirit of the last war was like, but I imagine that it is revived in its entirety in this one. The country is like an armed camp. As I ride along the country roads on my bike aeroplanes roar overhead, and anti-aircraft guns fairly bristle from the hedges.

What particularly amazes me is the way the women work. They are all in uniform and they buzz about like a lot of very efficient bees. They march more smartly than the men, and when you walk down the street it is they who salute you rather than the men who make up our other services.

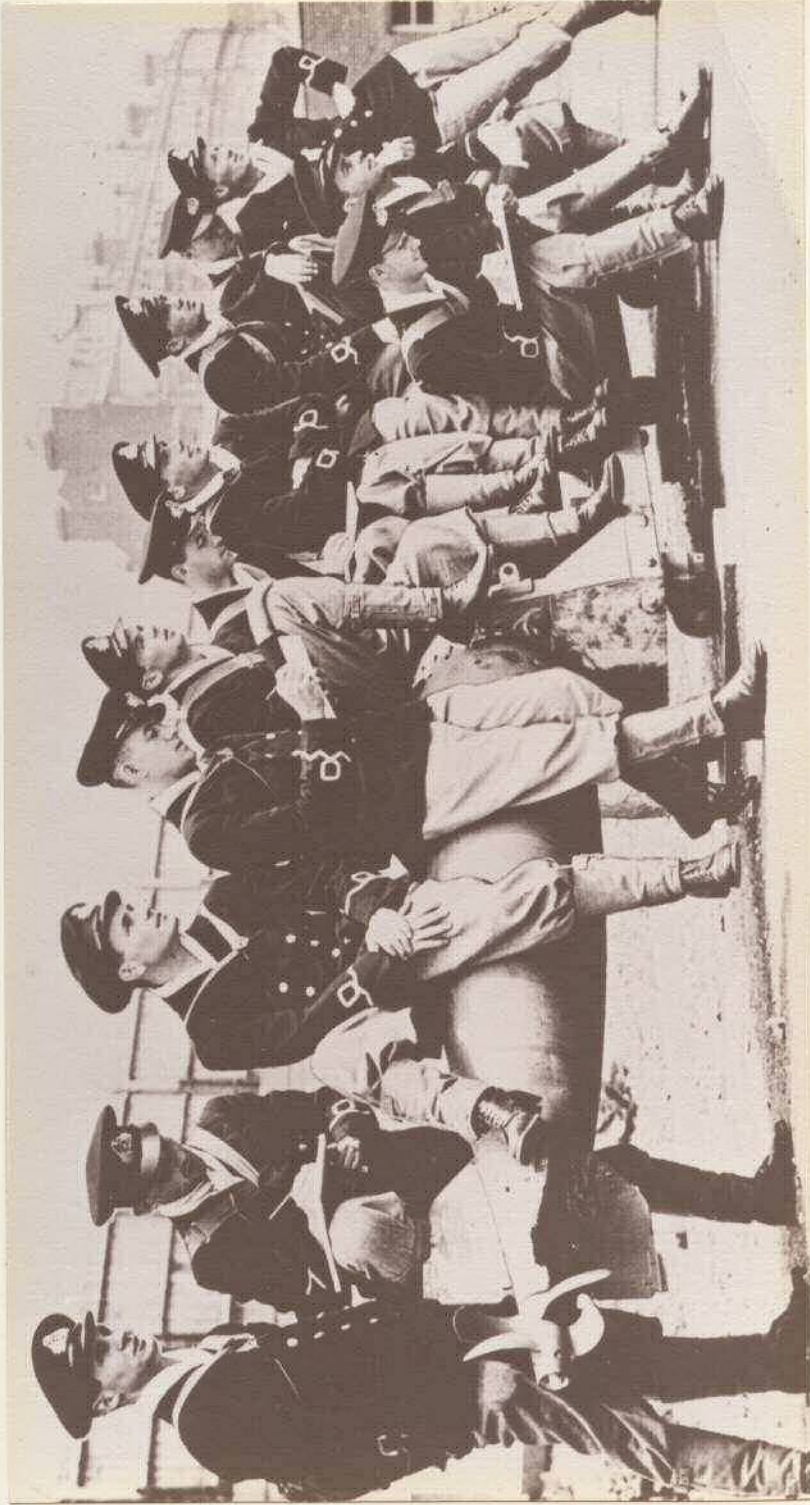
I spent last week-end at a very posh place in London, and the lady of the house, who is second in command of the London Red Cross, does up to sixteen hours' work a day, and neither grumbles nor boasts about it.

The situation which has sprung up in the last few days has greatly shaken people up in this country, but the general feeling is optimistic as to the ultimate outcome. It is noticeable, however, that people are following the government's instructions about carrying their gas masks wherever they go.

Well, until my next letter to you and the parents, which I shall write to-morrow.

Love,

FREDDIE.



A SIGNALS CLASS FROM H.M.S. "KING ALFRED"
"FREDDIE" THIRD FROM LEFT ON GERMAN TORPEDO

H.M.S. KING ALFRED,
Kingsway, Hove, May 22nd.

Dearest Mum:

Excepting that we are all very worried about the way the war is going at present there is little to tell you all of news. Accordingly this letter will tell you of various things which you asked me to describe in detail.

My exact training syllabus I am not at liberty to describe, but the subjects are divided as follows: field training (marching, field formation and drill); seamanship (a very general course embracing everything from knots and splices to lowering an anchor on H.M.S. Hood); navigation (which includes navigation within sight of land, and includes the use of rules of right-of-way, buoys, etc., a lot of which I have done on the "Dayspring"); gunnery (which is the study of naval guns and how they are controlled, aimed and fired); torpedo (which is the study of torpedoes, depth charges and all other explosives) and last and almost the most important is signalling which includes signalling by semaphore, Morse and Morse lights, and flags, both the naval and mercantile marine codes. This last is a fairly difficult subject as we were expected to become quite proficient in it.

As you can see, there is a great deal to be done in a short space of time, and it is up to the individual to get it done in the best way he can. We are allowed to choose what type of craft we want, and the chances are that our choice will be heeded.

My uniform may be of interest to you. I am never allowed out of it, and the result is that I have a lot of spare clothes here which I really don't need.

I have two uniforms, (*i.e.*, two tunics and two pairs of trousers), which look exactly the same. The first, called No. 3, is serge, and is used for service. Actually our working uniform down here consists of grey flannel trousers, No. 3 tunic, white cashmere scarf, gaiters, boots and cap. In the evening, however, we climb into our No. 5 for dinner. This

is made of very fine cloth indeed—and it should be at the price. Mine, which I got at Gieves (who are absolutely the top-notchers in naval uniforms), is made of exactly the same stuff as my Trinity blazer. It is as smooth as velvet and is made of broadcloth, although the tailor calls it Viennese or Venetian or something. I have not yet bought a greatcoat, but I have a naval raincoat which is blue, a Burberry along exactly the same lines as my fawn raincoat. In cold weather, which I have not yet felt, a white cashmere scarf is worn. For footwear, I have a pair of naval boots, which are ordinary boots less the toe cap, and which I use for rough work during training. In addition I have a good pair of naval shoes (plain oxfords), and for dress wear I have a pair of half Wellingtons. I wear brown gloves and carry a silver-headed cane. I always carry a respirator.

I had my picture taken to-day and will send you a copy when it is developed. There is a good photographer here in Hove, and he did the job for me.

As for banking arrangements, I wrote to Mr. Pangman in London, and as he was away I got a letter from his deputy explaining that my account was open. For added convenience I have deposited about fifty pounds in the Westminster bank here in Hove. This means that I have two bank accounts—so don't worry yet, at least, about my running short of the necessary. I am living well within my income.

The meals at the ship are good, although the food is a little different from what I have been accustomed to. The English substitute for milk is beer, and I find it a poor substitute. English milk is very good (better than ours), and although I have to pay four pence a pint for it I have a pint brought in before breakfast every day, and drink another pint for lunch (four pence more), but it is worth it.

Due to lots of exercise, (tennis, marching, P.T. and swimming) I consider myself in A1 physical shape and have never felt better. The bullets will bounce right off me! In addition I get to bed early and get up early.

The only thing that I dislike about the whole business is my billet. It has the advantage of being near the ship and

in a nice part of Hove, but it has the disadvantage of being crowded, and having very little hot water. The only way in which the crowding affects me is that it has relegated myself and my room-mate (Stan Moxley, a nice chap from Toronto) into a large converted dining room full of all sorts of extra furniture. The room is lovely and airy, and beautifully sunny all morning, but the furniture, which is piled in great stacks all around the room, is enough, by its very hideousness, to make your hair stand on end. In addition, there are large Victorian prints hung around the room named, from left to right, "The Leopard Skin," "Little Lady Bountiful," "The Relief of Ladysmith," and "A Little Charmer". Most of them are hung in heavy gilt frames, and some depict coy children holding one another's hands. Besides this the wardrobe facilities are none too good, and we generally hang our clothes from the chandelier. On the mantel there is a clock which makes our "Objet d'Art" look like an alarm clock. We hang our caps and scarves on that.

I do not object to this so much as I do to the absence of hot water. I am getting fed up with having to use a tea-cup full of hot water for shaving purposes, and only having a real honest-to-goodness bath on Tuesdays and Thursdays, at sixpence a crack. At Mrs. Bouverie's I spent most of the week-end in the bathtub, which Frederick, the second footman, and my valet, would prepare for me! However, I have to excuse my landlady because coal is rationed, and in a house with one bathtub it is very hard to accommodate fourteen naval officers, four of your own family, and four London evacuee-children. Mrs. Polter, the landlady, is a very patriotic, salt-of-the-earth sort of person, and I admire her for her own little war effort.

Well, there is little else to say, excepting that I intend to cable you to-morrow in reply to your cable which I was overjoyed to receive the other day.

I am spending next week-end with the Arderns at Weybridge, and will write again on Sunday.

Love to Dad, David and "bratskiis",

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. KING ALFRED,
Hove, Sussex, May 28th.

Dearest Mum:

The cable service must be extremely quick. I sent you a cable yesterday which you received to-day. You sent me one this morning apparently, which I got this afternoon. In addition to being quick it is cheap as I can send twelve words for three bob.

As I said in my cable I spent last week-end at Weybridge and had a marvellous time. On Saturday night we had a sort of dinner party at Glen Lodge with some young people and some older ones. (Believe me, a dinner party is a rare thing in these days with all the food rationing). After this we went dancing at the local hotel. The following morning was the day the King had decreed to be a day of prayer. Mr. and Mrs. Ardern went to the Christian Science Church and Joan and I went to the Anglican Church, which was packed to the doors.

In the afternoon I went with Joan, and another young lady and gent, for a motor drive to Windsor and Eton. We came back via Great Fosters, a hunting lodge of Queen Elizabeth's, set in beautiful grounds, and there we had tea. We got back about six and went for a walk over the golf course and along some country lanes which were beautifully green and fringed with large purple rhododendrons. I caught the nine-fifteen train back to London, and from there the ten-twenty-seven to Brighton. The whole week-end was marvellous and I am going there again the week-end after next.

Next week-end I believe I shall go to Portsmouth to see Pat Strathy, from whom I heard yesterday. If not I may go to London, as Mrs. Bouverie says she has a couple of blondes lined up for me and my friend Symons. You can gather from this that my spare time is well occupied, and I am never at a loss for something to do or somewhere to go.

I received a seven-foot scarf, along with a very nice note, from Mrs. William Hendrie the other day, and have just written to thank her.

There is no news, excepting that we are a little worried about the turn the war seems to have taken of late. The Germans are now about fifty or sixty miles from this place and we are all prepared for an attack of any kind. The news looks bad to-day, with the Belgian king throwing in the towel, but as Duff Cooper says "the situation is far from hopeless."

Thursday. I went to Brighton last night to see the D'Oyley Carte people do "The Yeomen of the Guard", and I am going again to-night to see "Iolanthe". They are very good indeed.

Well, I must go now—until my next letter,

Love to all,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. KING ALFRED,
Hove, Sussex, Tuesday, June 4th.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

I am not quite holding to my original schedule of two letters a week because very little happens during the week which would be of interest to you—so generally I shall write after the weekend in addition to sending you a cable on Mondays until, at least, I go on service, and even then as often as possible.

I do not know when my training here ends and I go on service, but I believe that I shall be here at least four weeks more. I am going to do my damndest to get into M.T.B.'s (motor torpedo boats) but there is no telling if that is the job I'll get.

To-day has been my big day in this place. I was President of the Mess at dinner to-night and I am officer of the day, which means that I sleep in the mess office and am called two or three times during the night to do the rounds with a couple of Petty Officers and ratings. It is a more responsible position than usual just now, due to the likelihood of air attack, and I'm not sure I'd know what to do if we were bombed, unless it is to run like the devil for the air raid shelter.

I have received quite a number of letters, parcels and cables from you all, and I always make a bee-line for the mail box in the morning. Keep up the good work. I shall notify you by cable immediately I change my address, but it is quite probable that I will not be able to give you an address other than G.P.O. London. Don't be surprised if you hear of this change quite suddenly. Things are apt to happen very suddenly over here.

Don't let this war situation get you down over there. None of us are very worried here, and although the events of the past few weeks may serve to prolong the whole thing a bit I don't believe it will go on so much longer. Also don't worry

about me as I have a firm belief that I'm lucky, and besides that policeman friend of Dad's has much the same sort of philosophy that I have.

I hope that you got my cable yesterday about butter and fudge. The fudge was delicious (thank Mrs. Higgins from the bottom of my heart and tell her that the more she sends the better). Don't send butter as I don't want the damned stuff. I get all I need and it is just a nuisance to have great chunks of such material arriving over here. The food shortage, as far as I'm concerned at any rate, is overrated and the only thing I'd use butter for would be to grease my bicycle!

As I said in my cable I was at Portsmouth last weekend. The object of the visit was to see Pat Strathy, who arrived a couple of weeks ago. We had a marvellous time and saw the Dockyard, which is really the heart of the whole Navy. What I saw in the Dockyard I am not at liberty to say, but after a look at H.M.S. Victory (of Trafalgar fame) I'm sure that we can only win this war.

The Officers' Mess at the naval barracks puts our rather make-shift outfit to shame. Those boys really live off the fat of the land. I was particularly impressed by the huge murals of the Battle of Trafalgar all around the Mess. You might tell Mrs. Levy, if you see her, that I saw John too, and he is very well and enjoying life.

After a series of retakes my picture is to be completed tomorrow and I shall send you half a dozen copies right away to be distributed as you think best. The picture is fair and will at least give you an idea of what the uniform looks like.

There is little more of interest to tell you except that I am going to Weybridge next weekend. For a few more days, then, "pip pip".

Love,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. KING ALFRED,
Kingsway, Hove,

Monday, June 10th.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

The last time I wrote was the night I was on duty at the ship as Officer of the Day. I spent a rather sleepless night on an air mattress, in my uniform, and I was roused periodically by a C.P.O. with whom I made the rounds of the sentries. Nothing much happened that night, but two nights later we had an air raid warning. It was the first of the war for Hove, and I must say that the noise of the sirens, at two in the morning, was enough to make a corpse shiver. However, nothing much came of the raid. I think some of the planes did pass over, and bombs were dropped in some of the neighbouring counties. We all went down into the basement, with our respirators, and after about an hour of waiting and tea-drinking I got fed up and went back to bed. A few moments later the "raid is passed" signal sounded, and no one was the worse for the whole thing. I imagine that Hove will get it before the war is out, though, so I'm being careful.

I spent last weekend at Weybridge again. We played a good deal of tennis, visited all the neighbours, went dancing on Saturday night, but apart from that it was a quiet week-end. Mr. Ardern is an extremely amusing person, and it is amazing how he can tease and annoy his wife and daughter. You might write the Arderns, Mum, and tell them how I enjoy myself there. It is really almost a second "Staplehurst" for me over here. Joan plays an exceedingly good, hard and fast game of tennis, and it is quite an effort to beat her!

I am sure that this is a very momentous day in the history of the world. Mussolini, the dirty dog, has stabbed his old friends in the back, and I'm glad of the opportunity to take a crack at those greasy wops. I hope they intern the whole lot of them in Hamilton, and everywhere else. We are expecting great things in Roosevelt's address an hour from now. Incidentally, I have just bought a very fine little portable radio.

I don't know when I am likely to be drafted for some form of service. It may be to-morrow and it may be a month to-morrow. I want it firmly understood by you all that I might not be able to keep in touch with you when I am on service. Of course I shall write and telegraph whenever and wherever I can, be it London, England, or Naples, Italy, but if you don't hear from me for days, or even weeks on end, DON'T WORRY. If I get clipped you'll know immediately, I can promise you that, so when you don't hear you can pretty well count on it that I'm O.K.

I sent those pictures of myself last week with an enclosed note asking you to be sure to send one of them to Maxwell Bruce. He particularly wants one of them and I trust that whatever fond relatives may be left out in the rush (?), he will get one.

Little of momentous significance has occurred lately. I shall cable you to-morrow, and I shall cable immediately, also, when I get shifted from here.

I hope that you have been getting my letters steadily and have enjoyed reading them.

Love,

FREDDIE.

P.S.—I certainly get lots of music over here. The continental radio plays nothing but classical stuff, and plays it extremely well, particularly the French and German radio. Even now I am listening to a Bach suite played on the harpsichord.

The sound of guns across the channel was quite audible all day to-day in Hove.

H.M.S. KING ALFRED,
Hove, Sussex,

Monday, June 19th.

Dear Mum, Dad, Grandpa and Grandma:

Well, the situation looks pretty desperate to-day. Who would have thought, three or four months ago, that France would throw in the towel, but she's done it and that leaves us as the last obstacle to Nazi world domination. It seems incredible, and it is a nasty thought no matter which way you look at it. It may be sacriligious to say so but many people wonder what has happened to Roosevelt, Russia and God. The situation certainly is bad but anything but hopeless. The Germans are going to find the English Channel a little wider than the rivers Seine and Somme—and a little better guarded. True, we are in constant peril of air attack, and that on a large scale, but we are prepared for it and there is nothing else they can do. They will never be able to land troops here on any scale, but if they try the British Army is still intact. I am longing to get a crack at them and I don't think it will be long now. It is marvellous to be living in such times as these and if I live through them (and I never doubt I will) it will have been well worth all the risk involved.

I am quite prepared for an air attack to-night. My slippers, dressing gown and torch are close by my bed (not to speak of my respirator, commonly called exaspirator because it is such a damned nuisance to carry around). I shall send you a picture of myself in my respirator—it really does wonders for my appearance!

While we are on the subject of pictures I must tell you that the Canadian papers are soon to be filled with pictures of us Canadians training over here. I shall try to get you one clipped from the London Standard of to-night and enclose it in this letter.

Last weekend I went to London for Saturday, when I met Strathy. We stayed at the Regent Palace Hotel (Jews' Paradise). We saw the play "Rebecca" that evening. On

Sunday morning I went to the Church of St. Martin-in-the-fields, which I found a little disappointing. After lunch I went out to Weybridge, arriving there about two o'clock. Mrs. Coste was there and we all went for a walk. When we got back we went over to a neighboring town to visit some friends of the Arderns for tea. Who should be there but John McCormack, the Irish tenor, who is a most entertaining and amusing person. I had a long talk with him, ranging all the way from matters musical to that rascal Mussolini.

I stayed for supper at the Arderns and took the nine-thirty to Clapham Junction and thence to Brighton. The train was packed to the doors with people standing all over one another in the corridors and compartments. As most of these people were Tommies, just back from France, and looking forward to a good bath, you can gather that the atmosphere did not compare too favourably with that of a rose garden. I stood up from Weybridge to Clapham, but from there to Brighton I had a compartment to myself in which I slept soundly, after throwing open all the windows and blacking out all the lights as the regulations require.

Nothing much has happened in my life lately. Last Thursday I was out for a forty mile cycle ride. I started right after training and didn't get back until nightfall. I had dinner at a country pub called the King's Head, which was a going concern in the time of Henry VIII. Life, while it lasts, is certainly pleasant.

After not receiving much mail from Canada I got quite a bunch the other day. Encourage David to write more often as his letters are most entertaining. I shall start to-morrow and write him often.

There is little else to say now excepting that you can be confident that we'll win this war, and that very soon now.

Love to you all,

FREDDIE.

Tuesday. I am leaving to-day for what may prove a dangerous demolition job in France. I shall telegraph you when I get back—it will be before you get this letter.

ROYAL NAVAL BARRACKS,
Devonport, Monday, June 24th.

Dearest Dad:

Since I wrote you last I have had my first whack of active service. I was getting fed up with the inactivity of life at H.M.S. King Alfred and when the chance came to volunteer for a "picnic" I snapped at it. The "picnic" turned out to be a demolition party, such as are generally conceded to be about as risky going as anything in the Navy. I have had a good deal of training in demolition, though, and along with three others of our Canadian group I was chosen.

Within two hours of volunteering we were on the train for London (last Thursday). We arrived there at 10 p.m. and had to change stations to get the Plymouth train at 1.00 a.m. We could not get sleeper accommodation but fortunately I managed to procure one side of a first class compartment to myself and slept tolerably well on the way down. We arrived at Plymouth about eight o'clock on Friday morning, and I, being in charge of the party, reported to the commander in charge, a Commander Sherbrooke, who incidentally commands H.M.S. Matabele, one of our finest and newest Tribal Class destroyers, and who distinguished himself at Narvik.

After a day of waiting around this luxurious establishment (the St. James Club in Montreal has nothing on the Mess of these Naval barracks) and poking around the Dockyard, we finally got our orders in the evening to leave next morning.

The following morning we got up bright and early and boarded our destroyer—not the Matabele but a rather older and smaller craft. The danger of the situation was brought home to me immediately I saw that we had a deck cargo of five tons of high explosive consisting of gun cotton, T.N.T. and fulminate of mercury. In the event of our being struck by even one tiny little aerial bomb (which was quite likely enough) our ship would simply have been blown to smithereens. That we were not struck is obvious by the fact that I am writing you now.

The destroyer pulled up her anchor and we went lacing across the Channel at a very fast rate of speed. All that day and night we went, all of us taking our turns at watch on the bridge, and arrived at our destination, an important Bay of Biscay French port, the following morning. As luck would have it it was a glorious day with few clouds and extremely ripe possibilities of aircraft attack—in fact probabilities. We had no idea whether or not Jerry had occupied our port as yet, but we found out from some of the hundreds of refugees, who were off the coast in small boats, that he had not, but that he was fifteen miles away. As we came near our port we saw evidence that the French had burned their bridges behind them. Huge petrol tanks all along the shore were ablaze and sending up dense black clouds of smoke. This was rather annoying as I had hoped to blow these up myself. In the harbour an enormous new lightship lay on her side, charred by flames.

I had studied the map well and in company with my T.G.M. (Torpedo Gunners Mate) and L.T.O.'s (Leading Torpedo Operators), who are petty officers who have been dealing with explosives and demolition all their lives, I formed my plan of action. I might say that the demolition party had been divided into four parts, one part under each of us. I was in command of "A" party and had under me one T.G.M., three L.T.O.'s and fifteen ratings. The others had approximately the same.

Our reconnaissance party went ashore. This consisted of Commander Sherbrooke, Admiral Hallett, who was in charge of the whole demolition programme in France, and one of our officers. Soon they came back with the unwelcome news that the French had everything ready to blow up and there was nothing for us to do. We were greatly disappointed as we were all set to land, with tin helmet, water bottle and .45 revolver—not to speak of a couple of tons of T.N.T.

My sorrows were interrupted, however, by the noise of approaching aircraft. A German reconnaissance plane passed over at some distance and we thought we had better be on our way before he brought back some of his big brothers, so we lit

out at full speed down the coast. A few minutes later there was another roar and a German heavy bomber could be seen approaching us from the direction of the sun. I thought our doom was sealed, but all our A.A. guns opened up on her and without dropping a bomb she turned tail and cleared out. At this point, demolition being out of the question, we received orders to go down the coast and pick up a convoy of evacuated troops off a certain island. The sky had darkened by this time and when we arrived off the island, which is about thirty miles off the mainland, the Bay of Biscay had begun to wind itself up for one of its famous storms. I shall never forget the sight of the rocky coast of that island in the half light. The coast is very high and the waves dashed high above it. Apparently it is one of the most primitive places in Europe—they still burn witches there.

We put off a small boat which got ashore, I don't know how, and found that our convoy had already left.

To make a long story short we turned around and headed back for England. We would have arrived here last night if we had not caught up with a couple of our destroyers and spent most of the night hunting for a submarine which we did not get.

Back in Devenport now I am dog tired, having had little sleep on that wretched destroyer. We have to stand by for a day or so on the chance that we might be wanted for another job. This job won't be demolition, as France has got her shameful armistice, but it may be forming an armed guard on French merchantmen at Bayonne. In other words we may be put in charge of boarding parties, to hold a gun in the ribs of some French skipper who wants to give up his ship, and make him steer for England. At any rate I'll let you know to-morrow whether this scheme has materialised. Meanwhile I am going to bed.

Wednesday.

I did not post this yesterday as I expected orders and I wanted to let you know what was doing. Unfortunately no

orders were forthcoming and I am still standing by in this palatial "hotel", living off the fat of the land and waiting. Meanwhile I have seen much of Plymouth and Devonport (our most important dockyard) and they certainly are inspiring places.

I am afraid that it is going to be a long war now that Germany dominates Europe. But I do believe that in this "Island Fortress," with America at our backs or beside us, that we can and will emerge the victors in the struggle ahead. People have at last awakened to the danger in which England finds herself, and there is a good deal less complacency now than there was when I arrived. In this place I am in close contact with lots of senior naval officers. I eat with them and talk with them (they are fine chaps) and their attitude is one of wakeful confidence. One of the finest of these officers is old Admiral Hallett, who went over to France with us on the destroyer. He is not at all what I had imagined an admiral to be like. He is a real tough old customer, going about on board in a dirty pair of grey flannels and a battered old naval tunic. He did not spend all his time in the captain's cabin either, but would sit in the ward room, or on one of those T.N.T. cases on deck, and spin us long yarns about his yachting experiences. Two summers ago he and some friends crossed the Atlantic in a boat not much bigger than the "Dayspring," and sailed for some time off the Nova Scotia and New England coast. He has been retired for the past few years but has been recalled and given every dirty job that the Navy has had to do. He was in command of naval parties at Narvik, he had a big hand in the Dunkirk show, and has been in charge of all this demolition work you read about.

I received some mail this morning that was forwarded from the King Alfred. A letter from you, two from Mum, and one from Gramps enclosing a cheque and a most amusing letter from an Irishman to his cousin in America. Please tell Mum that her air mail letters, though well intentioned and well burdened down with stamps, took just as long as an ordinary letter would. Apparently it is a matter of luck whether the

air mail will be fast or slow. Several chaps have received letters in six days and many have had to wait three weeks. I think the ordinary mail is the best way to send letters over here.

I am interested to hear of David's projected summer activities. I am a firm believer in the Bros. Parks Business College—Academy of Higher Learning—as an efficient finishing school for any young lady or gent. I also approve of your idea of getting him into some sort of military engineering course. The Engineers are a good lot—I have had a good deal to do with them lately in connection with demolition, and we need an efficient R.E. to counteract the efficiency of the German corps.

There is very little else to say excepting that I am still awaiting further orders. We may have to go on this trip to the Bay of Biscay (in which event I have bought a pocket compass) and we may be sent back to Hove. I will let you know which in my next letter.

Love,

FREDDIE.

ROYAL NAVAL BARRACKS,
Devonport, June 28th.

Dearest Gramps:

I received a most delightful letter from you this morning, along with an extremely generous donation from the "Finance Committee" which seems to have lost none of its old peacetime solvency. The Irish letter enclosed caused considerable amusement to me and my friends, and I am keeping it in my pocket-book to show to others.

I have just returned from my first whack of active service and have described it at length in a letter to Dad which I posted to-day and which you should receive before long. The thing (luckily I suppose) turned out to be a bit of a fizzle, but it was a nice quiet introduction to the gentle art of making war. I am waiting around Devonport now on the chance that I might get another job which I understand would put me in the category of a pirate and entitle me to fly the skull-and-crossbones from the yardarm. This job consists of going over in a destroyer and boarding French merchantmen. If the captain is amenable to reason, well and good, but if he is not I must poke a pistol in his ribs and tell him the direction of England. Apparently the morale of these damned Frenchmen is completely shot. When some of our party were ashore the other day in France they had to disarm some Frenchmen who took them for Germans, and slapping them on the back shouted "Camarade, Camarade—Vive l'Allemagne." Such conduct is disgraceful, even from "our gallant ally" of yesterday. I realize that the French have been very brave in their resistance, but their surrender simply bears out what I heard at the beginning of the war—that the Frenchmen believe that this is England's war and he is not going to die for England.

The news has been bad in one way but it has been good in another. The air is now clear, or almost clear. England is fighting once more against the whole continent of Europe, unencumbered by false friends and, we hope, secure against attack by the German land forces. We have never been beaten yet and with God's help we won't be beaten now.

Love to all,

FREDDIE.

WHITE FRIARS HOTEL,
Boreham, Herstmonceux,
Sussex, Friday, June 28th.

Dear David:

I suppose you are thinking that it is about time I wrote to you and you're quite right. Truth to tell, since I received your letter I have been exceedingly busy, having just got back from a little picnic over to France which, no doubt, you read about in my last letter to Dad. You understand, I hope, that my letters home are as much for you as for Mum and Dad and the rest. It is very difficult for me to write individual letters to each member of the family. Accordingly, I cannot write to you as much as I hope, and expect, that you will write to me.

The day I wrote to Dad I got orders to return to my ship at Hove, which I did, and on reporting for duty this morning I was granted a long week-end's leave, extending from Friday morning until Monday noon. I intended to spend the better part of this leave at Weybridge, but when I phoned Joan Ardern this morning I found, to my surprise, that she had left, with her young sister, for Canada. I changed my plans, and hopping on my bicycle after lunch I set out for Canterbury, which is a matter of about a hundred and fifty miles from Hove. It was a lovely day and I had the wind behind me. You would be amazed at how good all the roads are here. They seem to be made for cyclists, and since, owing to the petrol rationing, there are few cars, you can make good time. The only difficulty is that all signposts telling the route to places have been taken down (owing to the possibility of invasion) and you have to rely exclusively on road maps.

After travelling for about six hours, and having come about forty or fifty miles, I came into the quaint old village of Herstmonceux, which is a few miles inland from Hastings. This was one of the original Norman baronies, and has a huge castle which looks much like "Mandalay" in "Rebecca." I had heard of this castle so I stopped and asked the way to it.

My informant was the most gorgeous creature I have ever laid eyes on—except for a few. None of this rough-and-ready country girl stuff either, but a real beauty, evacuated from London. Hearing my Canadian twang (a sure fire road to success here) she offered to show me the way, so she mounted her bike and off we went. Fool that I was, I never thought I'd see her again, so I didn't get her name and address.

After seeing the castle (though only from a distance) I continued on my way until I came to Battle, which is a fair-sized town containing an old abbey of historical interest, Battle Abbey. (Incidentally, I am by myself on this trip). I had dinner at Battle and would have stayed the night but unfortunately I had entered the protected area in which no non-residents, no matter how good their credentials, are permitted to stay. I had a long argument with the police chief on the subject, and waved my naval identity card violently before his nose, but he was one of these "orders is orders" birds and the result was I had to back up to the nearest town outside the area which, believe it or not, is Herstmonceux. Here I found an exceedingly fine inn (I hope it won't be too expensive) called the White Friars Hotel. It is situated on a hill that overlooks a beautiful expanse of Downs country. I intend to seek my little friend to-morrow and if I should find her who knows but that this delightful inn shall receive my patronage for the next two days?

I approve of your decision to attend the Parks Business College for a few weeks. The typewriting, in particular, is of great assistance at the University. I would strongly advise you to give up the McGill idea and go to the better university at Toronto. Live at Trinity House, even if you are in Engineering, join the Zeta Psi and enter into the Trinity College activities as much as possible. You will find more opportunities for acting in plays and better facilities for whatever form of sport you like best than at McGill. Besides, you will be closer to home, which is better for Mum and Dad in these difficult times. Take my word for it, once you get going at Varsity you'll never want to go to McGill.

Saturday. I got up late this morning and pulling back the blackout curtains, which they have even in the rural districts, the sun streamed through the window and the birds were really beating it out. My room faces east overlooking lovely country, and honeysuckle trails in the window and lends the air a marvellous fragrance. I have decided to stay here for a day or two, particularly as I am stiff from my bicycle ride, and I shall spend my time reading "Tess of the D'Ibervilles" by Thomas Hardy and writing off my arrears of letters. I have just been sitting in the garden reading in the "Daily Telegraph," which I find the best morning paper, the views about Willkie being chosen as Republican candidate. He sounds like a good man for the job all right.

Please write again soon and let me know the full inside gossip.

Affectionately yours,

FREDDIE.

GRAND HOTEL,
Middlesbrough, Wednesday, July 3rd.

Dearest Mum:

In my last letter to Dad I was sitting around the palatial naval barracks at Devonport, H.M.S. Drake, awaiting further orders after our somewhat anti-climactic demolition party in France. My orders came the same day, *i.e.*, that we were to return forthwith to Hove. This we did, and arriving back on Friday we were given leave until noon on Monday. I intended to go to the Arderns for the week-end so I called up Joan and found, to my surprise, that she and her young sister, Ruth, had left for Canada. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Ardern were in so I decided that in view of what must have been a trying week for them I had better postpone my visit. Accordingly, I hopped on my bike, intending to spend the week-end in Canterbury.

When I cycle anywhere I wear a brown shirt and a pair of brown shorts with brown knitted stockings up to my knees. I carry no baggage, apart from the perennial respirator, razor and tooth brush, so I make fairly good time.

It was a beautiful afternoon that day and when I got tired of cycling I hauled out my book, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," and stretched out for an hour under a tree. By dinner time I had reached Battle (known for its abbey, dating back to Norman times). I had dinner there and would have stayed the night but for the fact that I was in the "protected zone." I backed up five or six miles and found a very beautiful country inn, with a lovely garden and a lot of nice people, at a village called Herstmonceux, and there I spent the week-end, reading, cycling, eating and sleeping.

All good things must come to an end, though, and on Monday afternoon I was back in harness. A surprise was in store for me, for late that day I saw my name on the draft list, along with that of another Canadian in my class. I was to leave the next day, so I packed on Monday night, sending a

suitcase full of unnecessary home, and retaining the rest of my baggage. Next morning I cleared up all my bills, transferred my bank account, shook the dust of Hove from off my feet and boarded the train for this wretched, industrial Yorkshire city. I stopped over in London to see Mr. Ardern in his office and tell him where I was going, etc. I hope that you will be as nice to the two Ardern girls as they have been to me over here. In Canada you should all inconvenience yourselves a bit for the benefit of the English evacuees you will be getting. You have no idea how people over here are doing that kind of thing just now.

We (*i.e.*, Peter Hincks, a lad from Victoria, who has been training with me, and who is assigned to the same ship) arrived here late last night after an unpleasant train ride, and took up our lodgings at the above mentioned establishment, which is not as grand as it sounds but is the best that Middlesbrough can offer.

This morning we reported for duty and were taken to our ship. She is a corvette, or escort vessel, built especially for convoy work. She is a beautiful little ship, a bit smaller than a destroyer, though quite heavily armed. She is in the final stages of construction, and we are to start commissioning her next Tuesday. That means that we will be taking to the sea in about a fortnight's time if all goes well.

She is very modern and exceedingly comfortably appointed. There are four officers aboard: the captain, Lieutenant Commander Legrassick, the first lieutenant, Hincks and myself. Hincks and I are to share a large and comfortable cabin. After my four or five days on H.M.S. Vanquisher (my destroyer of last week) I think that the Godetia (for that is her name) is going to be a veritable paradise. We even have a bathtub aboard.

Hincks and I have spoken to the captain (a fine chap, I think) and I hope to be navigator while Hincks takes charge of anti-submarine equipment. Of course I know little of celestial navigation as yet but I expect to learn. In one sense, then, I will be third in command of the ship!

I don't know where we are to be based, but I do know that it is not at this mud-hole. I shall be delighted when we get out of here. It is much the same as having the "Dayspring" up Oakville Creek, only there is much more coal dust here, and infinitely more rivetting machines.

By the way, when I was at Plymouth last week who should come into the naval mess but Eric McMurry, who had just lost his ship, H.M.S. Fraser, off the coast of France. I spent that evening and the next morning with him before I had to leave. He is very well, although rather at a loose end for the present until he gets a new ship, and sends his love.

Well, I can't think of anything else of interest that has happened lately. The next couple of weeks are bound to be fairly dull as I shall have to hang around the ship while she is being commissioned. I might say that I am pleased with my appointment, and could not have found a more comfortable ship. The convoying may be monotonous but we'll get used to it after a while. At any rate we shouldn't be too cold in the winter as the Godetia is steam-heated.

I sent you a telegram yesterday informing you of my new address which I repeat: Sub-Lieut. Frederick S. Ker, R.C.N.V.R., H.M.S. Godetia, G.P.O., London.

My love to all,

FREDDIE.

P.S.—I have just been out in the country where my C.O. and his wife had a little supper party for us. They are exceedingly nice and are quite a young couple. Legrassick is a peach of a chap along somewhat the same lines as Gilbert Scott. I think that what with a fine ship and a fine captain I am going to enjoy life.

The only problem in the whole business was my bicycle. It is a good one and I have grown very attached to it, so I had it shipped up here from Hove, hoping to use it a little while longer before selling it when I go to sea. That problem is now settled as the bike is coming with us on the ship!

GRAND HOTEL,
Middlesbrough, July 10th.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

I am still in this infernal place awaiting the completion of my ship. However, it won't be long now until she noses out of the harbour and away from this dreary part of the country to somewhat pleasanter southern England.

Since last I wrote you I have spent most of the time in bed—nothing serious I assure you. It all started with a stiff neck last Friday, which became so stiff by Saturday that I went to bed at noon and have been here ever since, except during the air raids, two of which we have almost every single night. In addition to my stiff neck, which was caused by swollen glands, I was blessed with a headache and a temperature, and a generally depressed feeling. However, all are better to-day and the doctor is going to let me get up before long. It is rather annoying to be flat on one's back when there is so much work to be done at the ship, but I suppose that I would be worse than useless down there in my present condition.

My room in the hotel is fairly comfortable and the service is good enough so I have very little to complain about on the whole. I spend most of the day reading, sleeping and listening to my radio. I must say, however, that there are times when I would prefer to be in my own bed at Staplehurst. Well, anyway, let's hope it won't be too long.

There isn't any particular news of interest due to my inactivity. I'll cable as soon as I'm up.

Oh incidentally, many happy returns of your anniversary which, if I am not mistaken, was on the sixth. I had intended to send a telegram but unfortunately to do so you must go personally to the Post Office, which I could not do as I was in bed.

I got a letter from Mrs. Pleydell-Bouverie the other day in which she said that she had sent her two small sons to Canada for the duration. They are staying with the Bruces at York Mills. It might be a good idea to have them over for a few days as they are probably John's age.

I am interested in what you are all doing during the summer. What is being done about the bad plank in the "Dayspring"?

My love to all bratskies,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. GODETIA,

July 16th.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

Well, at last I have started in on the seafaring life "good and proper." Our ship is all that we had expected and hoped that she would be. The only thing against her is that she tosses about like a cork, but, touch wood, that doesn't worry me greatly so far.

My illness finally blew over on Sunday and I rejoined the ship that day. Since then we have been at sea a good deal of the time. I am navigator, though the captain takes my calculations with due caution. I have spent all day on chart work and am thoroughly tired out. The trouble is that I am on the bridge the whole time and that is where the ship's rolling is felt most. It is very tiring on the legs at first, but I expect that I shall soon become accustomed to that.

You will have to get used to hearing less of interest from me now as I am in a position where I must take care what I say at all times.

Please pardon the shortness of this letter but I am "très fatigué ce soir" and yet I want to get a note off to you before I go to sea again.

I am very well now and exceedingly happy in my new job, which is convoying, pure and simple.

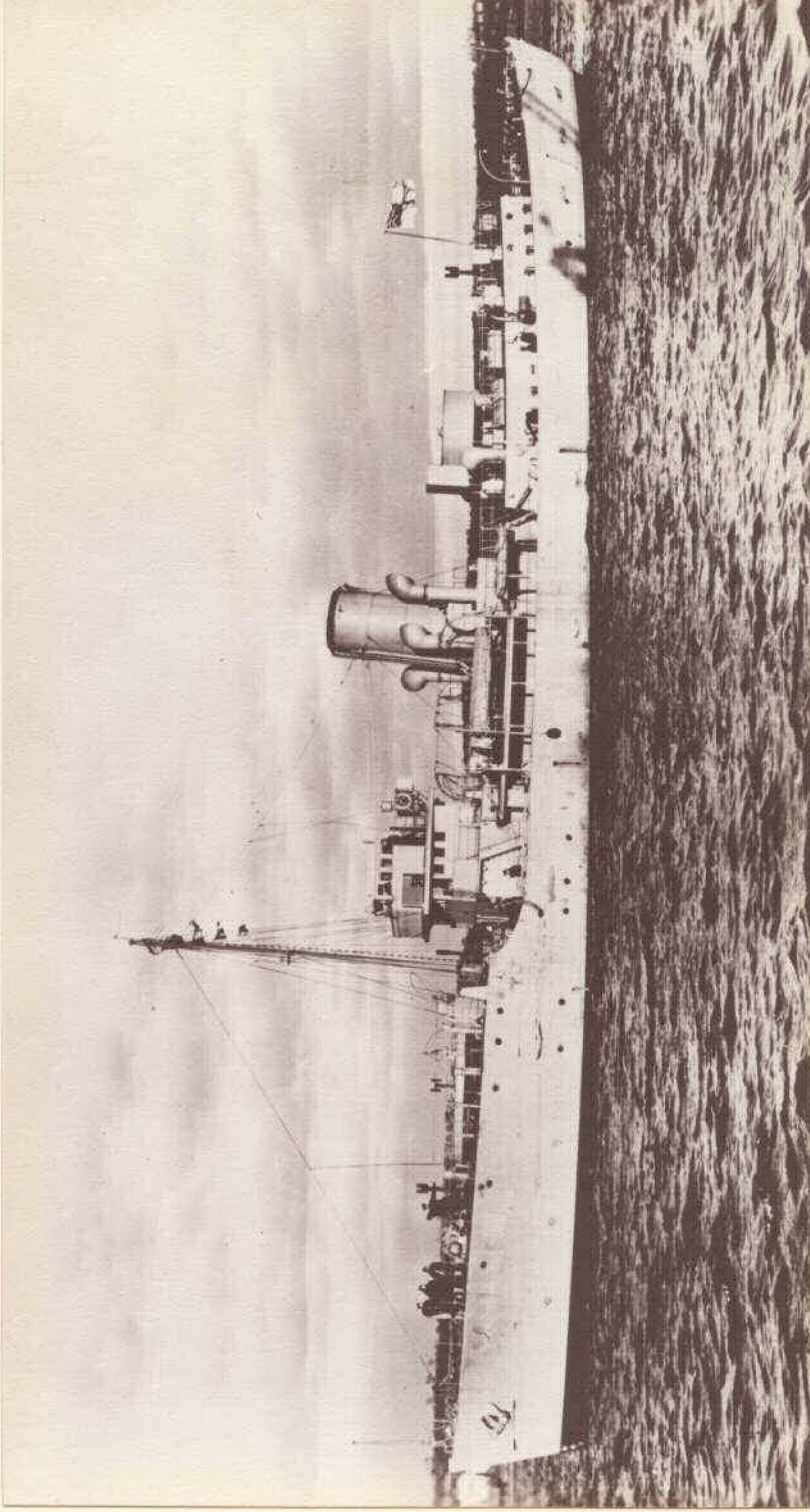
I was delighted with the letters I got from Mary and Jean last week, and I shall write to them P.D.Q.

I am glad to hear that you are keeping an eye on Marjorie Brown. I hear from her frequently, and intend to write to her more frequently than I have been doing. She seems very lonely and dejected, although I don't think it is as bad as it sounds. She tells me that owing to the difficulty of getting money over from England, she does not intend to go back to Varsity if she is in Canada next term, but will look for a job. Perhaps you can help her to get a good one somewhere. I hope that you will make her quite at home at Staplehurst.

My love to Grandpa and Grandma, and thank them for their telegram, which was most welcome.

Love,

FREDDIE.



A CANADIAN CORVETTE. THE "GODETIA" WAS OF THIS TYPE

H.M.S. GODETIA,
Sunday, July 21st.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

We have been at sea now for three or four days, in the course of which we rounded the north coast of Scotland. I cannot say where we are now, but we are indulging in the process known as "working the ship in." This consists of practicing anti-submarine and anti-aircraft drill at sea. There is to be a regular fleet of our sister ships along with us, and we are in for a couple of weeks, at least, of strenuous manoeuvres before actually starting our convoy work.

I have completely recovered from my illness of last week and am working hard to make up for lost time. In my capacity of navigating officer I correct all charts (a tremendous job) and lay off all our courses. In addition to this I stand watch at sea, in four hour shifts, with my "opposite number," Hincks, who is our anti-submarine officer. We have spent the morning receiving instruction in anti-submarine tactics and methods, and now I have the afternoon free. I think that I shall go ashore for a walk.

This ship is most comfortable. Hincks and I share a large double cabin. We have a wash stand with lots of hot water available. I have a wardrobe in which to hang my clothes, and a desk of my own on which I am writing this letter. As the ship is steamheated, and in addition all the cabins have electric heaters, it should not be too uncomfortable in the cold months ahead. The officers have a bathtub, with plenty of hot water day and night, so there again we are well off.

The food seems very good so far, and our steward is an efficient sort of chap. When in harbour we generally have breakfast about 8.30, and we are awakened with the perennial cup of tea at 7.45 (reminiscent of Art Evans on the Dayspring).

Now to describe the ship herself. She is called a corvette or escort vessel—there are a large number of ships like her at present building. She is of the Flower class, hence her

name, "Godetia." I must say it is a flower that I have never seen, have you? She is a small ship, with a complement of about fifty, and her tonnage is about 900 tons. She has nice lines and is exceedingly well equipped. From my short experience of destroyers I would far rather be on this than the best of them.

The ship is built for one purpose, namely, convoying. I imagine that that will be a bit of a bore so I hope the war won't go on for too long. I suppose the good old days of leave every week-end are gone forever now, and I'll be lucky if I get a day's leave every six months, unless something happens to make the ship lay up for repairs. It's a hard life from now on I'm afraid, but I look forward to it, and to getting this war polished off in a short time.

I've been getting quite a bit of mail from you all lately. I enjoy hearing from the "bratskies" and hope that they will continue to write often. I'm sorry to hear that "Cherry" will have to go, but when the war is over we'll get a whole stable-full of horses like her (I hope!). I am interested to hear of David's work at the Spectator, but am dumbfounded that he receives twelve dollars a week where I got a wretched five. Dad, you must be getting soft!

Well, I hope you'll all write often.

Love,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. GODETIA,
July 23rd.

Dear Mary:

I was delighted to hear from you the other day and to read your account of the gossip of the town.

I am sorry that Cherry must go. I often think of her and my pleasant rides up over the mountain. However, we must all pull in the old belts a bit (or stays and girdles if we wear them) and when this war is over I'll probably be so sick of the sea that I'll beg Dad to sell the Dayspring and buy a stable-full of horses instead.

I have seen few horses over here, barring one time I went riding over the Sussex Downs at Hove, but I once went to the greyhound races and won a few shillings. I am afraid that the happy days when I had time for all that have passed, and I must settle down to serious work.

I am navigating officer in this ship and spend all my time keeping the ship off the rocks and correcting charts, both of which are full-time jobs. We are at present in an extremely out-of-the-way corner which is more pleasant for its scenic beauty than for its activity ashore. We are practicing anti-submarine warfare with a real sub, and we work from six a.m. until sunset—the net result being that I feel pretty chewed up by ten at night. Anyway, this is not a patch on what it will be like when we really get going on our convoy work, a week or so from now.

I heard from Aunt Mamie and from Mum about your educational tour in the Province of Quebec. I presume that even as your waistline gets slimmer and slimmer your horizon gets broader and broader. The net result, by the time I get home, ought to be pretty good.

My love to all bratskies, and tell John to get hepping on his correspondence with me. That also goes for yourself, Jean and David. Speed up production all round.

Love,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. GODETIA,

July 24th.

Dear Jean:

It was so nice to hear from you the other day and again a few days later. You are a very reliable bratsky indeed and I wish that your twin was up to the same standard.

Since I have been over here I have not seen many horses. People haven't the time or the money to ride these days and the horses are all turned loose to crop the meadows, which are green and delicious for any animal. It is good for the horses and good for the meadows as the farmers and gardeners have all enlisted and otherwise the fields would go to seed.

You would enjoy the air raids over here (or rather those of them when they don't drop any bombs). It is not the bombs that scare you but the warnings, which are very loud sirens. It is infinitely worse than the sound of a fire engine. Generally you are fast asleep when you are wakened by a distant wailing, as the first areas get the warning. Then it comes closer and closer until the siren on your street corner has taken up the song and screeches enough to scare you out of your senses. The first of these things that I experienced was at Hove and I very dutifully ran down to the basement. But at Middlesbrough, where I was sick a week ago, we used to have two most nights, and since I was running a temperature I just took a chance on it and stayed in bed. Once or twice I heard distant bomb explosions, and once some German planes flew over the city, but I still live to tell the tale!

You would be interested in all the ships I have seen over here. Everything from submarines to aircraft carriers. The best ships in the Navy to be on are the smaller ones, though. They do all the hard work and don't go in too much for all this dressing-for-dinner stuff—but even they are pretty bad at it. The Englishman has the habit of looking terrible all day but turning out groomed like a show-horse at dinner time.

We have had a hard day's work practicing chasing a submarine (one of our own) and learning how to deal with them. We are in a lovely out-of-the-way place whose name I can't tell you just now. Suffice it to say that when I get the chance I go up among the sheep on the hills and lie among the heather. This won't go on much longer, though, and very soon we will be getting to work in earnest, bringing large convoys of ships in safety to England.

Please give my love to all the family, including Bill, Kerry and Linda.

Love,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. GODETIA,

July 29th.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

The time has once more rolled around for my weekly letter and I still find myself in the remote little place from which I last wrote you. It is very beautiful, and I frequently go ashore for rambles along the coast and over the fields. It is the sort of place in which peace and plenty still seem to thrive, in spite of what is going on not far from us. Rationing seems scarcely existent here. I can go ashore for tea, and for a shilling the table fairly groans with scones, pancakes, home-made bread, biscuits, cake and very excellent butter—lots of it. In spite of the national attribute which we generally associate with the people of this country they seem even more generous than those to the south. The rugged beauty and historical interest of these wild coasts and hills have affected, quite apart from myself, such diverse people as Robert Louis Stevenson and Mendelssohn. Do you remember when you read us "Kidnapped," Mum?

The only trouble is that the weather is not too good. It has rained almost every day since we have been here. To-day, for instance, we have been out all day since six a.m. practising exercises at sea in a driving rain and heavy wind. It is not too pleasant to be officer of the watch, pacing up and down an open forebridge, under such conditions. No matter how many oilskins and sou'westers you wear there is always one little trickle of rain that runs down your neck. Incidentally, what should fly by us to-day, without batting an eyelash, but a Dornier "flying pencil." I guess either she did not see us in the rain or else she had a look at our A.A. guns and balanced discretion against valour.

Last Saturday we had a shooting match ashore. A rich old colonel who owns an enormous estate with a castle near here, is commanding officer of the local L.D.V.'s (better known to you, perhaps, as the "parashots"). These are rather a rough-and-ready aggregation of people, ranging from about

eighteen to eighty, and armed with guns, some of which, I am sure, date back to the Battle of Crecy. Anyway, this colonel challenged the ship's company to come and shoot against his lads. We accepted the challenge and I led a bunch of our stalwarts ashore and up into a sheep-cote where the range was to be. The local L.D.V.'s were assembled, jawing away in Gallic, and the Colonel was hastily showing them that the trigger is the thing to pull to set the rifle off. The match went on for some two hours, and the last rounds were fired by the Colonel (who is seventy) and myself. I am proud to say that I got the third highest score of the whole outfit. Needless to say the sailors beat the L.D.V.'s, but not by much.

I have been getting lots of mail. The G.P.O. service is very good, and my other mail is forwarded promptly from the King Alfred or the bank according to how it is addressed. You can still send telegrams—I got one to-day from Gramps. I enjoy reading the Spectator, which arrives with reasonable regularity. I was particularly struck by a short piece in it the other day called "this England . . ." and signed "A Reader." I also enjoyed that clipping of Walter Lippman's, sent by Dad. It is encouraging to know that the U.S. is morally at our backs.

The English papers are very sensationalist these days, and they are putting up a great fuss about this invasion business. I think the whole thing is going to crack very soon, there will probably be awful carnage for awhile, but it will be the beginning of the end. Everything points to hostilities being over before long, in my opinion at least, and much as I like this life, I can't say that I'll be sorry.

I don't know how much longer we'll be here but I suppose it will be a few days more. We will probably leave at the end of the week for our station, wherever that is. I'll be glad to get back to civilization.

My days here are very full, whether we are at sea or not. At sea I have the double job of navigator and anti-submarine officer, both of which are full-time jobs. When we have a day in port, as we do to-morrow, I spend the day correcting

charts or attending lectures at a large parent ship which is also anchored here. The work is very hard, but that serves to make the time pass all the quicker, so I'm satisfied.

Tell me all about your summer activities when you write. Keep sending fudge—I got some very good stuff from Mary the other day, with her enclosed letter for the censor. Mail is very important and is greatly appreciated. Don't worry, though, if you don't hear from me at times as it is often hard to get mail off. It is particularly difficult to telegraph so I shall have to cut down on that.

Well, goodbye for now and best of love to you all,

FREDDIE.

P.S.—I don't like that picture I sent you. I'll have another taken sometime.

P.P.S.—I got a letter the other day from Mary's friend, Eric Earnshaw.

H.M.S. GODETIA,

August 5th-7th.

Dearest Mum:

Since last I wrote our peaceful life of the "working up period" has come to an end. We left that pleasant little port three days ago and have been at sea ever since, proceeding at a necessarily slow pace with a large convoy. Our station is going to be a cold one this winter—unless we are shifted before then. The life is going to be hard and monotonous, as it has been during the past three days, but that shouldn't do me any harm.

Our routine, as far as I can gather, is about ten days at sea to one or two in port, so I am looking forward to seeing lots and lots of water.

My duties as navigating officer have kept me going pretty hard and I spend most of my time correcting charts. This is not uninteresting and it gives me a good knowledge of the coasts of England and Scotland. I also keep watch on the bridge in four hour shifts. At present, until Hincks and I know more about the game, the officers are working on a two-watch system, but the captain says that shortly we are going to shift over to a three-watch system, which will permit us all to have more spare time.

Perhaps you will be interested in an account of a typical day in harbour and at sea.

In harbour I am called, generally, at seven-thirty by the steward, who confronts me with a cup of tea. This I bolt down and after a further doze I get up, wash, shave and dress. In harbour I must wear proper uniform and a clean shirt, but at sea I generally wear the rig I wore at the King Alfred, *i.e.*, a tunic with white cashmere scarf, grey flannels, boots or sea-boots if it is rough. I have bought a lovely pair of the latter. I have a service-issue duffle-coat with hood which is very warm for bridge use in cold weather. After shaving (remember we are still in port) I have breakfast in the ward-room with

the four other officers. We sit around for a few minutes after breakfast and "chew the rag", and then we set about the tasks of the day. Usually I spend the morning on charts, knocking off at twelve-thirty for lunch. In the afternoon I may go ashore for a couple of hours. Possibly I will be officer of the watch from eight to twelve at night. This means that I am in complete charge of the ship's routine. It means being on hand to salute at colours, to inspect "darken ship" arrangements, to inspect liberty men, to do rounds with the leading seaman of the watch at nine p.m., and to meet all boats coming alongside. This does not mean that I must stay on deck all the time, but I simply carry on with my ordinary activities until the quartermaster reports "boat alongside, sir" or "ship darkened, sir" as the case may be. If there is an air-raid during this time the O.O.W. is responsible for closing up the watch and taking the ship to sea if necessary (if the captain is absent).

At sea the routine is different. Here we work on a two-watch system. I might be O.O.W. from twelve to four a.m. The O.O.W. at sea is responsible for conning and navigating the ship. In a ship of war the conning of the ship is not done, as in a merchantman, from the wheelhouse, but from the fore-bridge, which is an open bridge on top of the wheelhouse. From this position, which commands a good view, orders are given to the quartermaster at the wheel. He is a machine, pure and simple. In some ships he can't even see where he is steering. He simply acts on the orders he gets from the O.O.W. on the forebridge, as for example:

O.O.W.: "Port thirty degrees."

Q.M.: "Port thirty degrees, sir."

O.O.W.: "Steady on south thirty west."

Q.M.: "Steady on south thirty west, sir."

and so on. The whole conduct of the ship, in other words, is the job of the O.O.W.

We are now at our base and have received the welcome news that the ship will be in for ten days repairs. This will give me, I hope, two or three days leave, during which I may go down to London.

Your parcels of fudge are most welcome. The chocolate fudge is better than the other because it is not so sticky. I have also had chocolate from Aunt Margaret and Aunt Dorothy. Also I got a sweater from Grandma, and socks from you. There is only one thing I really want, or will want, and that is a pair of fur gloves like I had last winter.

I have to close now as the mail is going to be collected.

Love to all,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. GODETIA,
August 14th.

Dear David:

I was glad to get your letter on returning from leave today, and I am making my reply to it in my weekly letter home. Please forward this letter, immediately you have read it, to Mum and Dad if they are away. I hope that the parents realize that this economy in letters is not because I don't enjoy writing home, but rather because I am so frightfully busy that I really have very little time for letter writing. I realize that this sounds a bit thin considering my past record of easygoing work, but I hope that you will believe me when I say that almost the whole working day is taken up. Not that I consider writing home of secondary importance—on the contrary it is one of the most important, if not the most important event of the week and I always budget my time to allow for it.

Since last week's letter quite a lot has happened. When I left off (still at Rosyth) there was the prospect of three days' leave while the ship was undergoing repairs, necessitated by the "mal-de-mer" which all "bons bateaux" suffer from in their first month at sea. That leave materialized and last Saturday I lit out for London. I spent a good deal of that afternoon seeing the sights of Edinburgh, and caught the train to London at 10.00 p.m. I fell in with an army officer who very kindly lent me a blanket and I stretched out at length on my side of the compartment for a good night's rest. I did not wake up until the train stopped with a jerk, and we were at King's Cross. I hastily put on my collar and tie and went to the Picadilly Hotel. It was seven-thirty a.m. so I hoofed it for Westminster Abbey for early Communion. It was my first visit and I must say I was impressed. It was a lovely morning and the sun streamed through the transept windows, across the woodwork and statuary.

After church I went back to the Picadilly for bath and breakfast and then met the Doc. (our ship's doctor, with whom I was to spend the week-end) and we went to the Mount Royal

Hotel where we got a sort of flat at very reasonable rates. We spent the rest of the morning walking in Hyde Park, and in the afternoon we went to the Dorchester Hotel Officers' Club, which is a cabaret tea dance given for officers of all services of the allied nationalities, and is completely swamped with teased out Dutchmen and Frenchmen. I got parked at one end of the table with a couple of lovely girls, and the Doc. got parked at the other end with a couple of less "lovelies." (All very nice girls though, best old English families and all that). Before I could get one of my lovelies lined up for a date the Doc. (whose full title is Surgeon-Lieut. A. G. Bellamy, R.N.V.R.) had accepted an invitation for me to a supper party chez one of his lovelies, so I had to fall in with the arrangement.

The next day I carried on a shopping tour. I added to my already mounting collection of gramophone records. Perhaps I have not told you before that I have a small portable gramophone in addition to my small portable radio. My record collection, so that you won't duplicate it at home, is as follows:

1. Chopin Etudes (1-12) (3 records).
2. Schumann Piano Concerto (4 records).
3. Mendelssohn's Hebride Overture (1 record).
4. Richard Strauss' Don Juan Tone Poem (2 records).

These, and many more, will come back with me after the war, so don't go and buy any of them. The wardroom also possesses a noble collection of jazz records, so we are excellently set up for music.

On Monday night I trotted off to a Prom concert at Queen's Hall where I heard more Wagner than I could take. I woke up with Wagnerian indigestion this morning. The Doc. and I took the ten a.m. train for Edinburgh, arriving back at the ship at eight this evening. It is now eleven and I am still writing this letter.

I hope that Mum and Dad don't delude themselves that I am in imminent peril over here. Actually I am not. Our convoy route, although quite within range of enemy heavy

bombers, etc., is not within range of dive bombers. A further fact for the parental comfort is that when convoys are attacked it is almost always the merchantmen that get the bombing as the enemy fliers are afraid of our anti-aircraft armament. As for subs and surface craft I can only say that we are designed to destroy them and we can prove more than a match for them. We also are provided with a device that makes magnetic mines into bacon and eggs. So, all things considered, life, so far at any rate, has been relatively healthy.

Mum said something in one of her letters about my not having had enough training for the job I'm in. Well, that is true enough, but the Navy hasn't the time to put its officers through a long land course at such a time as this. We Canadians had a relatively long course at the King Alfred and they taught us all they could teach anyone at that place, which admittedly is very little. The idea these days is for us to pick it up as we go along, and it's the best way. For instance, I learned more in our ten days of anti-submarine practice up in the Hebrides, when we were playing around with a real sub and in a real ship, than they learn in two months theoretical work on the same subject in the shore establishment at H.M.S. Osprey at Weymouth. I think I can truthfully say that any of the officers who were with us, in various ships, at our working-in post would be quite as capable, if not more so, of taking his ship into action against a submarine submerged as a graduate of H.M.S. Osprey, who has been at it for five times as long on an attack table.

The same applies to all the other hundreds of things a naval officer must be in some degree conversant with: navigation, watch keeping, keeping in convoy, signalling (though I must admit I have forgotten a lot of this), gunnery, the use of depth charges, explosives, etc., etc. I won't say that I know anything about any of these things yet but each day at sea or in port I learn more, and it is surprising how quickly it can be picked up when working with a captain and a first lieutenant, not to speak of a ship full of ratings and petty officers, who have been at it for years. The best officers are not necessarily those who have good specialized knowledge of the game, but

those who can make a decision and give an order to fit the circumstances. So much of it is common sense that a specialist is often completely done for. This does not mean, however, that experience is not essential, but the time comes when theoretics must end, and the only way for the job to be learned is to have the responsibility of carrying it out and, with the occasional advice of the specialist or the more experienced man, to jolly well carry it out. My training only started at the King Alfred, it did not end there. I am now undergoing a far better training—that of doing the real thing.

Due to all our moving about in the last few weeks I had not been getting mail very regularly. But now that we have settled down and have our base the mail seems to be coming through O.K. I had several letters waiting for me when I got back from the week-end, including one from John, written in a rich eighteenth century Johnsonian style which does its author great credit. Let further effusions pour from the pen of this noble master of words! I shall reply very shortly. Your letters are always welcome, David, and I am always most interested in your activities. Tell Mary and Jean to keep up the good work. My letters will be a little less frequent from now on, I think, as our run is something like ten days at sea. This may or may not be comfortable, depending on the mood of the captain and the North Atlantic. I shall write and telegraph every time I am in port, if I am there long enough, but don't worry if you don't hear for long intervals as there are so many factors upon which mail depends these days—but I don't need to tell you that.

I think the warm clothing situation is fairly well in hand Mum, all things considered. I have just been to Gieve's, where I bought a heavy turtle-neck sweater. I would advise holding off on the knitting until I scream for more. We get an incredible number of woollens from the Naval Comforts people, of which I have had little need and so for the most part I have passed them on. Don't forget the fur gloves though.

Hell has certainly been apoppin' over here lately with all these enemy raids, but the R.A.F. has done a grand job, and Jerry has done little damage of any importance.

I'm interested to hear of the family arguments about where you are going to college next year. My advice still stands—Varsity for co-eds! You don't appreciate them until you get over here. There are only about ten good-looking girls in England and they are all talking of legging it for Canada.

Anyway, this letter is getting off the track so goodbye for now and love to all,

FREDDIE.

H.M.S. GODETIA,
Saturday, August 24th, 1940.

Dearest Mum and Dad:

As I write this I am tossing about on the North Atlantic some hundreds of miles west of Ireland. It is our sixth day at sea. We took one convoy out here and leaving it last night we have just met a homeward bound convoy and are escorting it back. The weather this trip has been very bad. No sooner had we got clear of the British Isles than we ran into a north-westerly gale which stayed with us four days. Only four of the whole ship's company were not sick and I am proud to say that I was one of them. This ship is terrible in a heavy sea. She is so small that she turns almost inside out and all one can do is hold on for dear life. She is a good seaworthy little vessel however, and she lifts clear over the seas without any of the pounding and shaking which you get in destroyers.

In the past few days I have spent some memorable times on the bridge. The captain now assumes that we are capable of handling her ourselves and he retires to his bunk, leaving the whole conduct of the ship to the officer of the watch. These gales are just like you see in the movies, with huge waves, which seem even larger because of the size of the ship, a driving rain and a heavy wind. Great seas crash over her bows and send clouds of drenching spray over the whole ship. About ninety-nine per cent. of the spray is spent on the fore-bridge where the officer of the watch, a signaller and two look-outs maintain their lonely vigil for four hours at a stretch. We have an enclosed portion on the fore-bridge but the O.O.W. must remain in the open, with nothing between himself and the elements but a mackintosh and a sou'wester. The whole business must be utter hell for those who are seasick, but I quite enjoy it.

Our meals are good on this ship. The Navy standard of cooking is high and we have efficient wardroom stewards. My cabin has been most comfortable, particularly after a hard middle watch from twelve to four a.m. The Navy for some

people is more or less of a pink tea party, but it certainly is not for anyone who gets into these ships. Hard though this particular life may be I would not exchange it for a job on a big battleship. There a sub-lieutenant is a very small frog, lost in an enormous pond, a sort of dog's body kicked about by all and sundry. In a small ship, though, we have a good deal of responsibility and do something more concrete towards the running of the ship.

Please don't think that because this ship is small we live like a lot of animals at sea. On the contrary we try to preserve the amenities. I wash and shave in the ordinary way and when it is sufficiently calm, as it was yesterday, I even go so far as to take a bath. Also, I manage to pack in seven or eight hours' sleep most days, although this comes at rather strange times. If that old adage holds about the sleep before midnight being the only sleep that counts, I should be in remarkable physical condition by the end of the war. In any event the wind and salt water have given me what they call a "North Sea tan" and I feel extremely fit at the moment.

It is a terrible day to-day. The sea is not so rough but there is a thin rain which limits the visibility to a fraction of a mile. This makes station-keeping on the convoy most difficult. One consolation is that the wind is now behind us and we don't have it blowing in our faces on the bridge. I go on watch now so I shall continue this later on. There are still four or five days before we get into port.

Tuesday, August 27th.

Our convoy is just now coming into its base. It has been a long and eventful trip and I shall be glad to get my feet on terra firma again after ten days at sea. My adventures during the last two or three days will have to wait until the end of the war, when I get home, before I tell them to you.

It is a lovely morning and I have been up since four o'clock. The green fields of Scotland were a welcome sight in the early morning sun after the cold blue Atlantic. I have had

a bath, a good shave, and have washed ten days' worth of salt out of my hair. One thing about this life is that it is a healthy one and I feel fit as a fiddle.

We shall have at least two or three days in port, I hope, before setting out once more. I have ordered a greatcoat from Gieve's and it should have arrived by the time I get in. Also, I hope to get a lot of mail. If I get the chance I shall telegraph you, but you must reconcile yourselves to the fact that I might not be able to get into town to do so after every convoy. I hope that you will adhere to the principle of expecting my letters when you get them. They may be interrupted or delayed, but as long as mailships survive they will always come.

Please give my love to the whole family, and let me know about your activities in the summer and your plans for the autumn.

Love,

FREDDIE.

TO HENRY ABOUD.

H.M.S. GODETIA,

August 26th.

Dear Hank:

I am doing something which is normally against my best principles in writing you a letter in pencil. The truth of the matter, however, is that we are in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and the ship is completely without ink, so I trust that you will accept my apologies.

I got your letter of June the something the other day. It must have been delayed weeks in the mail and I can't understand why as it was not censored or anything like that. It may have been slowed up by the fact that it was in a commercial envelope and probably looked like second-class mail from the outside. It was not second-class mail, however, but entirely first-class, and I can't tell you how much I enjoyed reading every word of it. Congratulations on your exam. success, H. L., I envy you for being a B.A. while I am only an R.C.N.V.R. I was also impressed by the typewriting ability which was shown on its pages. I ascribe your success to my little table, which, incidentally, I am glad to hear that you are taking good care of.

I have heard from several of the guys and gals, and the general impression seems to be that I am lucky. I suppose I am in one sense, and yet I'm not in another. I really miss all my old friends like yourself, and no one I have run into over here can take your places.

Since last I wrote you my adventures have been many and varied. In fact the one thing that I cannot complain of in the past two months is lack of variety.

Towards the end of my course at the King Alfred I volunteered for a demolition party over in France. That was

before the French capitulation and the French coastal towns were all being blown up by the Navy to prevent the Germans from getting anything valuable when they occupied them. Our party went over to the Bay of Biscay in a destroyer, but when we went ashore in reconnaissance groups the French authorities told us that they themselves were going to blow things up, so the whole thing was off. We spent the next four days chasing U-boats in the Bay of Biscay, with German bombers all around us. Luckily for us we were not hit as we had a deck cargo of eight tons of T.N.T. and other H.E. with which we were supposed to blow up the port.

When I got back from this job I was drafted immediately to a ship. Her name is H.M.S. Godetia and she is a corvette or escort vessel, used for convoy work exclusively. When I joined her she was not completed, but after a week she was ready and we put to sea. After a week of working up practice we started in on our monotonous and hard job of convoying ships far out into the North Atlantic. This, our first convoy, has been most eventful. Two days after we left port we ran into a gale, and this being a small ship (smaller than a destroyer) she tossed about like a cork. So much, in fact, did she toss that all but four or five of the crew were violently seasick. I am glad to say that I was one of the four or five who weren't. This gale ended after three days, though, and we steamed through a calm ocean, little thinking of any danger that might lurk beneath the surface.

I was officer of the watch at the time. It was about three a.m. on a clear moonlight night and we were zig-zagging about the convoy. The look-out reported to me a blue flare on one of the ships astern. It is a serious offence to show a light at night these days, and I was going to put the ship about in his direction and tick him off when all of a sudden there was a flash from his side, a dull explosion and the whole ship burst into flames from stem to stern. I saw her sink within thirty-five seconds. I sounded the anti-submarine alarm, woke the captain and turned the ship in the direction I knew the submarine to be. As I did so there was a second flash, a second

dull explosion, and a second ship burst into flames, pouring clouds of black smoke into the moonlit sky. By this time everyone was at his station and our ship, together with the other escort (a destroyer) went into the attack. We dropped several depth charges but I doubt whether we "got our man."

The rest of the night we spent in picking up survivors whom we found hanging on to pieces of driftwood and upturned lifeboats. It was just like you see in the movies, or even worse. Of the two ships, both large merchantmen, there were only seven survivors.

One of these survivors was sitting on a sort of raft, gibbering away like a baby. He was almost done when we got to him and we had tremendous difficulty getting him aboard. Three of us climbed down a rope ladder on the ship's side, and after fifteen minutes struggling in the icy water, up to our necks, we got a noose around one of his legs. He was a big man, though, and very heavy with all his waterlogged clothing, and as the ship rolled his head was ducked under water. I grabbed him by the hair but had to let go for fear of breaking his neck. When we finally got the rope around his leg the crew hoisted away from the deck and he was hauled up head downwards. Just as he was almost at the gunwale the noose slipped and he fell back into the water. I ordered the sea boat away (this is only done in extreme emergency) and we picked him up astern. We brought him aboard and carried out artificial respiration for four hours. Finally we had to give up hope and later that day we buried him at sea.

A more cheerful tale was the rescue of a young midshipman whom we found at dawn, sitting on an upturned boat and singing Rule Britannia at the top of his lungs. He is safe and sound and is at present sitting at the other end of the wardroom table from me, writing a letter.

These events have brought me to a full realization that there is a war in progress. I only hope that I don't run into anything like them for some time to come.

Well, old man, I think that I have talked enough for now. Please write again soon. I am sorry that this letter is so late a reply to yours but you can see from my foregoing explanation how it is.

Yours as ever,

FRED.

P.S.—I hope this damned war will soon be over so that we can all get back to our normal, happy lives. Be careful to whom you tell the contents of this letter—I don't want it to get home to Mum and Dad.

F.S.K.

From the Officer commanding H.M.S. Godetia.

ADMIRALTY,

Whitehall, London,

September 18th, 1940.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Ker:

You had a son and I had a ship. They have both gone—a good son and a good ship. The hazards of war are not all enemy action, though the enemy is no less responsible.

Godetia was rammed and sank in about three minutes on a dark night and those who got away were *lucky* and not in any way better able to do so.

The terrible tragedy was quite unavoidable—I could take no action which would have altered the course of Fate in any way, and I lost a lot of good men.

Your son was extremely conscientious and keen—may I say quite genuinely the best officer I had. About a month ago I was offered more experienced people but I turned the offer down—I was satisfied.

We had put in a lot of good work rescuing people from torpedoed ships, in fact had landed seventy the day this all happened.

Young Ker had jumped over the side one night to assist a survivor who was quite unable to make it, but the circumstances were such that I could not mention this officially.

I am so sorry and terribly sad as I know you will understand. I was left on the bridge as the ship sank stern first—as the bow rose to take the final plunge I jumped and was fortunate enough to grab a raft. We were picked up hours later.

Every endeavour was made with ships and aircraft at daylight but no more were found.

I have to start again—try and forget, otherwise I shall not be able to carry on as we still have to in order to once and for all crush the German Beast.

Please tell me if there is anything I can do on this side, and believe me *your* son did *his* bit.

A. V. LEGRASSICK.

(Lieut.-Comdr. R.N.R.).

*“ . . . To those who will fall I say:
‘You will not die, but step into immor-
tality. Your mothers will not lament
your fate, but will be proud to have borne
such sons. Your names will be revered
forever and ever by your grateful country,
and God will take you unto Himself.’ ”*

*(From General Currie's exhortation to the
Canadian Corps, March 27th, 1918.)*

Service

CONSECRATED TO THE MEMORY OF
SUB-LIEUT. FREDERICK SOUTHAM KER
R. C. N. V. R.

Killed in Action at Sea

HILLFIELD SCHOOL, HAMILTON
FRIDAY AFTERNOON
SEPTEMBER 20, 1940

ORDER *of* SERVICE

HYMN

John Bunyan

Pilgrim Song

He who would valiant be
 'Gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy
 Follow the Master.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
 To be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round
 With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound—
 His strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
Though he with giants fight;
He will make good his right
 To be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, Thou dost defend
 Us with Thy spirit,
We know we at the end
 Shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away.
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
 To be a pilgrim.

READING: From "*The Pilgrim's Progress*"
of John Bunyan

CHARLES HOLTON

"The death of Mr. Valiant"

Then Mr. Honest called for his friends, and said unto them, I die, but shall make no will. As for my honesty, it shall go with me; let him that comes after be told of this. When the day that he was to be gone was come, he addressed himself to go over the river. Now the river at that time overflowed the banks in some places; but Mr. Honest in his lifetime had spoken to one Good-conscience to meet him there, the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over. The last words of Mr. Honest were, Grace reigns. So he left the world.

After this it was noised abroad, that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was taken with a summons by the same post as the other; and had this for a token that the summons was true, "That his pitcher was broken at the fountain." When he understood it, he called for his friends, and told them of it.

Then, said he, I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me, that I have fought his battles who now will be my rewarder.

When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which as he went he said, "Death, where is thy sting?" And as he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy victory?" So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

READING: from the *Apocrypha*

THE HEADMASTER

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died; their departure was accounted to be their hurt, and their going from us to be their ruin. But they are in peace.

For even if in the sight of men they be punished yet is their hope full of immortality; and having borne a little chastening, they shall receive great good. Because God made trial of them and found them worthy for himself. As gold in the furnace hath he tried them, and accepted them. Therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a crown of beauty from the Lord's own Hand.

They that trust on him shall understand the truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are to his chosen. And the Lord shall reign over them for evermore.

ADDRESS THE HEADMASTER

READING: of the "REQUIEM" of R. L. Stevenson

PETER FOSTER

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie:
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me;
Here he lies where he long'd to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

O Valiant Hearts

O valiant hearts, who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame;
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.

Proudly you gathered, rank on rank, to war,
As who had heard God's message from afar;
All you had hoped for, all you had, you gave
To save mankind—yourself you scorned to save.

Splendid you passed, the great surrender made,
Into the light that never more shall fade;
Deep your contentment in that blest abode,
Who wait the last clear trumpet-call of God.

These were his servants, in his steps they trod,
Following through death the martyred Son of God;
Victor he rose; victorious too shall rise
They who have drunk his cup of sacrifice.

O risen Lord, O shepherd of our dead,
Whose cross has bought them and whose staff has led,
In glorious hope their proud and sorrowing land
Commits her children to thy gracious hand.

PRAYERS:

MEMORIAL PRAYER

O Master of life and eternity a shadow has fallen athwart the sunlight of our lives and our hearts are sad.

We thank Thee for all our happy memories of the radiant and joyous life of our friend, and for the exaltation of spirit with which he offered his life to a noble cause.

Give comfort we beseech Thee to all who knew him and loved him and grant us the assurance of future reunion wherein we may renew our broken friendship.

PRAYER OF REMEMBRANCE

Almighty Father Who, for us and for our salvation, didst give Thine only-begotten Son, we beseech Thee, that, as Thou didst make Him perfect through sufferings and hast now exalted Him to Thy right hand, so we may ever keep in remembrance those of this School, who after His example, laid down their lives for their friends; May we consecrate our lives to the ideal for which they died, that wars may cease and old hatreds be forgotten in the brotherhood of mankind; and so enable us to be worthy of all those whose name in our proud remembrance liveth for evermore.

God Save the King

BENEDICTION:

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace, both now and evermore.

Amen.

SUB-LIEUT. KER FEARED KILLED

Parents Notified Hamilton
Naval Officer Missing

NO DETAILS GIVEN

Hamilton, Sept. 13 (Special).—One of the city's first war casualties was reported yesterday in the announcement Sub-Lieut. Frederick Southam Ker, eldest son of Frederick I. Ker, vice-president and managing director of the Hamilton Spectator, was missing and believed killed in action while serving with the Royal Navy.

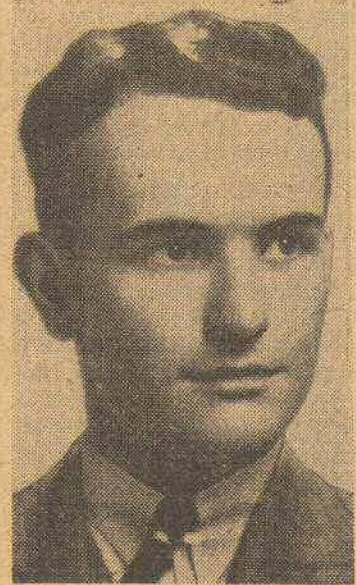
The 20-year-old officer was born in Vancouver and was a grandson of Mr. and Mrs. F. N. Southam of Montreal and a great-grandson of the founder of the Southam newspaper enterprises, William Southam. A brilliant student, he attended Hillfield School, Upper Canada College and Trinity College. At the time of his enlistment he was in the third year honor course in economics and political science in Trinity.

No details were forthcoming of the engagement in which he was reported missing and presumably killed. The announcement came in a telegram to the parents from the Minister of National Defense.

On April 24 Sub-Lieutenant Ker went overseas in the first group of fifty junior Canadian naval officers. He saw considerable service with the Royal Navy.

"He was a boy of unusual charm and personality," said his old headmaster at Hillfield, A. F. Killip. "I

Death Reported



FREDERICK S. KER,

Of Hamilton, Sub-Lieutenant with the Royal Navy, is believed to have been killed in action. His father, Frederick I. Ker, is vice-president and managing director of the Hamilton Spectator. Sub-Lieutenant Ker went overseas April 24.

hoped one day he would enter the ambassadorial service, for he had particular talents in that direction."

There are eight grandsons of the late William Southam in active service units. The only great-grandson of military age was Sub-Lieutenant Ker.

Missing After Action



SUB-LT. FREDERICK SOUTHAM KER, eldest son of Frederick I. Ker, vice-president and managing director of the Hamilton Spectator, and Mrs. Ker, has been reported missing and is believed killed in action with the Royal Navy, in which he was serving as a sub-lieutenant. He was 20 years old and was the grandson of F. N. Southam, of Montreal, and great-grandson of William Southam, founder of the Southern newspapers.