



PREPARATION FOR THE NAVY : ON BOARD H.M.S. *BRITANNIA*.

BY RAYMOND BLATHWAYT.



THE commander of the *Britannia*, the senior chaplain, and I, stood upon the deck of the world-famed training-ship, gazing at the varied and lively scene around us. The waters of the beautiful Dart lay wide and still around us, the green-clad hills were clear reflected in the glassy mirror, the masts of many vessels reached up to the sunny sky, little boats darted to and fro upon the crowded river, all was life and animation, bustle and hilarity. Here is where young England learns the duty of manning her wooden walls.

"Ah! the training of boys for the Navy is very different from what it used to be in my day," said Lord Charles Beresford once to me. "I joined a regular old man-o'-war, and went to work at once. The present system is, however, quite as thorough, and we turn out capital men."

It was to learn what the present system was that I was now standing upon the deck of the *Britannia*, which, together with the old troopship, the *Hindustan*, affords home and shelter to so many of our young British hopefuls.

"We will go below," said the commander, as he led the way, "and you shall see something of our daily life and work."

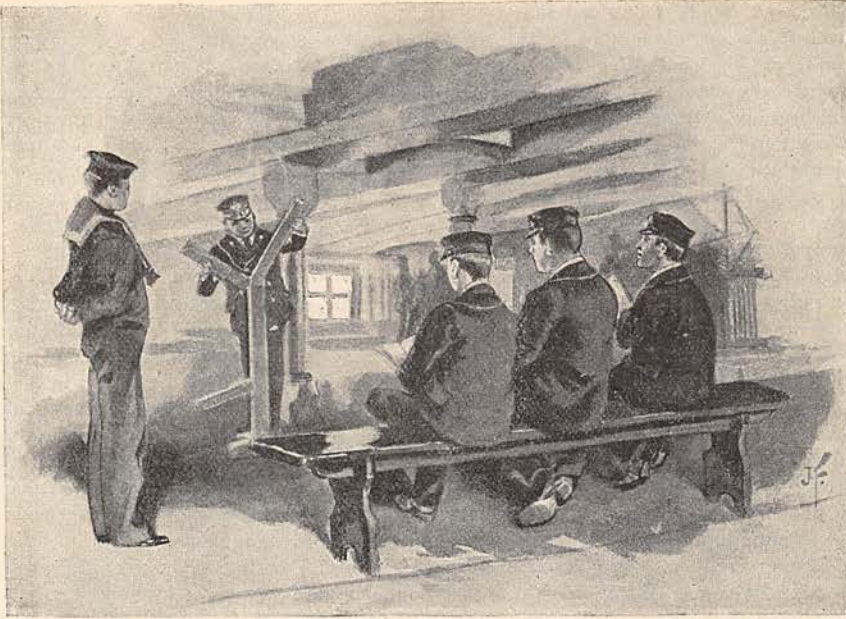
As we passed through the long decks, through the port-holes of which the bright sunshine streamed cheerily in, I caught a glimpse of a group of smart little cadets gathered round an old blue-jacket, who was explaining to them by means of a model the use of certain ropes, the names of different signal-flags, and the like; and round a very handsome model of a mastless ship run on wheels was a group of older boys, who were learning the different and intricate manœuvres to be gone through before a ship can be anchored. In the steam-study was a capital working model of a compound engine, as well as other models dealing with steam vessels; and in the next room were some fine models of modern men-of-war, upon the construction of which the boys are very carefully trained.

"In my young days," said the captain, "we had to learn all this for ourselves."

The mess-room lies wide and open upon the after-part of the lower deck, and is hung round with engravings of old naval engagements. Crossing by a covered way to the *Hindustan*, I was shown the great sleeping deck, upon the floor of which stand long rows of sea-chests, upon each of which a name is painted, and above which hangs the owner's hammock; and close to the dormitory lies a floating swimming-bath, which, when heated by steam, is used to teach the boys swimming in winter weather.

I asked the captain if discipline was easily maintained—if the boys were as easily managed as at a good public school.

"Oh yes," he replied; "we have but little difficulty, though I confess the lack of anything in the shape of a Sixth Form, which so often exercises a wholesome restraining influence at a large public school, is a somewhat serious defect. We have consequently to



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be very particular in the choice of our cadet captains. Almost everything depends upon them, for they are the connecting link between ourselves and the great mass of cadets. Again, I believe much in personal communication with the boys. I have some boys dining with me every night, and

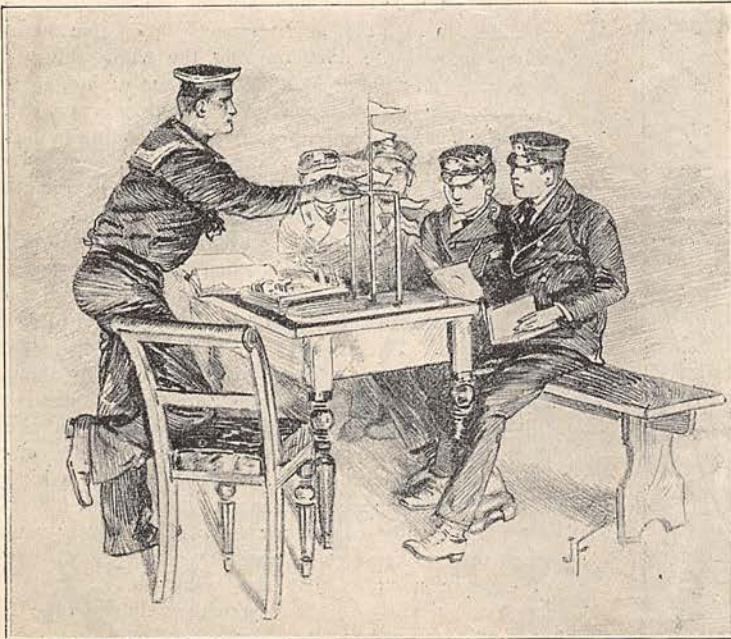
our officers are chosen with a special regard to their capacity for joining in the boys' games and amusements."

"And what is your daily life here?" I asked, as a bugle sounded and a number of uniformed cadets passed us hurriedly by, carefully saluting the captain and chaplain, who smilingly nodded or spoke to each boy as he filed by.

"Well," replied the captain, "at 6.30 they turn out, bathe, and dress. At 7.10 they are mustered for work before breakfast; some drill on land, others go to their class-rooms: seamanship, knotting, splicing. Others go on board the little steam-yacht which you see lying close by, and lay the fires and get steam up, and so on. After prayers have been read by the chaplain, comes breakfast. From 9 to 1 is work, with a short interval for rest, and the afternoon is given up equally to work and recreation."

At this moment the captain was called away, and the chaplain took up his parable. And this is what he said:—

"The *Britannia* has been established since 1859 as a training-ship for the cadets of the Royal Navy. The work



PRACTICAL SIGNALLING.

was begun at Portsmouth, and after a removal to Portland in 1862, she finally found a resting-place in Dartmouth Harbour on September 30th, 1863. Though the ship is not the same, the training establishment has been continuous. There have been only two or three serious changes in system since the course of study reached its present limit of two years, in 1870. Entry has always been a matter of competition between a large number of candidates selected by nomination, except in the years 1875 to 1880, when there was no competition, but only a trifling test exam. to pass, after obtaining a nomination. This has been one change—or rather an attempted change—for the effect on the work was prejudicial and the competition was restored. A great change was made in 1888, when the age of entry, which had up to that date stood at an average of thirteen, was raised a year, and now stands at fourteen, the limits of age being between thirteen and fourteen and a half.

“The nature of the study has always been to a great extent technical, and framed with the view of rendering the young officers well instructed in the practice of the profession they have entered on. It is very little use attempting to advance the general education of the cadets in a classical education, such as their fellows in age are carrying on at the public schools. An attempt was made to teach classics, but it was impossible to give



READING THE SEXTANT.

more than two hours a week to it, consistently with attention to the professional subjects, and it suffered the fate of many recommendations made by committees, and after being given a fair trial, classics ceded its time to history and geography. Education for the naval profession must be compromised among the conflicting claims of many subjects, and committees of the most eminent educationalists have only concluded that experience is no guide, and that to make it a system worthy of the name it should be entirely re-constructed on sound principles, which principles would contain no part of the present system. This is, no doubt, scientific, but it is not practical. The *Britannia* course has been a growth slowly following the needs of the naval service, and adapting the materials of youthful mind provided to their best uses in the service afloat. The best court of judgment for the results of the work of the ship will always be the commanding officers and commanders-in-chief of the various fleets to which the young officers go from the *Britannia*, and these have nothing but the highest praise for the style of youngster and his attainments.

“The life in the ship is arranged with the view of increasing self-reliance and independence. The nature of the country round Dartmouth is such that the cadets can be set free from all supervision and surveillance during the time they are ashore, and they are allowed to run free for six hours at a time on a summer afternoon—a privilege which no school in England enjoys. And it is natural to ask: What do they do? As they are not looked after, who should have a right to say what they do? Two or three things may be noted on their behaviour. Supposing they get into mischief, and one of the farmers complains that they have been throwing his hurdles over the cliff or stoning his ducks, and a complaint is made to the captain of any of their misdemeanours; the cadet captains are told that the offenders in such and such respects must give themselves up, and the next morning the whole thing is cleared up on the ‘aft deck,’ as the place of judgment is called, the pocket-money of the raiders is stopped, and the farmer reimbursed, and good feeling is thus restored between the boys and their neighbours. In winter a pack of beagles belonging to the cadets hunts the country two days a week, and the farmers enjoy riding after the little dogs; they will stand a good deal of annoyance connected with open gates and uprooted turnips to keep on good terms with the lieutenant who acts as Master of the Hounds, and to get him to run their hares. The regulations of the ship expressly state that cadets are warned to avoid climbing about the cliffs at Stoke Fleming, which are very dangerous; this takes the place of an old regulation which forbade their climbing, and is for that reason presumed considered as a permission to climb, and even as a kind of challenge to do so at the peril of their necks.

“They hardly ever come to grief, however; and when they do, it gives an opportunity for the display of courage such as that shown by Hugh Stucley, naval cadet, who went down with the help of a rope to rescue his comrade.

“Dartmouth Harbour is a splendid place for boating

of all kinds, and the boats at the cadets' disposal are ample to provide all who wish it with a chance to pull or sail about for the afternoon. There are two schooners in which they can go outside the harbour with a warrant officer in charge, but the other boats are taken out without any guidance, and are not allowed to be taken beyond the harbour mouth.

"The tender *Wave*—so called jocosely because



PAYING POCKET MONEY.

Britannia rules her—is a small steam yacht, barquerigged, and fitted for instructional purposes. She is not used for pleasure purposes except on such occasions as the whole holidays, when a party of cadets is taken round to Devonport to see some ships in course of construction in the dockyard, or to visit some of the matters of interest in the gunnery and torpedo instruction ships in the port.

"At all other times the *Wave* is a school-ship, a technical model, and during the summer months a very hard-worked craft. She is taken out of the harbour every week-day for one purpose or another, and the drills aloft begin early in the morning. The navigating officer takes her out with small parties, to learn and practise pilotage and the navigating a vessel by the use of Admiralty charts. The cadets, in turn, are put in charge of the bridge, actually to take her out, the navigating officer naturally keeping an eye on the performances, to see that his vessel is not left on the rocks. If he go below for a minute, the feelings of the youthful pilot have doubtless been well described by Mark Twain in his 'Mississippi.' The first lieutenant takes a watch of one term of the cadets out in her for instruction in the management of the vessel under sail, and morning sail drill is also part of his work in her. The engineer uses the engines for practical teaching in the management and construction

of engines; each cadet, in his turn, is regularly taught how to lay and light fires, the operations and precau-

tions necessary when getting up steam, besides the very thorough course of practical and theoretical teaching which he gets in the steam-study in the *Britannia*.

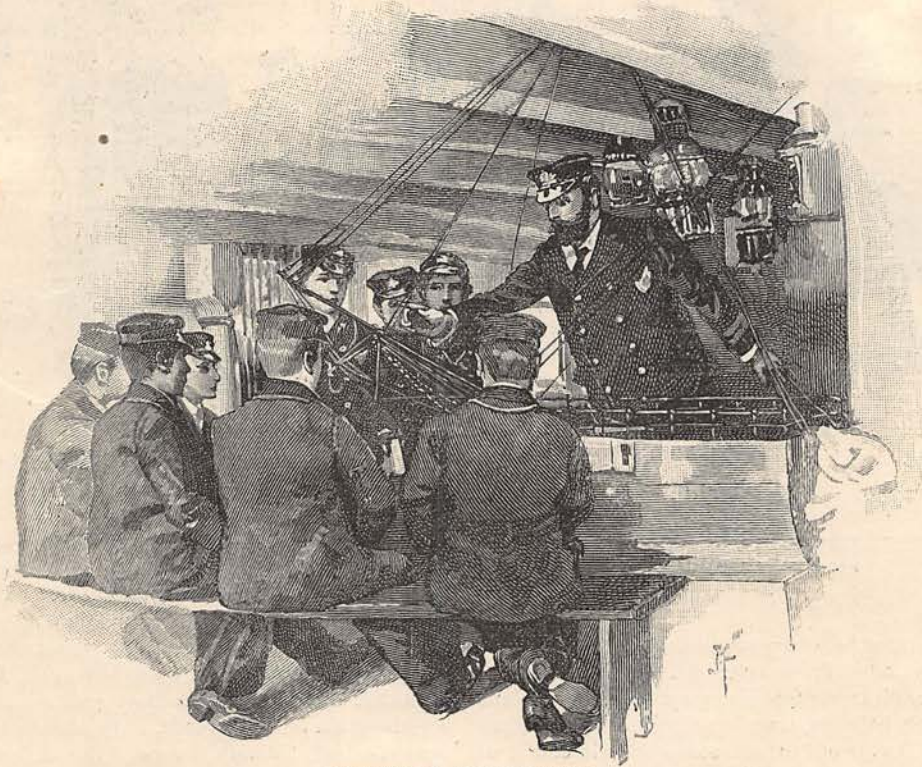
"The object always aimed at in dealing with cadets is never to teach them anything of which they are not taught also to make a practical use. The Navy is essentially a service of action, and in addition to the gain to the general service in always accustoming the cadets from the first to be up to any work, there is the gain that in so dealing with boys you are also following the grain of their minds. We often hear a boy at school asking, 'What's the use of this or that?' This question could never be asked in the *Britannia* without the complainant running the risk of spending an extra hour in the practical application of the said lesson. A boy is usually more matter-of-fact than his teachers, and it is a good instance of this that the cadets now give very little attention to teaching in masts and yards, which used to be the staple commodity of seamanship instruction, and think that steam is the really important branch. They are about right in this, but it is curious that they should be so farsighted as to have noted it. The beautiful rigged and working models connected with the seamanship of former days are always attractive to the small boy who visits the ship, but when he enters as a cadet he finds that this is not considered 'up to date.'

"Great importance is attached to boat-sailing and signal-work; a midshipman should be thoroughly proficient in these before he goes to sea, if he is to find favour in the eyes of his commanding officer. A smile is often observed on some visitor's face when he is told that a party of cadets out in a boat on a lovely summer afternoon, skimming over the harbour

in a good breeze, are at study. A very pleasant form of study, no doubt, but a very necessary one; for directly the lads leave the *Britannia* to go to sea, they may be called upon at once to take charge of a boat and sail her off on some duty.

"There is, of course, a great deal of hard mathematical work to be done by a boy on board, and if he is idle and neglects it, he is as likely as not to fail, and be returned to parents as the result of not passing an

spends in the old ship; nothing is spared to give him every opportunity of enjoyment. Captain after captain has thought his term of office incomplete if he has not devised some new mode of amusement or extension of some existing one. No school is fitted with so complete a scheme of games and employments ashore and afloat. No one can say that the boys are overworked when they are free any summer day after study is over, at 3.30, till they must come on board again



INSTRUCTION IN SEAMANSHIP.

examination; but the work is splendidly taught, and no cadet need ever fail if he works decently well; supposing that he has been able to pass in, he must have enough ability to pass out. The naval service depends on a sound mathematical knowledge applied to practical work, and this knowledge admits of direct test by examination; so that it is only right that the naval officer should be expected to pass at certain times without trenching on the vexed question of the suitability of examinations as a test of suitability to defend our country.

"The social life of cadets in the *Britannia* is to a great extent responsible for the strong coherence between the members of the 'Executive' in the Navy; they have all passed through the same mill, they know that their messmates have the same traditions, and have been trained from the first in the same school of manly independence and straightforwardness. Nothing could be pleasanter than the two years which a cadet

to tea at 7 to 7.10, while the summer half-holiday is unequalled anywhere for its freedom from any muster or 'call.' The *Britannia* is admitted by everyone who has looked into the life on board and ashore to be the finest school in England, and it is likely to be so when a series of the finest naval officers who have been chosen to command have given their best thoughts to improve the life. The Prince of Wales has always been commended for his judgment in sending his two sons to begin their life in public by taking equal shares with all the cadets who were going through the *Britannia* at that time.

"The late Duke of Clarence retained a very strong affection for the old ship, and a lively recollection of the various episodes of his life at Dartmouth. The Princes' life was so completely free from affectation or from any difference in their treatment, that a visitor coming here would never have noticed any difference; and this constituted the charm and value of the training to them.

The records of the time show that they acted all the while thoroughly in the spirit of the regulations, and appreciated, as the better-minded always do, that there is nothing forbidden for the mere purpose of annoyance or restriction, as schoolboys often think. When idle or unprepared with work, they took their drills, but any insubordination, which would have been impartially dealt with, did not exist.

"The *Britannia* Eleven plays an out match every summer half-holiday, and their opponents, the surrounding schools, the regiments at Devonport, and the naval teams as they can be arranged, as well as the county, find the boys worthy foemen, and mostly return beaten; some of the recent years have shown extraordinary successes. The band plays up in the fields, and the scene is lively in the extreme. Three matches are played at the same time, and one match at least is played against three elevens of a neighbouring school. In the evening the band plays on board, when the youngsters can let off some of the steam pent up during the hour of evening preparation for the next day's work. The band is composed of the personal

servants of the cadets, who are entered from the shore, and chosen for their ability to play some instrument. The whole scene on board at night is very striking, and should be seen if the cadets' life is to be appreciated.

"The progress in the establishment in the last fifteen years has been nothing short of a revolution; the rapidly changing forms of vessels and the needs of the general service have called for complete change in the scheme of teaching; the internal and outside fittings continually being improved and added to make almost a new ship of the old craft, though she remains safely moored, with her companion *Hindustan* ahead of her, in the same old place.

"Everything connected with the Navy must be level with the times, and most of all in the *Britannia* it is necessary for all the teaching to be, if possible, before the times, so that a youngster going to sea may not find himself a fossil before he has begun. God grant that our Navy may ever continue to be the Englishman's ideal of the profession for a Christian and a gentleman!"



WHAT TO WEAR: CHIT-CHAT ON DRESS.

BY OUR LADY CORRESPONDENT.

APRIL.



A NEW DRESS CAP.

(From a photograph by Watery, Regent Street, W.)

THE capricious month of April has arrived, and the perplexing question, Shower-proof cloak or sunshade? has to be decided.

Appropriate to the season is the beautiful waterproof plush manufactured by Messrs. Lister, which, made either as a three-quarter mantle or a semi-fitting jacket, looks costly and is most serviceable; but it requires the skill of an adept in the art of mantle-making to insure a successful garment. April's varying moods would also seem to have influenced the selection of the leading colourings for materials; for we now see side by side an "Amazon" cloth of smooth and silky surface in bright blue with one dyed to the hue of the sunny lawn refreshed by a shower.

Covert and faced-cloth in colourings of drab, tan, putty, and fawn have numerous admirers, whilst a grey cashmere, with an infinitesimal check in blue, green, or pink possesses a grace all its own. Ere this, you will have arrived at the correct conclusion that all the materials for the Spring season, with few exceptions, are smooth on the surface and of a cloth texture.

Moiré silk was arranged in an excellent manner on a new style of costume, the skirt, which was cut short and round, was made in bright blue faced-cloth, each width of material forming a box-pleat tapering towards the waist; the under portion of each pleat was composed of black moiré silk, the huge sleeves and folded