

A STORY WITH A MORAL:

A crop-headed seaman entered a cabin in U-Boat 999 and saluted smartly.

"Ein Englischesigarettebutt, Herr U-Boatintelligenzoffizier."

"Ach, dank you, Seaman Schweinhund. At what time and place have you this found?"

"On der water floating, a moment ago."

"Goot, Heil Hitler."

"Heil Hitler." The seaman respectfully saluted and backed out.

The intelligence officer popped the cigarette butt in a test tube containing an amber liquid. The liquid turned ochre. He added a few drops of a carmine fluid, and mixture turned ultramarine, with a cream scum. He drew the scum into a burette and read off the graduations. He then scanned a book of tables. A brief calculation and he turned to another officer.

"An example of the efficiency of our service, Herr Lieutenant. This cigarette butt was merely three minutes ago found. Now we know that a New Zealand troop ship passed this point fourteen hours ago, heading south south east at 20 knots."

"Miraculous."

"Not at all. Merely scientific. We are additionally sure of our facts because these figures check with an analysis of a gobbet of ship's stew found in the water." He lifted a telephone receiver and spoke briefly. The U-Boat changed course.

Some hours later, the submarine surfaced. Floating on the water were charred coops, poops, spars, hawsers, binnacles, marlin spikes and other seafaring tackle. There were no survivors to machine gun. FIRE had been there first.

"I wonder," said the intelligence officer, "whether it was the same careless smoker this time? Obviously, his cigarette butt has been carried by the wind through a porthole and has set fire to the papers in the Ship's Orderly Room. There has been a panic, probably because the fools did not keep the right in companion-ways."

MORAL: (1) Cigarette butts should not be thrown overboard,
(2) If you must vomit, vomit in the scuppers,
(3) Keep to the right.

H.W.G.

HAIR AND FAREWELL:

IT was a disappointment to the troops to find that circumstances did not permit of even the briefest leave at our first port of call. Nevertheless, the first dark outline of land, after an ocean voyage, was a sight that gladdened the hearts of many sufferers on board, and probably everyone, as we tied up at the wharf, enjoyed the sensation, if it can be called such, of a motionless ship beneath his feet. If the visit removed no restrictions on our liberty, it was still a happy experience - a break in a journey that we must expect to be long and of which, up to that point, we could say no more than that, in the words of the song, "We Saw the Sea." If the troops' expression of joy on sighting citizens of a nation other than our own was so vociferous that an appeal had to be made for silence so that the ship's officers could hear the captain's orders, that was, perhaps, perfectly understandable and excusable. There was, however, less understanding among troops from the Scottish South of the action of so many of our number who showered coin and cigarettes on the wharf as unsolicited gifts for whoever cared to stoop to pick them up. A private from Dunedin who, in his exuberance, parted with half a crown in mistake for a penny relates that when he later realised the enormity of this departure from his normal care, he caught a shilling thrown by a shipmate and so cut his losses to 1/6d.

Little activity on shore in daylight hours escaped the attention of the men who crowded into every vantage point on the ship. The inevitable lady in the red hat must have been flattered by the attention she received, and a perfect example of feminine opportunism was provided by the "Wren" who, with an assurance born of a knowledge of safety in her distance from her benefactors, smiled sweetly on all and pocketed their gifts of "smokes". The happy thought that brought a local military band to the wharf to entertain us was appreciated, but perhaps the only incident which favoured of excitement occurred when a hat blew overboard and local lads attempted a long swim to retrieve it. Two failed, and a third bore it proudly ashore as a souvenir.

Probably all on board have carried away in their memories, some picture that will remind them of a visit which marked the first milestone on a journey promising a wealth of new experience.

J.L.G.