



At Sea, 19th February, 1944.

Number 8

THERE AT LAST

By the time this issue is in troops' hands we shall almost have reached our destination and, "Down the Hatch," will have come to the end of its comparatively short, but, we hope, useful life. The troops generally have done us the honour of welcoming our various issues, encouraging the belief that we have been able to provide helpful information and to contribute some relief from the monotony of the voyage. We, in turn, have derived much pleasure from the small service that we have been able to render. It only remains for us to extend our best wishes to those on board for their success in the task which we know them so well fitted to accomplish.

ADEN

Kipling wrote of "old Aden, like a barrack-stove that ain't been used for years and years." But a place where Noah is said to have built his ark, and where cisterns built in Sheba's time collect water from the hill-sides when it rains (twice or three times a year) cannot be dismissed so lightly.

The town itself is in a crater of a volcano that erupted eighty years ago and covered the soil with lava. Apart from Sheba's cisterns, there are Artesian wells providing plenty of water.

The native craft, called yarugs, are no different from those used in biblical times, and are built without metal nails or screws.

The hinterland of 9,000 square miles, is a protectorate administered from Bombay, and Indian currency is used.

Troops stationed at Aden play all the major sports except rugby, boxing and skiing. The two former are too strenuous for the climate.

The population consists of white troops and officials, Arabs, Somalis, and natives of Aden, who were originally a mixture of Arab and Somali, but have developed into a special type with their own way of life.

The entrance to the Red Sea is called "Bab-el, Mandeb" - Gateway of Tears. Aden is said to hold the tomb of Cain. Beer is scarce.

H.W.G.

NEWS BREVITIES

RUSSIA The steam-roller advance of the Red Army, down the Estonian Border, continues. Now threatened is the German-held strongpoint of PSKOV. Russian strategy has forced the Germans to abandon their fortress-town of STARAYA RUSSA which looked like becoming another "Stalingrad."

The remnants of the ten German divisions in the Dneiper bend have surrendered. A big Russian advance in this sector can now be expected. Holding this small pocket in the Dneiper bend, cost the Germans 100,000 troops.

PACIFIC American landings in the Marshall and Caroline Islands are important and bold steps on the road to Tokio. With the occupation of Green Island by American and New Zealand troops the campaign in the Solomon Islands is virtually finished. The Allied air offensive against Jap bases in New Ireland, New Britain, and New Guinea is taking big toll of enemy shipping and air forces.

ITALY German attacks against British troops in the ANZIO area have reached new ferocity but so far our troops have held them.

WEEKLY LEAVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Those going on leave in the Middle East fall into two main divisions, on the one hand there are those keen on seeing things, and on the other those definitely out for a good time.

For the latter Cairo will hold many attractions. Firstly there is no long tiring journey to get there, and again hotels, bars and cabarets are all plentiful, and eager to cater for the pleasure seeker. However Cairo has also much for the earnest sight-seer, of which mention was made in our last issue.

For lovers of bathing, Alexandria, with its popular Stanley Bay, has a great attraction, and once more there are plenty of bars and cabarets for those on pleasure bent.

Those who seek a quiet restful holiday could not do better than go to Assuit, 200 miles up the Nile from Cairo, where the American hospitality is well known and has been so favourably commented on by all New Zealanders who have visited there.

Luxor and Aswan still further up the Nile are best visited in the wintertime. Luxor is the site of the finest collection of antiquities in the world, and across the Nile at Thebes are the Valley of the Kings and Queens, where the ancient Pharaohs are buried. Aswan Dam is one of the largest in the world.

Suez, Port Said and Ismailia all on the Suez Canal offer limited attractions for either class of troops, but boating and swimming can be indulged in.

But no matter what class of leave men are seeking I would advise them to go at least once to Palestine. It is an opportunity that will not come again to most of us.

The journey across the Sinai Desert is a tiring one but well worth the trouble. For those seeking pleasure Tel Aviv is the mecca of their desires, with Haifa second on the list. Jerusalem offers little attraction for them. Those who have come to see the Holy Land cannot do better than to proceed at once to Jerusalem.

There it is well to go on one of the organised daily trips to such places as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock (site of Solomon's Temple), The Wailing Wall of the Jews, Via Dolorosa, Solomon's Quarries and the Garden of Gethsemane. Half-day trips

can be arranged to Bethlehem; or to Jericho, the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

A round trip well worth taking is from Jerusalem to Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Tiberius, then to Haifa and to Mt. Carmel, to Tel Aviv and back to Jerusalem.

Most New Zealanders are amazed at the commercialisation of the Holy Places. To see Palestine fully and take time over the trips one really requires a fortnight.

A.S.H.

THE BOOTBLACK

My first day in Cairo wasn't a success. A small group of ill-mannered urchins with footstools followed me down the street and wanted to clean my boots. I told them, rather too mildly I'm afraid, to go away as my boots already shone like the rising sun, but one of the urchins drew my attention to my right foot which was covered with a sticky black mass.

Now, I thought, this was going a bit far and was about to wring the brat's neck when he protested his innocence and pointed to a second urchin who was at that moment disappearing around the next corner at a considerable speed. I was told later that this was by no means an uncommon occurrence in Cairo, but not withstanding this fact, a crowd of spectators gathered, and that they found the incident amusing was obvious.

I suppose the humour of the situation depends upon whether you are its victim or a spectator, but at that moment I could see nothing funny in any part of the proceedings, especially when the innocent urchin—and I have since changed my mind about his innocence—demanded two piastres for cleaning the black mess off my right boot and threatened to slap a similar mess on my face if I didn't pay up smartly. Now I didn't like his methods, but a Frenchman to whom I appealed, told me I had better pay if I wanted to avoid trouble. Then I discovered that I possessed only one piastre and two mills in small change. The urchin was about to renew his messy threat when the Frenchman took charge of the situation and sent the youngster on his way. The crowd seemed satisfied that they had had their moneysworth of entertainment but I felt a deep and bitter humiliation and resolved to be firmer in the future.

N.H.

"SEEIN' STARS"

Astronomy! Nebulae, constellations, star clusters and comets. Dry as dust subject, think you not? You've often been browsing your way through a bookshop, and accidentally found yourself staring, with mounting repugnance, at an astronomical publication which, without exercising the imagination to any great extent, positively oozes dust by the ton. But you, who gaze heavenwards on these beautiful starry nights, are mildly interested in astronomy without realising it.

Enjoying the cool night air up on the boat-deck I have overheard comments relating to a "pot," a few stars belonging to a group (or constellation) which has been known for many, many centuries (even before the birth of Christ) as Orion, the great hunter.

Now, how can a group of stars have any connection with a hunter, you may ask. Without delving too deeply it is said that shepherds and other watchers of the night, centuries ago, used to set their imaginations to work on the celestial bodies, and they ran imaginary lines from star to star to form birds, animals, men and women. Yes, they even introduced a woman's hair into the scheme of things. There would be no point in naming a few of such groups, but Orion seems the most popular, so next time you look at the "pot" try and imagine the figure of a man. The three stars forming a straight line, and which seems to be the bottom of the "pot," are actually Orion's belt. You work it out from there.

Many of you will have noticed that the Southern Cross, under which we used to ladle out lots of bluff to our girl friends, is now missing from the evening sky. The famous Cross, which never set, may now be seen about 2 a.m. low down on the southern horizon; from this latitude it does set, so it does not remain for very long above the water. At this time the constellation of the Great Bear can be seen to advantage, with Polaris, the north star, visible further north. This group is, indeed, shaped like a pot, but

is more popularly known as the Plough. These stars are never visible from N.Z.

There has been much speculation on the part of the dozens of amateur astronomers on the ship about the brilliant white object which glows so balefully in the east, just when the blackout hurtles itself upon us. This offending celestial body is Jupiter, by far the largest of all the planets in the Solar System. With relation to size, if Jupiter is represented as a cricket ball, then Earth pales into insignificance by being represented as a pill, the type the M.I.R. so maliciously and gleefully thrusts down our most unwilling throats at times. Some size, this Jupiter, don't you think?

Determined to share the spotlight with Jupiter are two more planets, but scintillating in a by far lesser degree. Nevertheless they are still objects of brilliance and well worth singling out, if you can do so. I am referring to Mars, Planet of War and Saturn the Ringed Planet, able to be observed favourably an hour or so after sundown.

Situated almost at the zenith, Mars is to be distinguished as a red spot, shining very brightly, while Saturn, though bright, fails to equal its companion. It is impossible to give directions as to their exact location, but if you look directly overhead you will observe these two planets, not so far away, forming a wide triangle with a star almost as fiery in appearance as Mars. Do not confuse Mars with Aldebaran. The latter is a pin point of red, Mars brighter and slightly larger. When you have divided these two, Saturn will be found as the third member of the triangle.

Venus, known as the morning and evening "star" (it is actually a planet) can be seen blazing with a strong intensity two hours before dawn, and is at its best then. However, it is still visible, though faintly, at 6 a.m. Venus, apart from the sun and moon, is the brightest body in the heavens, and can often be seen shining in broad daylight. The catch is—you must know where to look.

Astronomy, you see, is not the boring subject one may think it to be. A little perseverance and you may develop into another Herschel!

T.C.N.

A REPLY TO "R.N." FROM TRANSPORT 82

She saw your apprehension
On that day across the Blue,
When you walked right up the Gangway
Of Transport 82.

She was ready to receive you
And to do her best for you;
But she has her limitations,
Has Transport 82.

When war broke out, a Liner
Spick and span right through and through,
With Tourists, Mail and Cargo,
Sailed Transport 82.

Escorts were needed badly
To convoy the freighters through.
So she turned into an A. M. C.,
Did Transport 82.

She carries scars of battle,
And the splinters bit her through,
But she's lived to fight another day
Has Transport 82.

After two years as a Cruiser,
And when Transports were too few,
She helped to fill the Middle East
With Men and Guns for You.

She has travelled many a voyage
To countries old and new,
And she boasts a million miles and more
Does Transport 82.

She had never carried Kiwis
In her life across the blue,
She's been proud to make so many friends,
Has Transport 82.

In conclusion hear her wishes,
Best of luck to all of you,
And damnation to the Axis,
From Friend TRANSPORT 82.

L. G. (Purser).

SHIP'S HOUSEKEEPING

By the courtesy of the Purser we publish approx. astronomical quantities of food etc. consumed on this ship since leaving N.Z. :-

Cereals	-	-	-	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	Tons
Flour	-	-	-	47	"
Preserved Fruit	-	-	-	8	"
Jam	-	-	-	7	"
Sugar	-	-	-	11	"
Tea	-	-	-	2	"
Vegetables,					
Fresh & Presd.	-	-	-	28	"
Butter	-	-	-	8	"
Cheese	-	-	-	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	"
Eggs	-	-	-	50,000	No.
Milk	-	-	-	6	Tons
Potatoes	-	-	-	56	"
Fresh Fruit	-	-	-	60,000	Pieces
Meat	-	-	-	118,000	lbs. (or the
equivalent of 77 oxen or 1966 Sheep or 1100 Pigs					
Sausages	-	-	-	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	Miles
Cigarettes	-	-	-	2,750,000	No.
Cigarette &					
Pipe Tobacco	-	-	-	4,000	lbs.
Tinned Fruits	-	-	-	36,000	Tins
No. of Meals served: 430,000					

—Purser

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Britain.
2. Kalinin.
3. Wing-Commander Isherwood-Ramsbottom.
4. General Godley.
5. Staff Corps - cuff and shoulders. Other Officers - cuff only.

ACCIDENT

One of the printing staff, Gnr. A. Ogilvie, has had the misfortune to crush two of his fingers in the machine and is now in hospital.

SOUVENIR ISSUE

As a result of sales of the Souvenir Number of "Down the Hatch", the sum of £6.2.7. has been presented to each of the two charities, the British Seamen's Fund and the New Zealand Seamen's Fund. — Editor.