

Education and Meteorological Departments

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

ON JOINING THE SHIP at the beginning of the commission we were told by those whom we were relieving, and who had just returned from a late autumn in the Suez area, that working conditions on board in the Mediterranean were unbearable. Now, after six months in the tropics, we are looking forward to returning there to cool off.

These conditions have no doubt contributed to a falling off in the attendance at voluntary school. However, we have had students studying subjects from English spelling to Swahili, and preparing for examinations ranging from E.T.I to B.Sc. (Economics). We even found someone in this enlightened age of universal secondary education who, in order to multiply four by seven, had to write four down seven times and add them up—and got the wrong answer.

There must also be something fascinating about having some letters after one's name, since we have had a number of requests for degrees—it doesn't really matter which one—with which to go outside. Another favourite request is for a "brush-up" in some subject which, upon investigation, reveals that there never was anything there upon which to execute this burnishing process.

A lighter aspect of the work of the Education Branch is the sudden arrival outside the bathroom door, or other inconvenient place, of two red-faced ratings with a question such as: "What were the names of the first three horses in the Grand National of 1936, who rode them, and what were the odds paid out on the winner?" If one can answer questions like these straight off the cuff the stock of the branch is enormously enhanced and the ratings depart unquestioningly to settle their bet in private.

Another facet of our work on board has been to provide resettlement information and advice and to arrange E.V.T. courses for those about to leave the Service.

Instructor Commander Meredith successfully produced the play "Morning Departure" and arranged it for recording and broadcasting over the ship's sound reproduction equipment, the



technique of which is extremely difficult. It is a great pity that there are so few suitable plays with an all-male cast, or we might have had more.

The Instructor Commander also trained and organised the ship's choir and the Glee Club, which contributed largely to the success of the "Green Room Rag," which was produced by the ship at Mombasa.

Leading Coder (Ed.) J. Blackburn, who left us in August to return home to the University of Leeds, did valiant work in the libraries and took a leading part in the *Bulwark* Christian Fellowship and in the community hymn-singing which was held on the flight deck.

The commission has provided many excellent opportunities for educational visits, and those which are remembered with nostalgia are the bus trip through the narrow winding lanes of Normandy to Briquebec, which was *en fete* at the time; the visit to the Reichsmuseum in Amsterdam, and the expeditions to the game reserves in Kenya, where one's car was liable to be charged at any time without warning by a rhinoceros.

Perhaps the most hazardous effort was the assault on Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa, in which Instructor Lieutenant Greenhalgh took a leading part.

There have been a large number of language students on board and, in addition to the usual European languages, we had a class of thirty would-be Arabists, partly to relieve the monotony of an expected protracted stay in Aden, and partly, no doubt, since we were fortunate enough to obtain the services of Flying Officer E. I. Avery, W.R.A.F., as instructress.

METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

"When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say,
There cometh a shower; and so it is.
And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say,
There will be heat ; and it cometh to pass.
Ye hypocrites! . . ."

St. Luke xii, 54-57.

THOUGH A SMALL DEPARTMENT, Met. has been much in the public eye and is a constant source of wonderment to spectators on the flight deck.

The inflation and launching of *Bulwark's* own Sputnik, the Radiosonde, has occasioned many a side bet as to whether the contraption would (a) explode with a mushroom-shaped cloud ; (b) fall into the sea, or (c) be established in orbit with the P.O. (Met.) competing with Laika. The first two mishaps seldom occurred and, though it has been a close call at times, Petty Officer Lane is

still with us, so that much useful information has been obtained, not only for the ship's aircraft, but for civil aviation and the International Geophysical Year.

Forecasting has been the main occupation of the department, not only for aircraft, but for the essentials of shipboard life such as whether Able Seaman Bloggs will get wet if he sleeps on the flight deck, or if conditions are suitable for the P.M.O. to go fishing. We have had our successes in this sphere, though there have been some tense moments such as the synchronisation of the arrival of a typhoon warning with the Wardroom's farewell party in Hong Kong.

Voyaging from the Arctic Ocean to the Southern Hemisphere and from the New World to the Far East has produced some extremes of weather. The rapid transition from the milk-warm waters of the Caribbean to the fridity of the Labrador current will long be remembered, as will the heat and humidity of Aden and the Gulf of Oman.

For the record, winds exceeding 70 knots, the maximum our instruments can accommodate, experienced at Spithead on 4th November, 1957, and off the Scillies in October, 1957, when the ship executed her famous 27 degrees roll. The layman may be interested to know that winds exceeding 64 knots are defined officially as being of hurricane force.

The lowest air temperature was 31° F. in Halifax, and the highest 90° F. in the Red Sea returning from Aqaba, though a further 10° may be added for the average temperature between decks.

It seems likely that in future even the most critical will be more tolerant of the English climate after our tropical experience.



**The Conquest of Outer Space :
"Bulwark's" own Sputnik
being launched**



Officers and Chief Petty Officers
Writer and Supply Staff
Officers, Cook and Stewards

Supply and Secretariat

The Supply Task Generally

THE WORLD CRUISE provided an interesting exercise in practical logistics, for which a lot of advance planning was necessary; e.g., 5,000 cases of beer for the Canteen, and Wardroom stocks were shipped from U.K. to Hong Kong in January; three months' stocks of aircraft spares, naval stores and dry and frozen victuals were shipped to Gibraltar in February. Nothing was to be had in the West Indies except fresh fruit and vegetables.

From the date we left U.K. in mid January until we reached Cyprus in October we were more than 3,000 miles from any air stores depot, and apart from the shipment to Gibraltar, all our replenishments came by air freight from U.K. Despite this, it was a rare occasion indeed when an aircraft was grounded through lack of spares.

We stored ship according to plan at Gibraltar and Hong Kong, and then arranged for stocks of food and stores to be shipped to Cape Town.

All went well until the Iraq rebellion altered our programme; the South African visits were cancelled and the stocks at Cape Town flown or shipped to Aden. The ship was stored generally to the end of September, and so we had to guess at the probable delay in our return and order large quantities of additional air and naval stores and food and clothing from U.K.; Malta, Singapore and Mombasa, and also draw on R.A.F. food stocks in Aden, where nothing else was available.

In September, R.F.A. *Fort Charlotte* appeared from Singapore via Bahrein, and we transferred a lot of food, stores and drop-tanks, some being dumped ashore as reserve. At the same time H.M.S. *Sheffield* arrived with stocks of clothing and food from Malta.

No sooner had we completed our plans for replenishment at Aden, after the ship's return from her expected visit to the Persian Gulf, than we were ordered to Cyprus by 1st October.

At this time our naval and air store replenishments were on the way from U.K. to Aden in three merchant ships in the Mediterranean which could not be diverted. Food from Singapore was about to be shipped, but was fortunately stopped; urgent air stores were piling up in Bahrein and food from Mombasa was on the way in R.F.A. *Fort Sandusky*.

In the three days at Aden *en route* for Cyprus we grabbed all the stores that had accumulated there, diverted the air freight from Bahrein, and by deed of delaying the ship for several hours we cleared *Fort Sandusky*, on her arrival, of our food, almost as we were getting under way.

We now faced a three-week operational period in the Mediterranean with our main replenishment stocks of naval and air stores arriving at Aden. Some of this was picked up by H.M.S. *Sheffield* and brought to us at Famagusta, and the

remainder of our needs were hastily ordered from Malta and delivered to us with more dry provisions in R.F.A. *Retainer* and transferred at sea off Cyprus. The remainder of our 60-odd tons of naval and air stores were landed at Aden and subsequently picked up by H.M.S. *Albion* and R.F.A. *Reliant* on passage for the Far East.

Never a dull moment!

The Captain's Office

Staff: Lieut.-Commander R. H. V. Bodman
Lieutenant J. C. Gough
P.O. Writer D. H. Gamble
Leading Writer D. G. Bridge
Writer M. M. Steward
Writer J. N. Beveridge
Able Seaman J. H. Barnett

THEORETICALLY, the staff and office handle the ship's official correspondence and keep the records of officers and men. In practice, the office is a compressed mixture of Citizens' Advice Bureau, non-fiction lending library, General Inquiry office and waiting-room. We deal with pen pals, bad debts, fan mail, anxious mums and designing females. We record that advancement of yours, note your hurt certificate, check your next-of-kin, and discover that badge is overdue. We issued and collected in, checked and despatched your drafting preference cards (surprising how many don't know their own rating!), requestmen, or defaulter, compassionate leave or course—we get them all. In the tropics the temperature is about 95° F., but alas! we can't boast a steam pipe.

Since recommissioning, more than 6,000 official letters have been received and circulated; over 3,000 have been typed, checked and despatched, the latter varying in length from one word to a mammoth letter of forty-five pages; 1,436 ratings have appeared before the Captain as requestmen, and 1,978 alterations have been handled. The number of "rush" or "immediate" jobs handled arc countless, and it is amazing the number of letters that *have* to go after the mail has gone.

On the lighter side, the office bowled out a non-existent Sub-Lieutenant who had "joined" the ship, was entered on the ledger, allocated a cabin and victualled in the wardroom for some considerable time before he was given an "honourable discharge."

There was also the rating who, on joining the ship, discovered that he had the choice of two surnames and was not sure which one was correct, causing a minor sensation and reducing the Petty Officer Writer to hysterics.

In conclusion, the members of the "ship's axis" wish all their shipmates "Good fortune and cushy numbers" in the future.

Victualling Department

FOR THE MAJORITY of the victualling staff, *Bulwark* was their first experience of "big ships," but having got over the initial problem of storing, everyone soon settled down and looked forward to an interesting commission. The working-up period spent in home waters gave us quite a lot of running to do, but also pleasant memories of such places as Belfast, Cherbourg, Channel Islands and Rotterdam. Exercise "Strikeback" gave us the order of the "Bluenose." Our foreign commission carried us to places as far apart as the West Indies and Canada to Manila and Hong Kong.

During the West Indies cruise the correspondent of a British newspaper, who was on board, rang the Victualling Office with a query. He understood that we carried three types of fuel and knew of Avgas and F.F.O.; he appeared quite satisfied when told that rum was the third. Banyan and sailing parties left the ship at every opportunity, causing many headaches on the victualling side. To the relief of the department very few opportunities arose for such parties once the ship got east of Gibraltar. Full store ship programmes were carried out at Gibraltar and Hong Kong (the stores having been shipped from U.K.), and at Aden from the store ship *Fort Charlotte*. Fresh fruit and vegetables were taken on at almost every port of call.

Among our statistics we find we have consumed over a million pounds of potatoes, which is about one-fiftieth of the weight of the ship, and twenty-five and a half miles of sausages, which would stretch one hundred times round the flight deck or five times from Portsmouth to Isle of Wight.

STATISTICS	
Beef	105,000 lb.
Lamb	37,000 lb.
Veal	12,000 lb.
Pork	26,500 lb.
Tea	20,000 lb.
Sugar	155,000 lb.
Bacon	46,000 lb.
Fish	5,000 stone
Sausages (approx. 25½ miles)	50,000 lb.
Cheese	20,000 lb.
Butter	27,500 lb.
Margarine	43,000 lb.
Potatoes	1,110,000 lb.
Cabbage	100,000 lb.
Carrots	28,500 lb.
Onions	48,000 lb.
Fruit	55,000 lb.
Fruit (in number)	2 1 0,000

Pay Office

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW of the Church calendar, motor vehicle licensing, grouse shooting, the Commons' recess and yak-hunting, 20th March may be an excellent day on which to commission a ship; for the perspiring pen-pushers of the Pay

Office, however, it was the worst possible. For, apart from closing and transferring 1,178 pay accounts from last commission, and entering 1,178 new pay accounts for the forthcoming commission, we were faced with the end of the month, the end of the ledger period and the end of the financial year. Competing with the chatter of "Windy Hammers" and with the dust from the Avgas tanks we pressed on, and the first payment of the commission was made on time!

Our next headache was the squadrons which, during our time on the home station, came and left like proverbial yo-yos, taking their ledgers with them.

It was not until we entered the tropics that we really appreciated our central heating (a steam galley pipe) which sent our temperature soaring to a steady 102°. Our cruise took us to seven different areas of Local Overseas Allowance, accompanied by the inevitable money-changing sessions.

This year has brought two bits of financial luck. Firstly the pay rise on 5th April (a mixed blessing for us), and secondly our successful salvaging of s.s. *Fernand Gilabert* and s.s. *Melika*. The value of this nest-egg is still a mystery, and we can only reply to your queries, "Your guess is as good as ours."

On our way back now to tobacco coupons and leave payments, we hope to have been of service to you as keepers of your finances. Good luck, and may everyone enjoy his well-earned leave.

STATISTICS

	s.	d.
Total money you have picked up at the pay table during the commission ...	755,964	0 0
Remittances ...	164,912	II 1
P.O.S.B. deposits (commenced on 31st January, on arrival at Trinidad) ...	21,682	10 6
P.O.S.B. withdrawals (ditto) ...	9,372	18
Hong Kong dollars exchanged for "rabbit" runs, etc.: 640,000 H.K. dollars.		
P.O.S.B. withdrawals in Hong Kong ...	3,439	0 0
P.O.S.B. withdrawals in Aden ...	2,273	0 0

Cooks (0) and Stewards

FOR SIXTY PER CENT. Of the Cooks and Stewards, big ships and carriers were entirely new. However, after a shaky start and having overcome the trials of "Strikeback" accompanied by its "dreaded lurgy," we settled down to a fairly good team.

During the commission we have had many changes: P.O. Steward Rapps departed for course and examination, resulting in success. P.O. Steward Sennett and P.O. Steward Owen left for compassionate reasons, and Lieutenant Piper left just prior to our departure from the U.K., with a promise of a bowler hat and all that went with it.

Throughout the second part of the commission we have dealt with official and unofficial cocktail parties in different parts of the world: Port of Spain, Bermuda, Kingston, Halifax, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Singapore, Mombasa and Aden. Adding them all together, several thousand guests must have been entertained and, looking at it from the stewards' angle, several thousand glasses washed and broken.

Various nationalities have been catered for, particularly during Operation "Showboat"; the staff, though finding things heavy going because of the heat, managed to hold the extra work down and still make progress with the daily routine. This brings to mind a story of a certain leading steward who was serving the Sikh Lieut.-Commander in the Wardroom shop. The Lieut.-Commander made his purchases with some hesitation, the leading steward, trying to be helpful by jogging his memory, said, "Anything else, sir ? Toothpaste ? Toilet soap, or *razor blades* ?" Among our other foreign guests we had a flying visit from a Liberian tanker, which entered the gun-room through the after bulkhead.

We have done our share of showing the flag and, in spite of the trying conditions and a certain amount of hard work, most of us will agree that this commission has been an interesting and worthwhile experience.

Cooks (S)

FOR THE COOKS (S) STAFF the commission has gone very smoothly, despite the awkward working conditions of a carrier in the tropics. Nobody, as far as we know, has died of malnutrition, and we have never been late in opening the counters.

Petty Officer Collins had some valuable experience, cooking at an angle of 15° on board s.s. *Melika* during our salvage operations. During the same evolution, two of our staff taught H.M.S. *Puma* how to make bread, and were highly commended. Since we commissioned we have produced 137 tons of bread and 6½ tons of steak.

During the lighter moments of leave, two cooks found time to marry the girls of their choice, and five have become fathers—some of them "repeated offences." We have the oldest man in the ship, also one of the youngest, and the total ages of all the staff, including our two Royal Marine cooks, is over ,000.

Our sporting record is quite good: Cook Barrass has been in the ship's cricket team for every match that has been played; Petty Officer Charlesworth and Leading Cook Skillcorn have been in the ship's cricket team; and we have a very good deck hockey team. On the artistic side the Chief Cook won the Fleet Bakery Competition for the best decorative bread, and Cook Dunn has nearly reached the two dozen mark for his "tattoos" ; he hopes to fulfil this by the time we reach U.K. to pay off and have some well-earned leave.

Naval Stores Department

"There's a branch that's little noticed, for their station is below,
In the cubby-holes and lobbies where the sailors seldom go,
They are strangers to the limelight, they seldom see the sun,
But their task is never ending, and their watch is never done."

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES in aircraft-carriers are very much greater than in the average "pusser" ship. Aircraft spares and servicing equipment have to be provided in larger and ever-increasing quantities to keep the main armament fully serviceable, and the needs of the Engineering, Electrical, Executive and a host of small sub-departments satisfied so that we may have an efficient ship.

There has been one staff change since commissioning; this continuity has helped the experience of one and all and has resulted in the production of a pretty good team. The task has been a fairly heavy one, and the scores of thousands of requirements, ranging from split pins through all the various bits and pieces to such items as propellers, mainplanes, rotor blades, whip aerials, etc., have given us plenty of headaches, but we are still able to smile a little.

It is usual on these occasions to indulge in a little statistical analysis and to produce a few facts, which we hope will impress :

(1) Thirty-three thousand separate descriptions of stores stocked in quantity are dispersed in twenty storerooms, hangars and deck-head stowages.

(2) Fourteen new ranges of aircraft and electronic spares totalling 10,000 separate descriptions of stores have been embarked.

(3) Twenty thousand, eight hundred and one demands have been placed on store depots and dockyards.

(4) Four thousand, four hundred and ninety-two return notes for unserviceable stores, and items no longer required, have been raised.

(5) Approximately 320 tons of naval stores have been embarked during five storing periods.

(6) Five thousand, three hundred and four packages, ranging from railway truckloads to air-mail packets of air stores, have been received.

(7) Fifty-two railway truck-loads and 716 cases of air stores have been returned to store depots.

A few examples of the ship's consumption:
To keep the ship clean: 16,912 bars of soap.
To preserve and beautify the ship's side: 1,865 gallons of grey paint.
To lighten our darkness: 17,139 torch batteries.
To protect the hands of the ship's company: 3,452 pairs of leather gloves.

Although small in number, our sub-department has derived a lot of satisfaction from our ship's excellent records in all its exercises and operations, and we are proud to have contributed in no small way to this success. In conclusion, it has been a good commission, and may the tradition continue.

The British Insurance Association

SINCE H.M.S. BULWARK became the personal interest of all members of the British Insurance Association, we have learned quite a lot about the Royal Navy, and the term "Senior Service" has come to mean more than 3s. 11d. for 20. Vivid accounts of your operations and cruises received from time to time have made us very envious, particularly as we are mostly chained to our offices or desks, and although March in Halifax may not suit everyone, surely there could be nothing better than a cruise in the Caribbean. The effect of this free recruiting publicity on our young men worries us, and we dare not inquire into the number of insurance bodies volunteering to sign on.

Not content with this blatant propaganda, you have on many occasions given us the full treatment by acting as our hosts in typical Royal Navy fashion. For sheer volume, the invasion of *Bulwark* by about 250 from the B.I.A. in 1955 takes pride of place. Since then, smaller parties have been welcomed frequently, and many children still remember the wonderful Christmas party you gave them. More recently, the rigger match with you afforded us a good opportunity of meeting you at very close quarters. In this way we now know a lot about your life but, on the other hand, you have seen only the social side of our life, having met us at social functions in our number one rig or on the playing fields in our sports kit. So that you may not think our life is all char and cricket, we feel you should know something of the more serious side of our activities, as we do earn a fraction of our salaries sometimes.

The is the trade association of the British Insurance Companies (over 250 of them) looking after their common interests which cover an amazingly wide field dealing with matters from Britain to Burma and from Halifax to Hong Kong. The export side of our business is vitally important, as nearly three-quarters of British Insurance is transacted overseas and earns for this country over £40 millions a year—our contribution to the Balance of Payments struggle. As you may be aware, there are few countries or cities outside the Iron Curtain where British Insurance is not on duty, and this goes from Hong Kong westabout to Hawaii—not forgetting ships and their cargoes on the seven seas.

Our main task is to watch legislation and taxation developments, both at home and overseas, which may affect our members' business, and in this and many other matters we are greatly assisted by voluntary committees made up of General Managers or senior executives of the various Member Companies, experts who give the benefit of their wide experience to the industry as a whole. The day-to-day work of the Association is performed by the Secretariat of about twenty, led by Mr. Tom Wilmot. Direction is in the hands of the Chairman, at present Mr. Charles F. Trustam,

General Manager of one of the largest Insurance Companies.

One very important aspect of our work is maintaining good relations between the industry and the public. This is done largely in co-operation with the Press by providing articles and advising correspondents as well as advertising. We are also represented at exhibitions, the latest being at Brussels, where our exhibit at the City of London stand caught the attention of the Duke of Edinburgh when he visited the British Pavilion early in July. Our Deputy Chairman, Mr. H. A. Walters, represented the B.I.A. on this occasion and had the honour of being presented to Prince Philip. We have also made our own film, given broadcast talks and produced representatives who have braved the TV cameras in the service of insurance.

The most recent innovation was the Press Conference at our Annual General Meeting this year, when Mr. Trustam led a Brains Trust of insurance experts which acquitted itself courageously in answering a barrage of searching questions from the gentlemen of the Press.

In comparison with all this, the "work" connected with H.M.S. *Bulwark* is pleasure indeed, and it is a great pity that the exigencies of the



The unique Standing Salt presented to "Bulwark" by B.I.A. in recognition of her part in the Suez operation, 1956

Service take you so far from this country. We are very proud of our connection with such a happy ship and of the fine spirit of friendship that has grown up between the ship's company and the B.I.A.

As we have been on the receiving end of naval generosity for some time, the Board Room in Gresham Street has a distinctly nautical air. Our latest addition, the magnificent George III silver Bosun's Call, is highly prized and greatly admired by all visitors. As yet, it has not been used to "pipe all hands to a Committee meeting," but that

may come in time. However, we have had the pleasure of "piping the side" for your Captain and a number of his officers at a luncheon given on your return from the Suez operation.

At the moment, we are looking forward to your return from abroad when we shall be able to renew old acquaintances and make new friends over the plates and bottles, on the playing-fields, or, perhaps, aboard ship. In the meantime, we hope this article has given some idea of the other side of our business life in looking after the interests of a vital section of British commerce.

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" just like a Civvy Parish "



MY FATHER, a police officer, had very definite ideas about how a clergyman spent his time on weekdays. "I suppose," he said, when I told him I wanted to be ordained, "you are the sort who might enjoy drinking cups of tea with all the old ladies of the parish every afternoon."

My first parish had very few old ladies ; it is what is known as "a young parish"—a bad description, for it is mentioned in the Domesday Book, and that was not written yesterday. The "young" applies, not to the institution, but its people. But a new curate is first sent round to show himself off to the regular worshippers who, out of their hard-earned wages, are going to pay his stipend (about the same amount as a Junior Seaman gets, but without his "keep," and no K.U.A.). This is so that they can see how good or how bad a bargain

they are getting for their money. For it is not a case of "You pays your money and you takes your choice" where curates are concerned. There is, for the parishioners, no choice. In fact, they pays their money and takes the bishop's choice !

On a fine Monday afternoon in late September, more years ago than I care to remember, feeling very "green," and peering over what seemed to be a white-washed fence, I sallied forth from the clergy house with a list or ten names and addresses on which to call. It is the biggest parish in England, with eight priests, and the people were used to losing one who had learned his job and gaining another who had to learn his each year. And instead of saying to themselves with a sigh of resignation, "Good grief, another makee-learn!" (or words to that effect), they were, year by year,

kind and welcoming to their new acquisitions. Four hours later on that September afternoon, having drunk seventeen cups of tea and eaten twelve chocolate biscuits, I returned to the clergy house feeling rather sick and dying to visit the heads. I had discovered a strange belief of the laity. They cannot bring themselves to believe that the clergy indulge in anything so coarse as answering the calls of nature. And the inexperienced young curate, rather than disillusion this cherished belief, often suffers agonies in silence. At the end of that day I began to think perhaps my father had been right.

That was a long time ago. I soon learned how to refuse repeated offers of tea without appearing to be churlish or ungrateful. And in any case, I was soon turned on to visiting people who did not come to church, and did not help to pay my stipend, and were often not welcoming, and would never dream of offering tea.

"This afternoon, start on Ravenor Park Road," the rector would say, and off I would go "door-stepping" — calling at house after jerry-built house in a long road of extremely identical domiciles. Some would be out, some would be rude, some would be icily polite but completely disinterested, some would belong to another church. One soon learned to make appropriate replies to various types of people. A very "modern" middle-aged female in black jeans and sandals, and holding between blood-red finger-nails a long cigarette-holder, stared at me as if I were a historical relic and drawled, "Oh, it's no good coming here;



we're not interested in the Church." "A pity, ma'am, for the Church is *very* interested in you." Another rather pleasant, homely Lancashire woman greeted me with: "Ee, you've coom to the wrong house—I'm a Peculiar Baptist." "That's all right, missis, I'm a bit funny myself. Can I come in?" On that occasion the ice was broken and she became my very good friend.

About one house in every hundred was a "winner." Someone really needed the help of a priest, and often enough they needed it at that very moment, as if one had been led there. Such occasions would make the whole, often wearisome, trudge worth while and provide an antidote for the next ninety-nine rude or bored or icily polite houses.

There was one interesting spinster who had been the English nanny to the offspring of half the Italian, Belgian and Luxemburg nobility. She was a very intelligent person and an interesting conversationalist. But she had one exotic hobby: it was to try to get each new curate in turn, as soon as possible after his arrival in the parish, happily and helplessly drunk. I was warned that this would be my fate when I accepted her invitation to "tea" one afternoon, unless I took great care. And sure enough, on the afternoon in question, she commenced her strategy. "This post-war stuff is so poor," she murmured disarmingly, as she poured out half a tumblerful of whisky and added a merest splash of soda for me, while she poured out tea for herself. "But, of course, it is no good trying to tempt you men with tea." I did not get drunk, to the lasting disappointment of my older colleagues, who had all been through that part of their training with more or less success, but I found Evensong that evening, which we said together at 1800, a very light-hearted service (it was not a Sunday, so there was not a large congregation). And I found that particular house a pleasant refuge whenever I had had an overwhelmingly depressing or frustrating day. I could feel assured that my cares and sorrows would there be given a jolly good ducking—if not be drowned.

An odd apprenticeship for the Navy, you think? Not a bit! For most of these parochial characters have their counterparts in the Navy, and indeed in H.M.S. *Bulwark*, as the following will show.

One afternoon I was invited to keep a watch with the Engineers in "A" Engine-room. It was most enjoyable, but I needed all my past training to cope with the hospitality of the engine- and boiler-rooms; a "wet" of tea immediately on arrival, a further "wet" in "B" Engine-room when I visited there with the Engineer Officer of the Watch, and yet another in each boiler-room, and

"JUST LIKE CIVVY STREET" —*continued*

upon our return to "A" Engine-room endless cups of a beverage called "Ruby Goffer" were thrust into my hand and duly consumed. No heads were visible !

Subsequently, having arranged a trip in a Skyraider, I reported to the flight deck at the scheduled time. There was an hour's delay, which was whiled away by a few "wets" in the bridge mess. Then the flight began and lasted for three hours. There are no heads in a Skyraider !

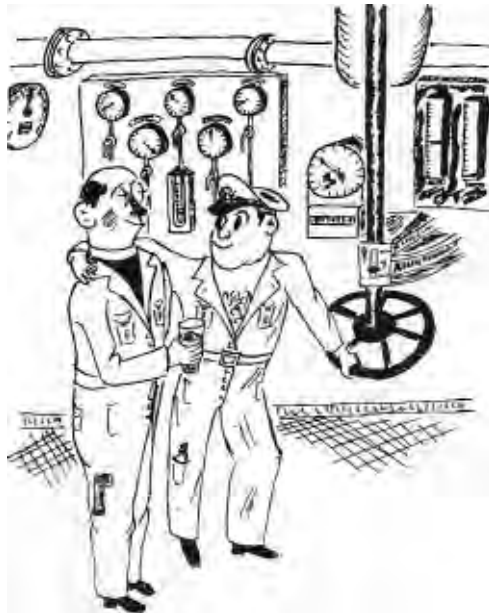
The same process is repeated whenever one visits the Chippies, the Sick Bay, the Royal Marines Sergeants' Mess or the Electrical Office or the workshops. I am driven to the conclusion that tea-drinking is not only an addiction of old ladies in the parish, and my father was certainly wrong. I wonder, indeed, what he used to do when he was "on the beat" ?

Going round the mess-decks is very similar to "doorstepping" in the parish, with two exceptions: my parishioners are never—at all events, when we are at sea—"not at home," and up to now no sailor has ever been deliberately rude. But some are bored, some are icily polite, some belong to

other churches. The ones who make life worth while are rather more than one per hundred.

There are even the counterparts of the English nanny. I met a lot of these, for instance, both in the P.Os.' and the P.O.M.Es.' messes last Christmas Day. And on that occasion I might say that they were rather more successful than she was in accomplishing her object !

To end, here is a story which is not strictly accurate, but is a splendid conclusion to this. brief account of the joys and sorrows of a priest. During my last leave I was the only other occupant of a compartment in a train with a countryman with a fine Somerset accent. When I asked him what he was he said, "Oi be a shepherd, zir." "I'm a shepherd, too," I said, "how many sheep have you got in your flock, shepherd ?" "Nigh on 'unfired, air," he replied, and then, after a long silence. "And how many 'ave you, air ?" "I have seventeen hundred," I said. At this he spent several minutes ruminating upon my remark and finally came out with this comment: "Oi reckon you must have a foine ould frolic come lambing toime !" he said.



"Wets !—down below"