



ICE ON THE MERSEY, JANUARY, 1940.

## LETTER.

At the end of another term away from the Ship the period of change comes round again. There will be more new and fewer familiar faces when I next visit the ship, but I feel sure that whatever changes there may be, one thing will remain the same, and that is the "Conway" spirit of determination to see things through.

As I came aboard last term, in the middle of one of the most difficult periods I have known, I could almost hear its resolute challenge.

"Difficulties?" said the figure of Nelson at the bow, with a scornful lift of his eyebrows.

"Difficulties?" echoed each timber of the old ship and every member of her company. "Of course there are difficulties, but we're here to get over them."

That was the feeling I had as I climbed aboard and heard of the trials of severe

weather, illness, and the consequent depletion of the staff. That was the spirit I sensed as I heard from the Captain and the Acting Headmaster of the way in which the work of the ship had gone on cheerfully in spite of it all, and of the additional efforts which had been made both by staff and cadets to overcome these handicaps. Such resolution and good humour are obviously a more potent factor than any good wishes or encouragement of mine, sincere and deserved though these are, to ensure your personal success and through that to add still further to the old ship's long list of proud achievements.

To the few Cadets who have written to me this term of the little intimate and personal incidents which together make up life on board, I send my real and sincere appreciations. To those who have not; to those who find letter-writing of any sort a tiresome labour, I would suggest that an occasional record of such incidents; happenings during the wilder passages of No. 1 or No. 2; the

sudden disclosure of the dramatic talent of Cadet X at the end of term concert, or even the appearance of a new joke perpetrated by Mr. Y. on the main deck, would not require great effort, and they would certainly warm our memories of the lighter side of "Conway" life. There need be no censor other than your own dependable good taste, and if you are one of those who have arrived since our departure perhaps such a letter would be one way of beginning to know something of each other before we meet.

To give news of our doings here is much more difficult, for even the most carefully edited description of those things which would interest you most would probably be classed by the Censor as "Careless talk." However, there is one amusing incident which, though it concerns one of our own senior officers, cannot be classed as a vital secret. Driving with another officer along a country road his driver asked if he might stop for a short spell. They consented, and after he had disappeared they thought they too might take advantage of the opportunity to stretch their legs. Back came the driver and without so much as a glance behind him, drove off into the night. Out came the officers from the wood, only to see the red light of the car vanish in the distance. Shouting was useless, and a long cold tramp through the snow appeared unavoidable, but they were fortunate enough to come upon an Army mess close at hand, where refreshment warmed their blood, and a telephone raised their hopes of catching their driver and renewing their journey. So the scene shifts to the nearest town, over twelve miles away, where the local police, primed with a description of the car, soon tracked it down and halted it.

"Where is your Air Vice-Marshal?" asked the policeman, with more than a suspicion of a twinkle in his eye.

"Why, in the back of the car," said the driver.

"Oh, no, he's not! He's twelve miles down the road waiting for you to go back and pick him up, and I should look sharp about it."

And believe me, he did, but the A.V. took the thing in a really sporting spirit though, as you may well imagine, it was the joke of the mess for many a week after.

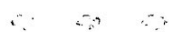
Now, with the summer term ahead, our thoughts turn to tennis, cricket, sailing,

swimming, and other joys of the open air, and here, if the vigorous leadership of the staff becomes reduced by further calls to other forms of service, you must be ready to run your own show, and I hope you will have the opportunity of showing even more of that capacity for initiative and organization which your work in your tops shows you to possess. I have even a dream of a specially selected party being allowed to undertake an energetic week-end climbing expedition in the Welsh mountains.

Only a dream? Yet I think the submission of a well-prepared plan by a capable C.C. might lead to its realisation, and I am sure that the experience of wider horizons, the stimulus of a new healthy interest, and the satisfaction of achievement would make it well worth while.

Yours very sincerely,

T. E. W. B.



#### ATLANTIC SAILING.

I was on my first trip as an apprentice to the Booth Line, when at 11-50 a.m., Sept. 30th, we sighted what we *believed* to be a British ship, steaming towards us at full speed. We had no reason to suspect any danger, and our flag was hoisted.

Some time before reaching us, the raiding pocket battleship, for such it was, sent a seaplane towards us, and we were stopped by machine gun fire. Apart from the mate, who received a wound in one hand, nobody else was injured, and no serious damage was done.

It was only then that we, on the S.S. "Clement," of 5,000 tons, realised that we were face to face with one of Nazi Germany's most powerful ships, the "Graf Spee." Immediately our master gave orders for abandoning the "Clement" and there followed a great bustle aboard ship.

There was no time to waste and no hope of saving kit, but several of the men made a dash to secure some personal comfort. I managed to secure my sextant, and from a drawer, which contained six new white suits, I saved pipe and tobacco. One of the crew, who was wearing only shirt and trousers, recovered two hundred cigarettes from his bunk.

The order for abandoning ship having been given, boats were lowered and we rowed clear