

WHERE GRIM DEATH LURKS

No Other Post So Full of Peril as the Modern Military Mast.

EXPOSED POINT ON A BATTLESHIP

Tars Assigned to Duty in the Fighting Tops Play Hide and Seek, with Battleship's Crews All Against Them.

Our gallant tars who are off to fight Spain fully realize the horrors of warfare as made possible by the modern battleship. There are many points of duty which entail great danger, but the brave fellows assigned to the military mast, or the fighting top, must know when they go up into those dread places that their chances of coming down alive are very slim. There is no position on board a ship so exposed, there is no duty so thrilling, and there are no greater heroes than Uncle Sam's tompen.

The heroes of this war, says the New York Herald, will be the men detailed to duty in the military masts, or fighting tops, of our big battleship. The tompen's position will be one of desperate peril. Exposed to the full fury of the enemy's fire with scarcely any protection, and with the possibility of having the entire mast shot away, his is a position perhaps the most dangerous in all modern naval warfare.

The steel barbettes of the present time, save in certain respects, will, over the head of the tower, give a protection more ample than real, more picturesque than practical. And while the military top crews have the advantage of being somewhat elevated, they are not less exposed to a certain extent from the fact that they are in a position to be seen from the enemy's guns, and to be hit by their shells.

DAYS OF THE OLD NAVY.

Recollections of a Brief How in One of the Days of the Old Navy. The average American, says the Chicago News, takes away from school with him such a knowledge of American history as can be compared to the old-fashioned magic lantern slides, the history itself being a kinetoscope picture. That is, he has vivid ideas of certain unexplained events, mainly with regard to Saratoga, Valley Forge, the crises of the Delaware and Yorktown stand for the revolution. Then there is little more until the almost complete banishment of sails, yards and the more or less intricate rigging necessitated by their use, in favor of military masts, or, in some cases, a central mast.

The rig of the ironclad battleship of ten years ago differed in no very essential particular from that of a decade or two ago, but now, in a single decade, all is changed. Before the change some progress had been made in utilizing the ordinary tops in action by placing rifling on machine guns in them, in order to direct a plunging fire so the enemy's deck. It will be remembered that it was a shot fired from the mizzentop of the Redoubtable that laid Nelson low in the moment of victory.

THE ANCIENTS USED THEM.

As a matter of fact, military tops, although greatly improved as now constructed on our battleships, are, in their origin, as old as warfare. They are represented in the drawings and carvings of Egyptian and Asiatic war ships nearly 2,000 years before Christ. The medieval days of the fighting top was recognized part of a ship of war. Archers and slingers poured their missiles down from the decks of their enemies, or, in some cases, from the masts and rigging of the attacking vessels.

The next step was also rendered necessary by the growth of masts and spars, for when heavily rigged ships, such as the Great Harry and the ships which took part in the Armada fight, came to be built, it was necessary to enlarge the masts and rigging in order to give a support to the shrouds which upheld the topmast. From this period the top as a fighting platform disappeared until recently, except in the war galleys of the Mediterranean and Baltic, which had a curious basket top at their mastsheads, known as a "kable."

The military mast of today is constructed primarily to carry guns, and secondarily for signalling purposes, for it must be remembered that in all countries in which they have been equipped with fighting tops since their very first inception, the primary duty of the mast which upheld it was to carry sail for the propulsion of the ship.

Some of the masts are supplied with an upper top for the electric light, a peculiarly shaped, edifice below to enable three quick firing guns to be discharged right and left, and a species of conning tower below, from which the captain can overlook the smoke clouds and so see to direct his ship in action. The later types are all constructed with much the same ideas.

Some have a lookout, or conning tower, others have not, but all have three or six pounder quick firing guns and electric light projectors, and one or two lighter machine guns in addition.

The smaller caliber rapid fire and machine guns employed in tops are supported by riflemen, and in every fight their work of clearing the guns, sweeping the decks and superstructures, is one of the most dangerous and leading men, to say the least, hazardous. In the galleys days the military tops were fairly well protected, but during the sailing era the tops were exposed to the pieces and deck rakers, and forming a special corps of musketeers, had no protection, except what was given by a network of masts filled with hammocks.

TARGETS FOR SHOT AND SHELL.

It would take a big projectile to bring a mast down, but then, if it did, great would be the fall thereof. And think of the poor devils that would come crashing down with it! And think of them even if the mast doesn't come down, perched up there, living targets for shot and shell. The only thing is of so availing against anything larger than a rifle bullet, and a small shell might pass harmlessly over the heads of the men in an open top which in a closed one would have been burst by the iron shell, and scatter death and destruction within.

A serious umbrella-like structure is the production of the brain of the vessel's genius, the emperor of Germany, and was intended to be placed on board the ship which was to be built to replace the old Frenchman. Although offering the greatest possible protection, it was found to be impracticable.

The only practical test of the modern battleship was the brush between China and Japan and it was my good fortune the other day to have a talk with a sailor who had been in that fight.

In the depths of the ship men were stripped to their waists, throwing coal into the huge furnaces; in the turret the gunners stood to their guns; the British admirals and the cockpit the sailormen packed back and forth awaiting orders for action, not uttering a word, with every muscle and every nerve at extreme tension. The firing, the stencils and coal heavers were shut up in the fire rooms out of danger from shot and shell, but certain of a terrible death should the vessel be sunk or a magazine exploded. On the main forms, at the reversing gear, at every valve and throttle were stationed men to make responsive to every command. Orders moved along the telegraph cables and the stencils and valves tubes and annunciators, in the magazine and shell rooms far below the water line, or the lower flats and at successive stations men stood to guide the shells and cylinders of powder.

NAVY FIGHTS AGAINST ODDS

Desperate Chances Must Be Taken with 8 m of the Modern Craft.

NOVEL ENGINES OF DESTRUCTION

Modern Torpedo Boats and Submarine Terrors—Recollections of a Queer Craft in the Civil War.

The naval officer who remarked that the creation of a monument to the memory of the officers and crew of the dynamite cruiser Vesuvius would be in order just as soon as that vessel went in action spoke with a full understanding of the probabilities attending the first engagement between the war ships of the United States and Spain. He might have included the heroes who will form the crews of the torpedo boats, the torpedo boat destroyers, and even the armored cruisers and battleships. Their chances of life, says a writer in the Chicago Times-Herald, will be but a trifle better than those of the men on the Vesuvius. One well-directed shell aimed at this floating magazine of dynamite means instant annihilation. One round from a rapid fire gun has but to strike a torpedo boat in the right place to send her to the bottom. One torpedo, as has been demonstrated in the harbor of Havana, can tear into fragments the most formidable battleship afloat.

In the days when iron and steel had not supplanted oak in the construction of fighting ships, when long toms, carronades and ten-pounders were the equivalents of breech-loading rifles and machine guns, when a full brigade at close quarters lacked the destructiveness of a single projectile from a high-power rifle over a range of four miles, the sailor felt that as long as his ship floated he had a chance of reaching dry land as his enemy. He had an abiding faith in the specific gravity of wood, and counted on finding a piece of his ship for a life-preserver if the fight went the wrong way. Today he is in much the same fix as the man who went sailing in a sieve before he learned to swim.

LEADERS OF FORLORN HOPES.

There was never a hope so forlorn, however, that a leader was lacking and no leader ever failed to find those who would follow him. Today the navy is being recruited as rapidly as possible with men who are of top high an order of intelligence not to know the perils before them. A certain proportion of these men will be assigned to the torpedo boats, a branch of the service which has been recognized as the most hazardous of all, making an exception in favor of any actual work that may be attempted with the new-fangled ideas as the Holland and Raddatz submarine torpedo boats. Moral courage of the highest order will be required of every officer and enlisted man into the call of duty takes him into an engagement with any of these deadly engines as his weapon of attack.

Experience has demonstrated that the torpedo boat, whether operating above or below the water, is as much of a menace to the life of its crew as it is to the ship it attacks. It may run the gauntlet of the machine guns under cover of darkness and deliver a fatal blow against the armored side of the battleship, but the chances are as good as a hundred that the explosion which sinks the big ship will destroy the frail little boat and its crew. The submarine torpedo boat is an unknown quantity in actual warfare, and its worth is estimated by the results attending repeated trials of similar boats during the civil war.

Recent trials of the Holland submarine boat seem to have proved it an easily managed craft, capable of diving and coming to the surface at the will of the operator. Whether the Holland machine will be used in a fleet in time of war remains to be seen. It is to be hoped that it will establish a better record than the submarine boat constructed by the confederates in 1862. Naval officers have expressed grave doubts whether the Holland will ever accomplish anything but the destruction of its crew, just as the confederate boat did repeatedly in the attempts to use it against union ships. And thereby gave a story of heroic daring equal to any recorded in the history of the American navy.

A SUBMARINE COFFIN.

In the fall of 1862 a tiny, half-submerged torpedo boat attacked the fine crew union war vessel, New Ironsides, as she lay at anchor in the Charleston harbor. The attack was successful, in that the torpedo exploded three feet under the water against the side of the New Ironsides, but the force of the explosion was not strong enough to inflict any damage that would actually sink the little boat or make possible the capture of her commanding officers. Encouraged by this trial the confederates constructed another torpedo boat at Mobile the same year after plans providing for her use beneath the water. She was constructed of boiler iron, her iron armament consisting of a single five-foot long and carried a crew of thirty men. Eight of these worked a hand propeller, while the other seven below the surface of the water. She could be submerged to any depth desired or propelled by the hand propellers, and was easily attain a speed of four knots an hour.

Several successful experiments were conducted in the harbor at Mobile, and then one day the boat failed to come to the top of the water. She was raised, and the bodies of her crew were given a more fitting burial. Then she was towed to the Charleston harbor and put into service. She was designed to approach a vessel at anchor, dive under her keel while dragging a floating torpedo, and when the opportunity came to strike, to approach an anchor, and upon the side or bottom of the vessel. The first night set for an attack resulted in death for the nine men composing the crew of the new iron vessel, while the Holland machine, having passed unscathed her by the wash following.

AN ILL-FATED CRAFT.

Once again she was raised and tied up to the Fort Sumter wharf. Once again she was towed to the Charleston harbor, and again she was brought to the surface, and after being thoroughly repaired was placed in charge of a lieutenant and eight men men for trial in the Stone river. She behaved splendidly for a day or two, and then dived to the bottom and struck her nose in the Charleston harbor, and was raised and again tried. For the fourth time the confederates raised this ill-fated craft and resumed again the experiments in the Charleston harbor. The trials were successful until the attack, when she failed to give a cable and became a coffin again for her crew.

With a faith in the future of the boat that could not be shaken the confederates raised her again. A brave lieutenant asked permission of General Beauregard to attack the Union fleet in the harbor. Consent was given, with the condition that the boat should work upon the surface until a star torpedo had been fired, when she should become a volunteer. The attack was made on the night of February 17, 1864. When within 100 yards of the Union fleet a star torpedo was discovered by a deck officer. He was slow in giving the alarm, and the delay in slipping her cable and starting her engines was fatal.

While all this was being called to quarters and confusion reigned supreme on the war vessel the little boat exploded her torpedo against the side of the bulky foe and knocked a hole in her below the water line. Four minutes later and the Houstonian was rising on the bottom of the harbor, a total wreck. Five of her crew were killed, either by the shock or by drowning, and the others were rescued from the rigging. What became of the torpedo boat, she was never again seen. She was either swamped by the immense column of water throwing the air by the explosion or she was carried down by the suction created by the sinking war vessel.

THE ARMY MULE.

An Element of Strength in a War Between the United States and Spain Would be the Superiority of the United States in the Matter of Mules.

The United States is in the matter of mules the greatest mule nation in the world, declares the Kansas City Star, and Missouri is the bright particular mule state in the union. It is a remarkable fact that in this contest Spain is also a mule country. The economical team of the royal family of Spain is composed of white mules. But in this point of comparison, as in every other, the superiority of the United States is manifest. As the United States has more men and more mules, so it has more mules. Spain has, during the three years' contest with the insurgents, been forced to draw her mule supply from the United States, principally from Kansas City. With this supply will be cut off, and the American mule, no longer being subject to draft in a case he must despair, will be used in the service of his own country.

The mule became prominent in history at the time of our civil war. The long-haired champion seemed to spring from the earth. Many volunteers of certain sections of the country who had never before seen a pair of mules harnessed lived to see thousands of them hauling army wagons. Tennesseans also, and his clan voice "rouses the soldier e'er the morning star." Usually the mule does not go where glory waits him (though General Fighting Phil Kearny habitually rode a mule), but he condensed to the heavy labor of the quartermaster's and commissary's departments. But in whatever lot—fed lot or any other lot which he is placed, he does his duty. He has been accused of a quick and even vindictive temper, but in trying times it

was never allowed to interfere with the performance of his public duties. And it was in the darkest days and nights of the war, as his soldier associates will now remember, that the brightest qualities of the mule appeared. In darkness and storm, with mud to the hubs, he leaned to the collar and "snaked" the heavy wagon, calm and imperious, although his director wrapped himself with curses at with a garment and rode along enveloped in a light blue halo of profanity. And when the muddy march was over, the mule, who for days together had dined and supped on red gates, released from harness and his long vacant interior decorated with a few quarts of corn, rice and radish, and squealed an awkward and played with his fellows as if he saw already spanning the horizon the rainbow of peace.

In warm and southern regions the services of the mule are indispensable. While he can live anywhere, he seems a sort of tropical beast. It is believed that his ample carcase rescues from the flames by neighbors with a ladder. A few days ago Nelson sold a house and lot, and the robbers are supposed to have secured the proceeds, \$400.

MURDERED BY ROBBERY.

BLACK EARTH, Wis., April 23.—Andrew Nelson and wife aged respectively 7 and 56, were murdered by robbers last night at their home in the outskirts of the city. Nelson's head was crushed in with a club and his wife was wounded in the chest. The robbers then set fire to the house. An aged woman who lived in the upper story was rescued from the flames by neighbors with a ladder. A few days ago Nelson sold a house and lot, and the robbers are supposed to have secured the proceeds, \$400.

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"The Dogs of War Are Loose." Advertisement for a book about the Cuban War. Includes title, author Murat Halstead, and a detailed description of the book's content.

"Story of Cuba" advertisement. Describes the book as an entertaining and instructive account of the Cuban struggle for liberty. Includes author Murat Halstead and a coupon for a discount.

"Destruction of the Maine" advertisement. Describes the book as a splendid octavo volume with 625 pages, 6 1/2 x 9 inches. Includes author G. C. Sigsbee and a coupon for a discount.

A large grid of advertisements for various businesses in Omaha. Includes: Parlin, Orendorff & Martin Co. (Jobbers of Farm Machinery); M. E. Smith & Co. (Dry Goods, Furnishing Goods); Lee-Clark Andresson Hardware Co. (Wholesale Hardware); Richardson Drug Co. (Drugs); Walter Moise & Co. (Wholesale Liquors); The Mercer Chemical Co. (Pharmaceuticals); E. E. Bruce & Co. (Druggists and Stationers); American Hand Sewed Shoe Co. (Sewed Shoes); F. P. Kirkendall & Co. (Boots, Shoes and Rubbers); W. V. Morse Co. (Boots, Shoes, Rubbers); Bemis Omaha Bag Co. (BAGS); Farrell & Co. (SYRUPS); The American Chicory Co. (CHICORY); M. H. Bliss (CROCKERY AND GLASSWARE); The Sharples Company (Creamery Machinery); J. H. Haney & Co. (HARNESSES, SADDLES); Rector & Wilhelmy Co. (Wholesale Hardware); and many others.