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NEBRASKA GALLANT VESSEL AND ITS FIRST COMMANDER

Sailor Man of Long Experience and Approved Mettle Has Been Selected to Command One of the Finest Battleships that Ever Rode the Waters Under the Stars and Stripes

A STOCKILY-BUILT man above the age of 50, with a strong, earnest face, said it was one of the proudest moments of his life when he was assigned to the command of the new battleship "Nebraska." Earnestness was written all over his face, and Reginald F. Nicholson, as commander of the Nebraska, undoubtedly felt what he expressed, when he said: "I hope that the Nebraska under my command will give a good account of itself in whatever position it may be placed."

Captain R. F. Nicholson, a resident of the District of Columbia, at present second assistant to the chief of the Bureau of Navigation, expects to join the new battleship on August 1, at Seattle, and in the event of the Atlantic division not going to the Pacific as recently contemplated by the naval strategy board, he will bring the "Nebraska" to the Atlantic.

Captain Nicholson entered the Naval academy and was graduated in the class of '73. His family is one of sailor men. His father, Somerville Nicholson, attained to the rank of commander when he retired, while his grandfather, Augustus Nicholson, was quartermaster in the marine corps from South Carolina. There is probably no man in the navy today who has seen more kinds of naval service than has Captain Nicholson, and it is doubtful if any man has had less unemployed service—as they call it in the navy—since his graduation in '73 than has "Reggy" Nicholson, he having been engaged in the duties of his position during all the years since his graduation with the exception of eight months' unemployed service. He is one of the youngest of the battleship commanders, having just turned 55, but his splendid record is an earnest of what may be expected of the intrepid officer who received a battleship command before he was made a captain, an unusual distinction in the navy.

Navigated the Oregon on Its Run

When the battleship Oregon made its famous run around San Francisco Captain Nicholson, then a lieutenant commander, was its navigator—Captain Clark, now a rear admiral, was its commander, but to Nicholson is the credit due for having made that tremendous run which received the applause of 80,000,000 of people during the Spanish-American war. It was on March 9, 1898, when the Oregon was sent out of the Bremerton dock on hurry orders to proceed on the first step of its journey around the Horn. War had not yet been declared, but the country was in a high state of tension over the Maine incident. Within ten days its sailing orders, sealed, were received and on March 19 the ship turned its nose out of the Mare Island navy yard, no one outside of the naval board knowing its destination. When the orders were opened and they became known to the officers there was excitement on board ship, which was one of the new battle monsters of the navy. The trip down the west coast was a remarkable one and stands today in the naval annals of our country as one of the most brilliant achievements in our history. It was the first American war ship ever sent on such a journey. The ship passed through the Magellan straits and up the east coast, arriving at Jupiter Inlet, Fla., May 22—about sixty-three days after leaving San Francisco—and two days later it joined the famous "flying squadron," then off Cuba waiting for orders to strike.

Captain Nicholson has seen all sorts of service. He has seen duty on the old sail-driven vessel, on the modern cruiser, the gunboat and battleship. He has had service in the hydrographic department and the various mechanical bureaus of the navy.

On July 1, 1904, as commander of the new cruiser "Tacoma," Nicholson started out from San Francisco to join the North Atlantic fleet. On that trip he went around the Horn because of the heavy ice in the straits and arrived at Norfolk about four months later. There was no occasion for hurry on that trip and the vessel traversed much more water than was necessary to make the direct journey, but he was on a hunt for a merchant vessel known as the "Connemaugh," a British ship that was missing in South Pacific waters. The search lasted for several weeks, but the ship was never sighted and to this day no word has ever been heard of either ship or crew, remaining as it does one of the unsolved mysteries of the deep. Another mystery Captain Nicholson undertook to solve on that journey was the location of a new island that had been reported as seen off the southern South American coast. Several weeks were spent in this search, but the island was not to be found.

Vessels He Has Commanded

Captain Nicholson's first command was that of the "Farragut," and afterward the "Tacoma," the "Jamestown," and lastly, the "Brooklyn." While he was born in North Carolina, much of Captain Nicholson's life has been spent in Washington, D. C., when not at sea, having been appointed from the District of Columbia to the academy. His shore and sea duties were equally balanced on July 1, he having spent eighteen years and seven months at each. His sea service includes that of a captain's clerk in the civil war. He was a mere boy at the time and only 13 years old at the close of the war. Personally, he is one of the most charming of men and is a universal favorite in naval circles, and the "Nebraska" could not have had a more sterling captain assigned to its command than Captain Nicholson, who hopes that the crew of the Nebraska may be largely enlisted from that state, having had a letter recently from Lieutenant Commander Signor, now on recruiting duty in Omaha, stating that he was offering inducements to the young men of Nebraska to join this splendid battleship of the United States navy—a battleship which, according to the board of inquiry, is the most efficent fighting machine of the day and of its type.

Congress, in March, 1899, appropriated money for three seagoing coast-line battleships carrying the heaviest armor and most powerful armament for vessels of their class, and provided for two more by the act of June 7, 1900. The Bureau of Construction and Repair fully carried out the evident purpose of congress, for the design of the "Nebraska" and class represents five most powerful battleships.

REGINALD F. NICHOLSON, U. S. N.

Of the five vessels appropriated for three were required to be sheathed and coppered and two without sheathing; immediately after being contracted for, however, the Navy department took this question under consideration and decided to omit all outside sheathing and coppering, so that each vessel of the class is now a counterpart of the other, except for minor modifications incident to construction. The general dimensions and chief characteristics of these vessels are:

Length on load water line	435	feet
Breadth, extreme, at load water line	76	feet 2½ in.
Trial displacement, about	14,948	tons
Mean draft at trial displacement, about	23	feet 9 in.
Greatest draft, full load, about	26	feet

In the 15,000 tons represented in each of these vessels the many antagonistic qualities essential to a perfect fighting machine have been compromised and incorporated in proportion which experience seems to have pointed out as the most desirable and efficient. To begin with, these battleships will have a speed of at least nineteen knots, which compares most favorably with any battleships under construction abroad, as well as with any in the projected stage.

The Nebraska will be propelled at this high speed by twin-screws driven by two four-cylinder, triple-expansion engines of about 19,000 indicated horse power, having a stroke of four feet, running, under conditions of maximum speed, at about 120 revolutions per minute. The steam necessary to this power will be supplied at a pressure of 250 pounds per square inch by twenty-four Niclausse water-tube boilers, placed four in each of six independent watertight compartments.

Armament of the Nebraska

The Nebraska will carry four twelve-inch guns, forty calibers in length, mounted by pairs in balanced turrets, one turret being located forward of the superstructure and the other aft, and each having a total arc of train of 270 degrees. Of the eight eight-inch guns, forty-five calibers in length, which will be carried on this vessel, four will be mounted by pairs in turrets, superposed upon the twelve-inch turrets above mentioned and four in two broadside turrets slightly forward of amidships, the amidship turrets having a total arc of train of 180 degrees. In the Nebraska there will be a broadside battery on the gun deck of twelve six-inch rapid-fire guns, fifty calibers in length, mounted six on each side, each with a total arc of train of 121 degrees. The secondary battery will consist of twelve three-inch fifty-caliber rapid-fire guns, twelve three-pounders, semi-automotic; eight one-pounders, heavy automatic; two thirty-caliber machine guns and six thirty-caliber Colt automatic guns, all mounted in commanding positions and having large area of fire. The Nebraska will also be fitted with submerged torpedo tubes.

The magazines will be specially fitted to enable it to carry, with absolute safety in all climates, the new smokeless powder. Provision will be made in the magazines for the stowage of at least sixty rounds for each of the twelve-inch guns, 125 rounds for each of the eight-inch guns, 200 rounds for each of the six-inch guns, 300 rounds for each of the three-inch guns and a plentiful supply of ammunition for the smaller guns.

Defensive Qualities Great

So much for the vessel's offensive qualities. To make its defensive qualities proportionately great, it will be provided with a complete waterline belt of armor, eight feet in with amidships, eleven inches thick at the top and eight inches at the bottom, tapering to a uniform thickness of four inches at the ends of the vessel. It will also have a casemate armored belt extending over 245 feet of its length, of a uniform thickness of six inches, rising from the top of the main belt to the upper or main deck, and joined at its after end to the barbette of the twelve-inch turret by a six-inch armored bulkhead, and having at its forward end an armored bulkhead of six inches thickness extending from side to side, thus forming a citadel or redoubt within which the six-inch guns will be mounted. Within this citadel or redoubt, and extending from the forward turret to the after turret, light armor one and one-half to two and one-half inches in thickness will form subdivisions of the gun enclosures, thoroughly protecting the guns' crews from flying splinters and fragments of bursting shells. The barbettes for the turrets of the twelve-inch guns are to be ten inches in thickness for that portion outside of the redoubt or citadel, reduced to seven and one-half inches in thickness within. The turrets themselves will be protected by armor twelve inches in thickness. The eight-inch turrets will, in all cases, whether superposed or independent, be protected by six inches of armor, with six and one-half-inch port plates, and their barbettes will be protected by similar armor. The conning tower and its shield will be nine inches in thickness, and the armored tube, five inches thick, will be of sufficient size to receive all voice pipes, wiring, etc. In addition to the conning tower, there will be, aft, a second tower known as the signal tower, which will be constructed of five-inch armor. From the bottom of the waterline armor belt there will rise a curved turtle-backed nickel-steel protective deck one and one-half inches thick on the flat and three inches thick on the sloping sides, to make assurance doubly sure that no projectile of the enemy finds its way into the vitals of the ship. As an additional protection to stability, a coffer dam belt, three feet in thickness and packed to a density of eight pounds to the cubic foot, will be worked along the two sides, above the protective deck, for the entire length of the vessel.

The material of construction is the high quality of steel which has entered into all the vessels of our navy. The main or upper deck, in addition to being built of steel, will be the only one upon which wood is to be laid. The lower decks will all be of steel, covered with linoleum. The use of wood in the construction of this vessel will be limited even more strictly than it has been in the later battleships, and all woodwork above the protective deck, except deck plank, will be fireproofed. Bilge keels and heavy docking keels are fitted.

Comfort for Officers and Men

It is proposed to make all the vessels of this class flagships, and to do this it is necessary to make provision for the accommodation of one flag officer, one commanding officer, one chief of staff, nineteen wardroom officers, ten junior officers, eight warrant officers and 772 crew, including sixty marines, making a grand total of 812. Both officers and crew will have wash rooms, bathrooms and other similar conveniences such as will place the comfort and healthfulness of these vessels very high in the scale.

The applications of electricity on board are very much wider than in the case of any other battleship in existence, with the possible exception of the Kearsarge and Kentucky. All of the turrets have electrical turning gear, and the ammunition hoists, blowers to the turrets and general ventilation, the general workshop and practically all of the auxiliaries, outside of the engineers' department and excepting capstan and steering gear, are to be electrically driven. To provide for the power required for these purposes, there will be installed eight engines and dynamos, mounted on combination bedplates, two having a rated output of 1,250 amperes at 125 volts, and six with 625 amperes at 125 volts.

In this class of vessels all of the latest approved equipment will be provided for accommodation of the officers and crew, the ventilation and drainage being of a high standard; the hospital quarters airy and commodious; the bakery and galleys, with their issuing rooms and refrigerating plant, having been worked out with a view to thorough efficiency; laundry and drying rooms are fitted with the latest machinery, electrically driven, and the living quarters are carefully protected by insulation from cold in winter and excessive heat in summer. Take it all in all, the designs of the Nebraska class embody the latest developments in naval artchitecture, and these vessels will prove most formidable additions to the fighting strength of the navy.

Silver Service from the State

Within a short time the beautiful silver service bought for the battleship Nebraska by the state of Nebraska will be presented to the officers of the ship with elaborate ceremonies, participated in by Governor Sheldon and his entire staff and other Nebraskans. Just when this presentation will take place has not yet been determined, but Governor Sheldon at this time is bending his efforts to arrange the affairs of state so it will be possible for him to get away early in the fall. For almost two years the silver service has been ready for the ship, but the delay in the construction of the vessel has necessitated the state keeping it in storage. At this time the service is in Omaha at the wholesale house of A. F. Smith, through whom it was purchased. This gift will draw closer the hearts of the people of this state to the magnificent vessel which bears the name of Nebraska, because every man, woman and child indirectly contributed toward buying the service. It was not a free will offering, a subscription taken up among the people, which paid for the testimonial, but an appropriation by the legislature of funds which belonged to all the people, therefore all have given.

That Nebraskans are proud of the ship which bears the name of their state is attested not only by the presentation of this silver service, but when Governor Sheldon boards the vessel he will be the third Nebraska governor who has gone to the coast to show the interest of the people in this floating fortress. Governor Savage and Governor Mickey, each accompanied by a staff of the state's representative citizens, have visited the vessel and taken part in the laying of the keel and its launching. Governor Sheldon and his staff will see the boat in full commission and doubtless will see the silver service on the table of the captain and he may put it to use.

Governor Sheldon has not yet officially annnounced that he is to make the trip, but it is his wish to do so and he is trying to so arrange his work that immediately after the state fair, the journey will begin, if that date is convenient to the Navy department. It is thought that whatever date suits the governor will be satisfactory to the department, as the ship is to remain along the Pacific coast.

It was the legislature of 1905 that appropriated the $3,000 to buy the silver service, and at that time, those who recall the session, will remember there was quite a difference of opinion regarding not only the sum to be appropriated, but also the nature of the testimonial from the state. A large number favored a library, thinking the sailors aboard would get more use of the library than from a silver service, which, perhaps, only the officers would see. The size of the appropriation discussed ranged from $1,000 to $15,000, but finally it was decided that a silver service of which the state need never be ashamed could be purchased for $3,000, and this sum was appropriated. At that time some of the newspapers

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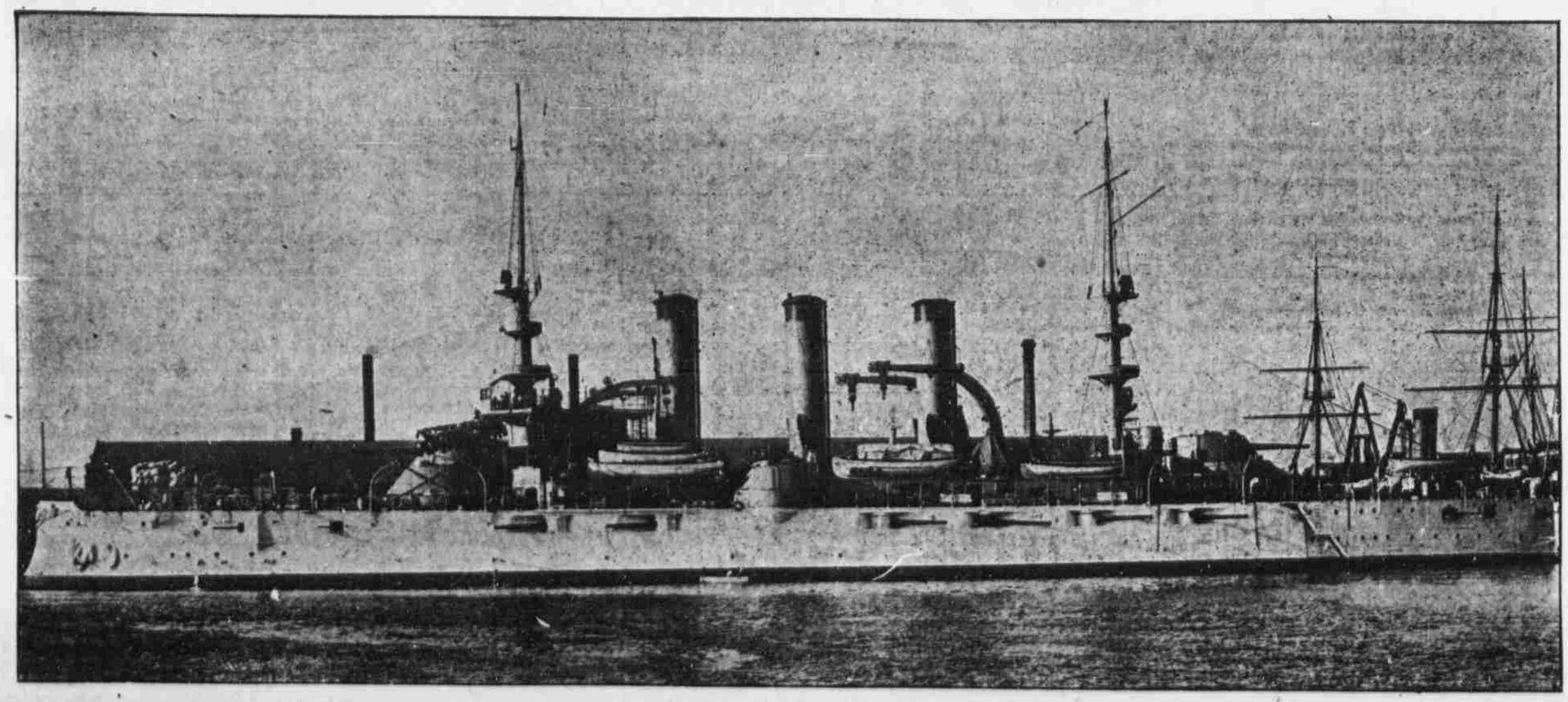

BATTLESHIP NEBRASKA, UNITED STATES NAVY.