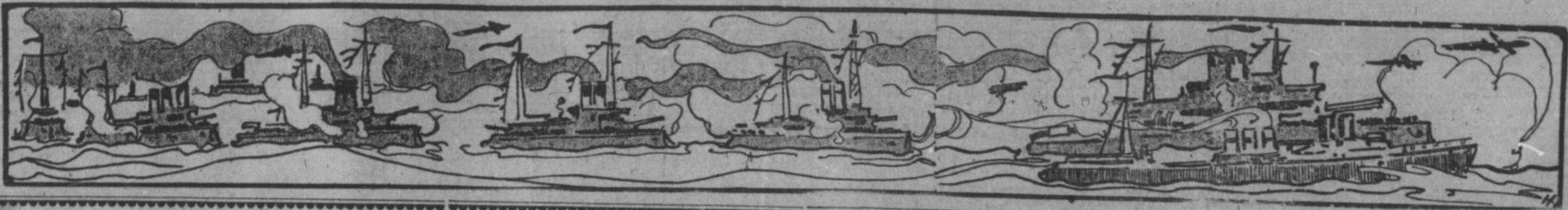


# THE VICTORY AT SEA

By ADMIRAL WILLIAM SOWDEN SIMS



## AMERICAN DESTROYERS REACH EUROPE

### Irish Welcome Back Their Boys.—Commander Taussig Senior Officer in Charge.—Admiral Bayly's Real Friendliness Sets the Americans at Ease.—Taussig's Quick Action Pleases.

The morning of May 4, 1917, witnessed an important event in the history of Queenstown. The news had been printed in no British or American paper, yet in some mysterious way it had reached nearly everybody in the town. A squadron of American destroyers, which had left Boston on the evening of April 24th, had already been reported to the westward of Ireland and was due to reach Queenstown that morning. At almost the appointed hour a little smudge of smoke appeared in the distance, visible to the crowds assembled on the hills; then presently another black spot appeared, and then another, and finally these flecks upon the horizon assumed the form of six rapidly approaching warships. The Stars and Stripes were broken out on the public buildings, on private houses, and on nearly all the water craft in the harbor; the populace, armed with American flags, began to gather on the shore; and the local dignitaries donned their official robes to welcome the new friends from overseas. One of the greatest days in Anglo-American history had dawned, for the first contingent of the American Navy was about to arrive in British waters and join hands with the Allies in the battle against the forces of darkness and savagery.

The senior officer in charge of the Centurion, and chief-of-staff to Admiral Seymour, who had charge of the British forces. This British officer was severely wounded; a bullet had pierced his lung, and for a considerable period he was unable to lie down. Naturally this informed companionship made the two men friends. Commander Taussig had had many occasions to recall this

and civilization. We shall all have our work cut out to subdue piracy. My experience in China makes me feel perfectly convinced that the two nations will work in the closest co-operation and I won't flatter you by saying too much about the value of your help. I must say this, however. There is no navy in the world that can possibly give us more valuable assistance, and there is no personnel in any navy that will fight better than yours. My China experience tells me this. If only my dear friend McCalla could have seen this day how glad I would have been.

I must offer you and all your officers and men the warmest welcome possible in the name of the British nation and the British Admiralty, and add to it every possible good wish from myself. May every good fortune attend you and speedy victory be with us.

to command their operations in the next eighteen months, and in its brevity, its entirely business-like qualities, as well as in its genuine sincerity and kindness, it gave a fair introduction to the man: Admiralty House, Queenstown, 3. 4. 17. Dear Lieutenant Commander Taussig: I hope that you and the other five officers in command of the U.S. destroyers in your flotilla will come and dine here to-night, Friday, at 7.45 and that you and three others will remain here to sleep so as to get a good rest after your long journey. Allow

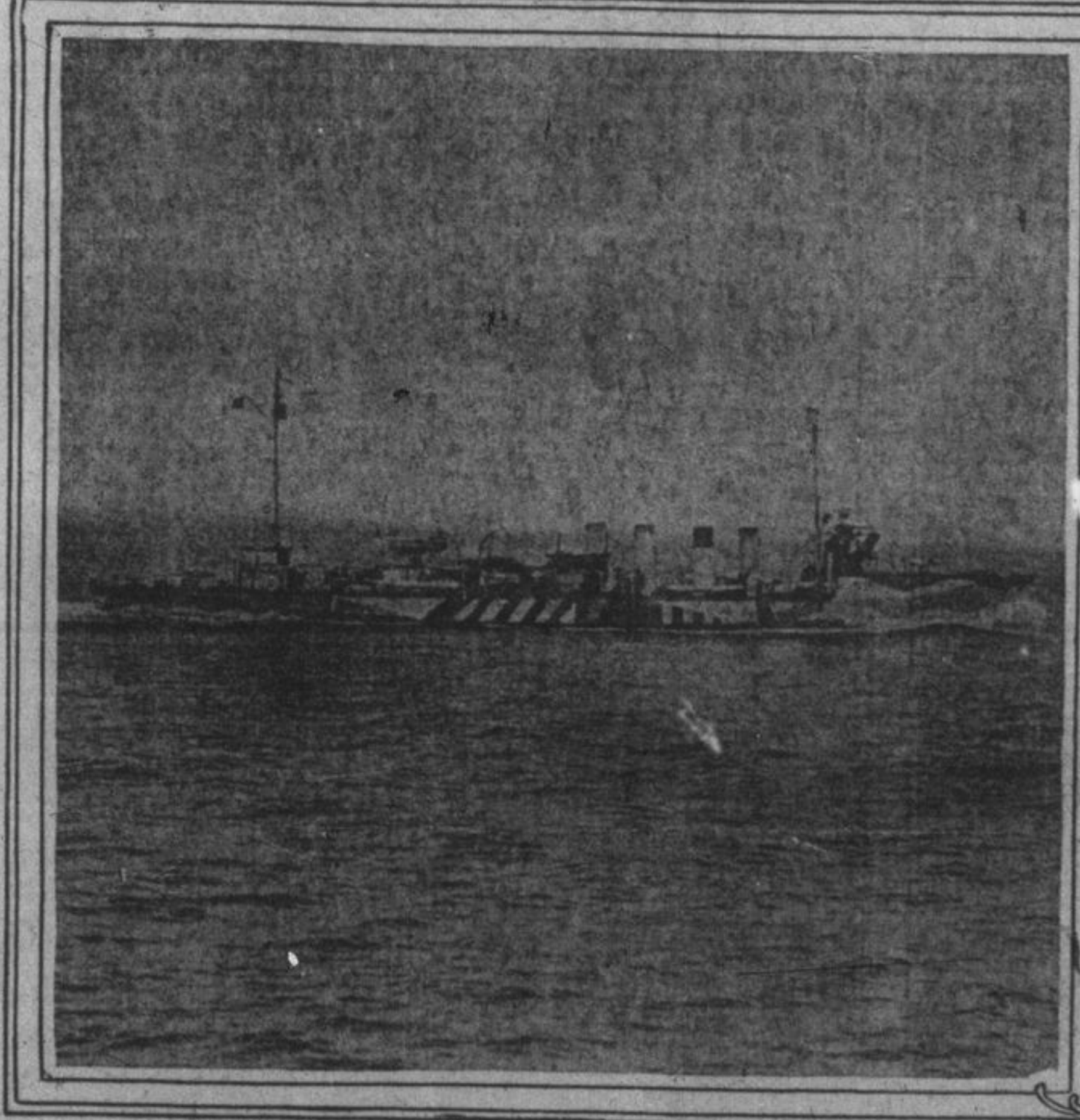
Butterfield, made an eloquent address, laying particular emphasis upon the close friendship that had always prevailed between the American and Irish people. Other dignitaries made speeches voicing similar sentiments; this welcome concluded. Commander Taussig and his brother officers started up the steep hill that leads to Admiralty House, a fine and spacious old building. Here, following out the instructions of the Navy Department, they were to report to Vice-Admiral Bayly for duty. It is doing no injustice to Sir Lewis to say that our men regarded this first meeting with some mingling. The Admiral's reputation in the British navy was well known to them. They knew that he was one of the ablest officers in the service; but they had also heard that he was an extremely exacting man, somewhat tactless in his manner and not inclined to be over familiar with his subordinates—a man who did not easily give his friendship or his respect, and altogether, in the anxious minds of these young Americans, he was a somewhat forbidding figure. And the appearance of the Admiral, standing in the doorway awaiting their arrival, rather accentuated these preconceptions. He was a medium sized man with somewhat swarthy weather-beaten face and black hair just turning gray; he stood there gazing rather quizzically at the Americans as they came trudging up the hill, his hands behind his back, his bright eyes keenly taking in every detail of the man, his face not showing the slightest trace of a smile. This struck our young men at first as somewhat grim reception; the attitude of the Admiral suggested that he was slightly in doubt as to the value of his new recruits, that he was entirely willing to be convinced, but that only deeds and not fine speeches of greeting would convince him.

Bayly's Cordiality. Yet Admiral Bayly welcomed our men with the utmost seriousness and dignity; his face, as he began shaking hands, broke into a quiet non-committal smile; there was nothing about his manner that was effusive, there were no unnecessary words, yet there was a real cordiality that put our men at ease and made them feel at home in this strange environment. They knew, of course, that they had come to Ireland, not for social diversions, but for the serious business of fighting the Hun, and that indeed it was the only thing which could thus find place in Admiral Bayly's mind. Up to this time the welcome had taken the form of lofty oratorical flights, with emphasis upon the blood ties of Anglo-Saxons and the significance to civilization of American and Great Britain fighting side by side; but this was not the kind of a greeting our men received from Admiral Bayly.

Arrival at Queenstown. The morning was an unusually brilliant one. The storms which had tossed our little vessels on the seas for ten days, and which had followed them nearly to the Irish coast, had suddenly given way to smooth water and a burst of sunshine. The long and graceful American ships steamed into the channel amid the cheers of the people and the shouting of all harbor craft; the sparkling waves, the greenery of the hills, the bright fruit trees already in bloom, to say nothing of the smiling and cheery faces of the welcoming Irish people, seemed to promise a fair beginning for our great adventure. "Welcome to the American colors," had been the signal of the Mary Rose, a British destroyer which had been sent to lead the Americans to their anchorage. "Thank you, I am glad of your company," answered the Yankee commander; and these messages represented the spirit of the whole proceeding. Indeed there was something in these strange-looking British destroyers, that necessarily inspired enthusiasm and respect. They were long and slender; the sunlight falling upon their graceful sides, and their decks, made them brilliant objects upon the water; their business-like guns and torpedo tubes suggested efficiency and readiness. The fact that they had reached their appointed rendezvous exactly on time and that they had sailed up the Queenstown harbor at almost precisely the moment that preparations had been made to receive them, emphasized this impression. The appearance of our officers on the decks, in their unfamiliar, closely fitting blouses, and of our men, in their neat white linen caps, also at once won the hearts of the populace. "Sure an' it's our own boys comin' back to us," an Irish woman remarked, as she delightedly observed the unmistakably Gaelic countenances of a considerable proportion of the crew. Indeed the natives of Queenstown seemed to regard these American jockies almost as their own. The welcome provided by these people was not of a formal kind; they gathered spontaneously to cheer and admire. In that part of Ireland there was probably not a family that did not have relatives or associations in the United States. There was scarcely a home that did not possess some memento of America. The beautiful Queenstown Roman Catholic Cathedral, which stood out so conspicuously, had been built largely with American dollars, and the prosperity of many a local family had the same trans-Atlantic origin. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that when our sailors landed for a few hours' liberty, many hands were stretched out to welcome them. Their friends took them arm-in-arm, marched them to their homes and all the time plying them with questions about friends and relatives in America. Most of these young Americans with Irish ancestry had never seen Ireland, but that did not prevent the warm-hearted people of Queenstown from hailing them as their own. This cordiality was appreciated, for the trip across the Atlantic had been very severe, with gales and rain storms nearly every day.

First Instructions for Fighting Germany. At the indicated spot Commander Taussig broke the seal and read the following document—a paper so important in history, marking as it does the first instructions any American naval or army officer had received for engaging directly in hostilities with Germany, that it is worth quoting in full: Op.—10 NAVY DEPARTMENT Office of Naval Operations Washington, D.C. Secret and Confidential To: Commander, Eighth Division, Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet, U.S.S. Wadsworth, Flagship. Subject: Protection of Commerce near the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland. 1. The British Admiralty have requested the co-operation of a division of American destroyers in the protection of commerce near the coasts of Great Britain and France. 2. Your mission is to assist naval operations of Entente Powers in every way possible. 3. Proceed to Queenstown, Ireland. Report to senior (naval) British officer present, and thereafter co-operate fully with the British navy. Should it be decided that your force act in co-operation with French naval forces your mission and method of co-operation under French Admiralty authority remain unchanged. Route to Queenstown. Boston to latitude 50 N—Long. 20 W to arrive at daybreak then to latitude 50 N—Long. 12 W thence to Queenstown. When within radio communication of the British naval forces off Ireland, call G O K and inform the Vice-Admiral at Queenstown in British general code of your position, course and speed. You will be met outside of Queenstown. 4. Base facilities will be provided by the British Admiralty. 5. Communicate your orders and operations to Rear-Admiral Smith at London and be guided by such instructions as he may give. Make no reports of arrival to Navy Department direct.—Joseph Daniels.

association since, for his wounded associate was Captain John R. Jellicoe, whose advancement in the British navy had been rapid from that day onward. On this same expedition Captain Jellicoe became a sincere friend also of Captain McCalla, the American who commanded the Newark and the American landing force; indeed Jellicoe's close and cordial association with the American navy dates from the Boxer expedition. Naturally, Taussig had watched Jellicoe's career with the utmost interest; since he was only twenty-one at the time, however, and the Englishman was twice his age, it had never occurred to him that the First Sea Lord would remember his youthful hospital companion. Yet the very first message he received, on arriving in Irish waters, was the following letter brought him by Captain Evans, the man designated by the British Admiralty as liaison officer with the American destroyers: Admiralty, Whitehall. 1-5-17. My Dear Taussig: I still retain very pleasant and vivid recollections of our association in China and I am indeed delighted that you should have been selected for the command of the first force which is coming to fight for freedom, humanity,



The Wadsworth, Flagship of the First American Destroyer Division, After Being Camouflaged and Fitted with Anti-Submarine Device. Below—On the Deck of the Wadsworth, Off Queenstown.



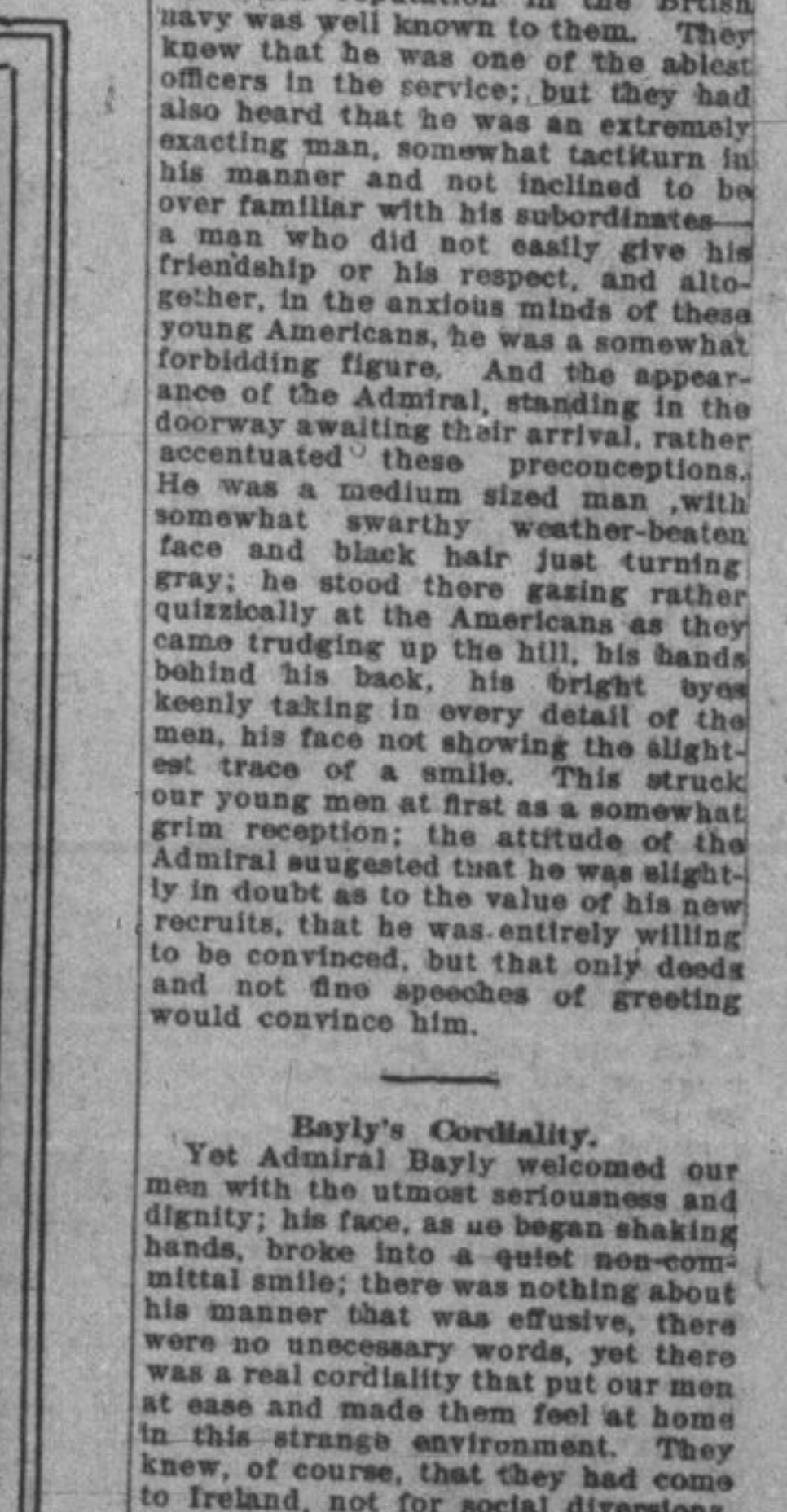
Wadsworth, before being camouflaged.



Lieut.-Com. (now Capt.) Joseph K. Taussig, Senior Officer of First American Destroyer Division to Reach Europe.

me to welcome you and to thank you for coming. Yours sincerely, Lewis Bayly.

When Can You Begin Work? The Admiral himself, with his somewhat worn uniform, and his lack of ceremony, formed a marked contrast to the official reception by the Lord Mayor and his suite in the insignia of office. Entirely characteristic also was the fact that, instead of making a long speech, he made no speech at all. His chief interest in the Americans at that time was the assistance which they were likely to bring to the Allied cause; he courteously greeted the officers, the first question he asked about these forces was: "When will you be ready to go to sea?" Even under the most favorable conditions that is an embarrassing question to ask of a destroyer commander. There is no type of ship that is so chronically in need of overhauling. Even in peace time the destroyer has under way a long list of repairs; our first contingent had sailed without having had much opportunity to rest and had had an extremely nasty voyage. The fact was that it had been rather severely battered up, although the flotilla was in excellent condition considering the hard experience on the ocean and the six months of hard work which it had previously had on our coast. One ship had lost its fire-room ventilator, another had had condenser troubles on the way across, and there had been other difficulties. Commander Taussig, however, had sized up Admiral Bayly as a man to whom it would be a tactical error to make excuses, and promptly replied: "We are ready now, sir, that is, as soon as we finish refueling. Of course you know how destroyers are, always wanting something done to them. But this is war, and we are ready to make the best of things and go to sea immediately." The Admiral was naturally pleased with the spirit indicated by this statement, and, with his customary consideration for his junior said: "I will give you four days from the time of arrival. Will that be sufficient?" "Yes," answered Taussig, "that will be more than ample time." As we discovered afterward the Admiral had a system of always "testing out" new men, and it is not improbable that this preliminary interview was part of this process.



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