

THE VICTORY AT SEA

By ADMIRAL WILLIAM SOWDEN SIMS



BAYLY OUR FRIEND AT QUEENSTOWN

Delightful Life at Admiralty House—The Admiral's Liking for American Officers and Men—His Keen Sense of Humor Pleases Them—His Charming "Family" Helps Him Entertain.

Admiral Bayly was wonderfully quick at repartee, as our men found when they began "joshing" him on British peculiarities, for as naval attaché he had traveled extensively in the United States, had observed most of our national eccentricities, and thus was able promptly "to come back." In such contests our men did not invariably come off with all the laurels. Yet, despite these modest tendencies, Admiral Bayly was a conservative of the conservative, having that ingrained British respect for old things simply because they were old. An ancient British custom requires that at church on Sundays, the leading dignitary in each community shall mount the reading desk and read the lessons of the day. Admiral Bayly would perform this office with a simplicity and a reverence which indicated the genuinely religious nature of the man.

"William the Conqueror" used to. And in smaller details he was likewise the ancient, tradition-loving Briton. He would never think of writing a letter to an equal or a superior officer except in longhand; to use a typewriter for such a purpose would have been propagation in his eyes. I once criticized a certain Admiral for consuming an hour or so in laboriously penning a letter which could have been dictated to a typewriter in a few minutes. "How do you expect to win the war if you use up time this way?" I asked.

"I'd rather lose the war," the Admiral replied, but with a twinkle in his eye, "than use a typewriter to my chieftain!" Our officers liked to chaff the Admiral quietly on this conservatism. He frequently had a number of them to breakfast, and upon one such occasion the question was asked as to why the Admiral ate an orange after breakfast, instead of before, as is the custom in America. "I can tell you why," said Commander Zogbaum. "Well, why is it?" asked the Admiral.

"Because that's what William the Conqueror used to do." "I can think of no better reason than that for doing it," the Admiral promptly answered. But this remark tickled him immensely, and became a byword with him. Ever afterward whenever he proposed to do something which the Americans regarded as too conservative he would say: "You know this is what William the Conqueror used to do."

Yet in one respect the Admiral was all-American; he was a hard worker even to the point of hustle. He insisted on the strictest attention to the task on hand from his subordinates, but at least he never spared himself. When he arrived at Queenstown, a few months before our destroyers put in, he proceeded to reorganize Admiralty House on the most business-like basis. The first thing he pounced upon was the billiard room, and that the billiard tables could be transformed into admirable drawing boards for his staff. He immediately called the superintendent and told him to make the necessary transformations.

"All right," said the superintendent. "We'll start work on them to-morrow morning." "No, you won't," Admiral Bayly replied. "We propose to be established in this room, using these tables, to-morrow morning. They must be all ready for use by eight o'clock."

And he was as good as his word; the workmen spent the whole night making the changes.

A Welcome at Admiralty House. The episode is significant not only of Admiral Bayly's methods, but of his ideals. In his view, if a billiard room could be made to serve a war purpose, it had no proper place in an admiralty house which was the headquarters for fighting German submarines. The chief duty of all men at that crisis was work and their one responsibility was the defeat of the Hun. Admiralty House was always open to our officers; they spent many a delightful evening there around the Admiral's fire; they were constantly entertained at lunch and dinner, and they were expected to drop in for tea whenever they were in port. But social festivities in the conventional sense were barred. No ladies except the Admiral's relatives, ever visited the place. Some of the furnishings were rather badly worn, but the Admiral would make no requisitions for new rugs or chairs; every penny in the British exchequer, he insisted, should be used to fight the war. He

was scornfully critical of any naval officers who made a lavish display of silver on their tables; money should be spent for depth charges, torpedoes, and twelve-inch shells, not for ostentation. He was scrupulousness itself in observing all regulations in the matter of food and other essentials.

A "Bone Dry" Englishman. For still another reason the Admiral made an ideal commander of American naval forces. He was a strict teetotaler. His abstinence was not a war measure; he had always had a strong aversion to alcohol in any form, and had never drunk a cocktail or a brandy and soda in his life. Dinners at Admiralty House, therefore, were absolutely "dry," and in perfect keeping with American naval regulations.

Though Admiral Bayly was not athletic—his outdoor games being limited to hip-and-run, cricket, and tennis in the Admiralty grounds, which he played with a round bat and a tennis ball—he was a man of wiry physique and a tireless walker. Indeed the most active young men in our navy had great difficulty in keeping pace with him.

One of his favorite diversions on a Saturday afternoon was to take a group on a long hike in the beautiful country surrounding Queenstown; by the time the party reached home, the Admiral, though sixty years old, was usually the freshest of the lot. I still vividly remember a long walk I took with him in a peeling rain; I recall how keenly he enjoyed it and how young and nimble he seemed when we reached home drenched to the skin. A steep hill led from the shore up to Admiralty House; Sir Lewis used to say that this was a valuable military asset—it did not matter how angry a man might be with him when he started for headquarters; by the time he arrived, this wearisome climb always had the effect of quieting his irascibility. The Admiral was fond of walking up this hill with our young officers; he himself usually reached the top as fresh as a daisy, while his juniors were frequently puffing for breath.

He enjoyed testing out our men in other ways; nothing delighted him more than giving them hard jobs to do—especially when they accomplished the tasks successfully. One day he ordered one of our officers, Lieutenant Commander Roger Williams, captain of the Duncan, a recent arrival at Queenstown, to cross the Irish Sea and bring back a ship. The joker lay in the fact that this man's destroyer had just come in with her steering gear completely out of commission—a circumstance which Admiral Bayly well understood.

What Commander Williams Did. Many officers would have promptly asked to see himself—something quite unprecedented and possibly even reprehensible, for it was about the same thing as a commanding general going into the front line trenches. But the Admiral believed that doing this now and then helped the men and besides that he enjoyed it—he was not made for an exclusively land sailor. He had as flagship a cruiser of about 5,000 tons; he had a way of jumping on board without the slightest ceremony and taking a cruise up the west coast of Ireland. On occasion the Admiral would personally lead an expedition which was going to the relief of a torpedoed vessel, looking for survivors adrift in small boats.

"What a Bag for the Hun." One day Admiral Bayly, Captain

Pringle of the U.S.S. Melville, Captain Campbell, the Englishman whose exploits with mystery ships had given him world-wide fame, and myself went out on the Active to watch cor-

somehow grimly behind his desk, wholly absorbed in the work in hand. If he were writing or reading his mail he would keep steadily at it, never glancing up until he had finished.

He would listen to the report stolidly, possibly say a word of praise, and then turn again to the business in hand. Occasionally he would notice that his abruptness had perhaps

officers who were stationed at Queenstown need only to mention the name of Miss Voysey. The dignity with which she

was for the purpose of expressing sympathy and tiding over, with hot coffee and tobacco, the inevitable delays in completing the arrangements.

I am sure that long after most of the minor incidents of this war have faded from my memory, I shall still keep a vivid recollection of this kindly gentleman, Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O., Royal Navy, American, French, Italian, Japanese, or Negro sailors, with a cheering word for each, and afterward with sleeves tucked up calmly washing dishes in a big pan of hot water.

I have my fears that the Admiral will not be particularly pleased by the fact that I have taken on all these pains to introduce him to the American public. Excessive modesty is one of his most conspicuous traits. When the American correspondents came to Queenstown, Admiral Bayly would receive them courteously. "You can have all you want about the navy," he would say, "but remember—not a word about Admiral Bayly." He was so reticent that he was averse to having his picture taken; even the moving picture operator detailed to get an historic record of the arrival of our destroyers did not obtain a good view of the Admiral, for, whenever Sir Lewis saw him coming, he would turn his back to the camera! My excuse for describing this very lovable man, however, is because he became almost an object of veneration to our American correspondents because, since for eighteen months he was the commander of the American forces based on Queenstown, he is an object of legitimate interest to the American people. The fact that the Admiral was generally known to our officers as "Uncle Lewis" and that some of those who grow to know him best even called him that to his face, illustrates the delightful relations which were established. Any account of the operations of our Navy in the European war would thus be sadly incomplete which ignored the splendid sailor who was largely responsible for their success.

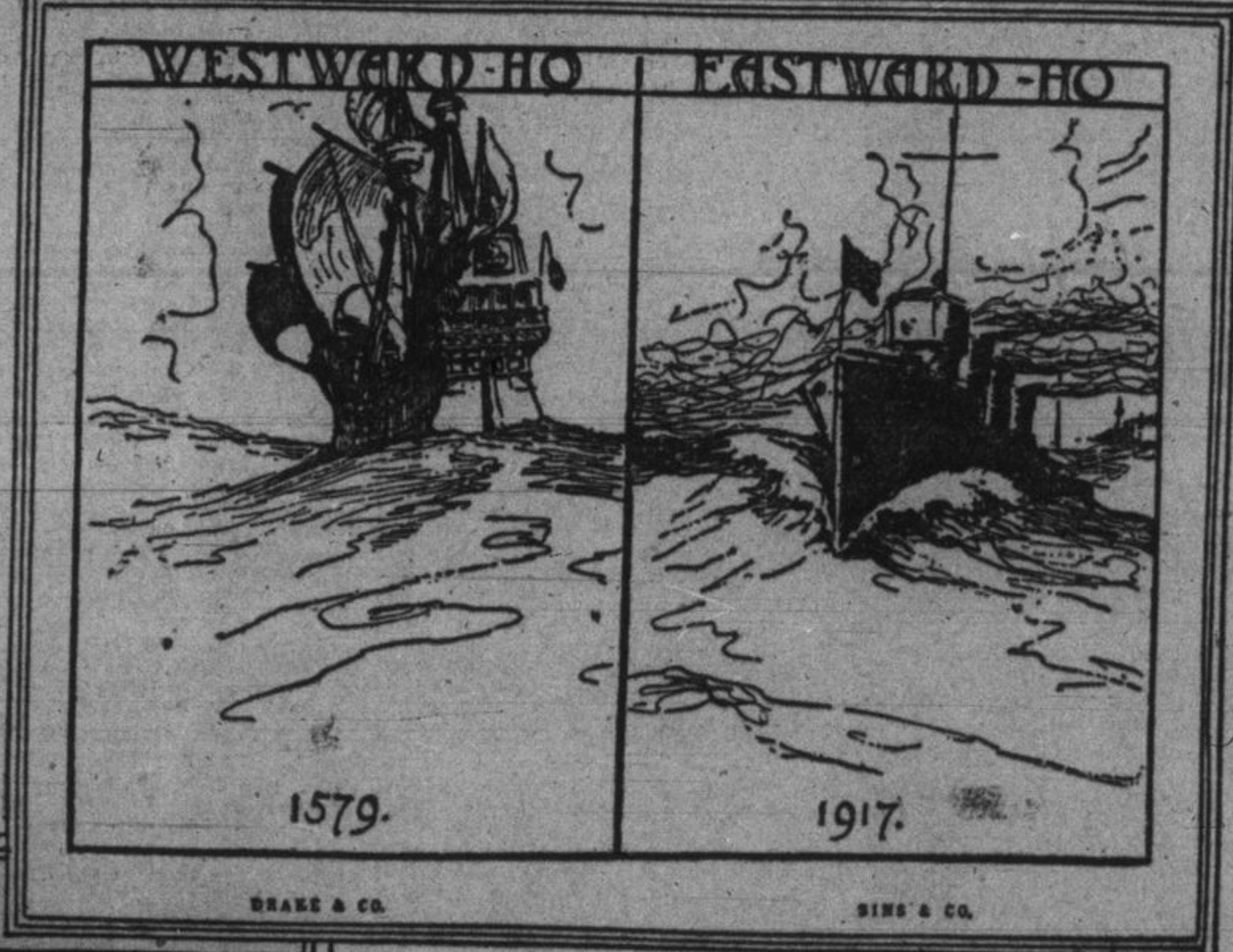


Lieutenant-Commander (now Commander) A. F. Fairfield, in Command Destroyer McDougal.

tain experiments with depth charges. It was a highly imprudent thing to do, but that only added to the zest of the occasion from Admiral Bayly's point of view.

"What a bag this would be for the Hun!" he chuckled. "The American commander-in-Chief, the British Admiral commanding in Irish waters, a British and an American captain!" In our mind's eye we could see our picture in the Berlin papers, four distinguished prisoners standing in a row.

A single fact shows with what consideration Admiral Bayly treated his subordinates. The usual naval regulation demands that an officer, coming in from a trip, shall immediately seek out his commander and make a verbal report. Frequently the men came in late in the evening, extremely fatigued; to make the visit then was a hardship and might deprive them of much needed sleep. Admiral Bayly therefore had a fixed rule that such visits should be made at an o'clock in the morning following the day of arrival. On such occasions he would often be found seated



An English Cartoon.

pained the young American; then he would break into an apologetic smile, and ask him to come up to dinner that evening, and even—this was the greatest honor of all—to spend the night at Admiralty House. The "Family" at Admiralty House. These dinners were great occasions for our men, particularly as they were presided over by Miss Voysey, the Admiral's niece. Miss Voysey, the little spaniel Patrick, and the Admiral constituted the "family" and the three were entirely devoted to one another. Pat in particular was an indispensable part of this ménage; I have never seen any object quite so cross-faded and woebegone as this little dog when either Miss Voysey or the Admiral spent a day or two away from the house. Miss Voysey was a young woman of great personal charm and cultivation; probably she was the influence that most contributed to the happiness and comfort of our officers at Queenstown. From the day of their arrival she entered into the closest comradeship with the Americans. She kept open house for them; she was always on hand to serve tea in the afternoon, and she never overlooked an opportunity to add to their well-being. As a result of her delightful hospitality, Admiralty House really became a home for our officers. Miss Voysey had genuine enthusiasm for America and Americans; possibly the fact that she was herself an Australian made her feel like one of us; at any rate there were certain qualities in our men that she found extremely congenial, and she herself certainly won all their hearts. Any one who wishes to start a burst of enthusiasm from our

she looked out for his comfort, also inspired their respect. Miss Voysey was the leader in all the war charities at Queenstown and she and the Admiral made it their personal duty to look out for the victims of torpedoed ships. At what time these survivors arrived they were sure of the most warm-hearted attention from headquarters. In a large hall in the Custom House at the landing the Admiral kept a stock of cigarettes and tobacco, and the necessary gear and supplies for making and serving hot coffee at short notice, and nothing ever prevented him and his people from stationing themselves there to greet and serve the survivors as soon as they arrived—often wet and cold and sometimes wounded.

Welcoming U-Boat Refugees. Even though the Admiral might be at dinner he and Miss Voysey would leave their meal half eaten and hurry to the landing to welcome the survivors. The Admiral and his officers were always inclined on serving them, and they would even wash the dishes and put them away for next time. The Admiral, of course, might have ordered others to do this work, but he preferred to give the personal expression of a real seaman's sympathy for other seamen in distress. It is unnecessary to say that any American officers who could get there at that time always lent a hand. Of course there were regularly appointed representatives of shipping companies charged with the duty of providing quarters for these people and transporting them to their homes; but this reception immediately upon landing

Criticisms of British Command. The fact that these American destroyers were placed under the command of a British Admiral was somewhat displeasing to certain Americans. I remember that one rather bumptious American correspondent, on a visit to Queenstown, was loud in expressing his disapproval of this state of affairs, and even threatened to "expose" us all in the American press.

The fact that I was specially commissioned as destroyer commander also confused the situation. Yet the procedure was entirely proper, and, in fact, absolutely necessary. My official title was "Commander of the U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters"; besides this, I was the representative of our Navy Department at the British Admiralty and American member of the Allied Naval Council. These duties required my presence in London, which became the centre of all our operations. I was commander not only of our destroyers at Queenstown, but of a destroyer force at Brest, another at Gibraltar, of sub-chaser forces at Corfu and Plymouth, of a mixed force at the Azores, of battle squadrons at Scapa Flow and Boreas, Ireland, and of many other contingents. Clearly it was impossible for me to devote all my time exclusively to any one of these commands; so far as actual operations were concerned it was necessary that particular commanders should control them.

All these destroyer squadrons, including that at Queenstown, were under the command of the American Admiral stationed in London; whenever they sailed from Queenstown on specific duty, however, they sailed under orders from Admiral Bayly. At any time I could withdraw these destroyers from Queenstown and send them where the particular necessities required. My position, that is, was precisely the same as that of General Pershing in France. He sent certain American divisions to the British Army; so long as they acted with the British they were subject to the orders of Sir Douglas Haig; but General Pershing could withdraw these men at any time for use elsewhere. The actual supreme command of all our forces, Army and Navy, rested in the hands of Americans; but, for particular operations, they naturally had to take their orders from the particular officer under whom they were stationed.

Admiral Bayly, His Niece, Miss Voysey, and the Spaniel Patrick.