

Senior Term Notes

GUN-ROOM NOTES

DESPITE what the newspapers would have you believe, the life of a cadet is not always a carefree and happy one. It is full of little duties and doublings to and fro. There are always classes and studies. It is a rather hurried existence. Thus it is that the average cadet, and those that aren't average too, look with weary eyes to the gun-room, just as a man lost on the desert welcomes a cool green oasis on the blistering horizon.

The gun-room is the room where we spend the odd minutes—nay, seconds—of freedom which we enjoy here from day to day. You come in, drop your book-bag into a soft chair, put your cap on your books, and collapse your "warm young body" beside them; to catch your breath and run a sticky finger between binding white collar and perspiring red neck. Then you just sit there and wait 'til you have to dash off somewhere again.

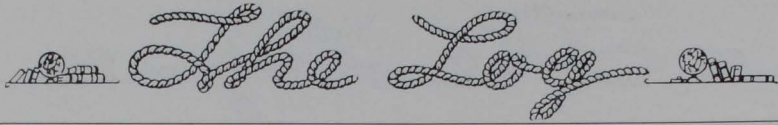
I.

Sometime early in the first term we selected a committee of diligent gentlemen, whose duty it was to be to see that the length and breadth of the gun-room were not strewn with the personal belongings of cadets. These conscientious gentlemen have done such an efficient job that the average cadet thinks twice these days before he lays down his cap in the room, and shudders at the thought of leaving his oilskin or books unattended for more than a minute or so at a time. For confiscation is an ever-present possibility, and no one likes paying out a tenth of his pay or more, every Friday night, for the redemption of those vital articles.

II.

It is sometimes said of very old mansions that each room has its own particular mystery. That may well apply here, for certainly the gun-room has its mystery—namely, where do the new magazines go? The average cadet is ready to swear with me that no human power could contrive to remove the latest issues of *Time* and *Life* with such cunning and speed. One moment you see a magazine lying inert and inviting on a chair—you turn your back for a minute, and presto! no magazine. And it won't do you any good to look around the room, for the disappearance is quite complete; the thing is nowhere to be found.

This unearthly manifestation is not just an isolated incident, either, for it has happened time and time again, to every one of us, and no reasonable explanation has yet been forwarded. One misguided individual went so far as to suggest that human motive power only was directly responsible, but of course this suggestion was squelched so hard that there was never much of an investigation.



III.

At odd hours of the day, long queues of cadets may be seen leading up to the bar—from whence comes the quaint clink of shattering crockery, and the gentle slop-slop of milk on the polished floor. This is known as feeding time, and comes on twice or thrice a day between regular meals.

In every article I have read so far (and I have read several in search of the unvarnished truth) I read of the "thick, tasty, Navy cocoa" which we get. This is one of the more severe forms of journalistic perjury, for the liquid they serve us here has a density of somewhat less than water, and a range of tastes from pine-tar to Wildroot Hair Tonic.

IV.

The night orders go up on the board late in the afternoon, and there is a general rush forward as each cadet tries to read the blurred typewriting, a little anxiously, for some sign of a slight variation in the iron routine of the place. But those who press forward most eagerly are the boys who have handed in punishment chits, and await only a terse notification in orders before they don bayonet belt and gaiters and prepare to tread the light fantastic on the parade ground.

V.

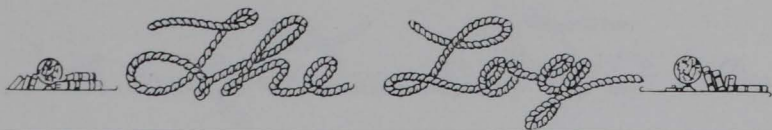
We spent Hallowe'en night in the gun-room, and felt so glad (!) that we had a nice warm castle to stay in when so many young Canadians wouldn't have a roof over their heads the whole night long. That was the night we first discovered Willie Spencer's potentialities as a strip-tease artiste. He danced on the bar and brought the house down.

Then there was New Year's Eve. Another riotous evening. There we sat—moodily recounting detailed descriptions of last year's New Year's. Loneliness and heartache were on every face—black despair in each heart. J. Garvin Waters lingered over the keyboard playing "White Christmas" softly. Strong men wept, or danced soulfully with gun-room cushions.

Birdie German provided the only levity of the whole evening when he picked up the dollar-bill in that amusing new way, and thereby won it.

VI.

One night the whole gun-room was aflame. The air was noisy: the atmosphere was clamorous. A tall young man stood in the centre of a large and interested group. He had that very afternoon performed his greatest feat—the newly perfected Rope Trick. Others begged for his formula for success—he could not, or would not, offer them any hint, except to say, "Try it yourself," and although there were a few who tried half-heartedly to copy his performance, I think all of us knew in our hearts we would never be able to do it as he did. But we were happy for him.



VII.

Once a week, on Sunday morning, we have church in our gun-room, and this great room, which has been noisy all week long with the din of week-day occupation, becomes hushed and quiet. It is a pity that the reverent atmosphere does not linger longer, for it soon fades away, and is gone by Sunday afternoon.

VIII.

We all rode Hunter a lot when they featured him as "Average Cadet," but we didn't realize that such a tremendous ovation lay hidden away in the mail-bags, to come pouring forth in letter after letter from ebullient young ladies of impressionable heart. Now Bud has many fans, and we cast rather envious eyes on the stack of coloured and scented envelopes which await him each noon. Who knows, perhaps these letters will prove the seeds of some beautiful friendships.

So go ahead—sit there and relax; you haven't long. For just as you reach for a cigarette or a succulent second biscuit that belongs to someone else, a sharp, discordant bell is bound to puncture your dream, and a sharp, discordant voice we all know and love will prick you to your feet. "Get out of it; move yourselves; didn't you hear that bell?"

And so, the end of these reflections. A bare outline of our social life—and the place we spend it. I could say more. I don't think I need to. Incidents are but short glimpses of the much larger picture of associations. Incidents we may forget—associations never.

R. I. L. ANNETT.

Congratulations to Capt. H. T. W. Grant, R.C.N., on assuming command of H.M.S. "Diomedé." Capt. Grant is the first R.C.N. officer to command an R.N. cruiser in this war.