Compared with that of a "27-knotter" of twenty years ago the wardroom of a modern destroyer is a palatial apartment.

Imagine a room about 15 ft. long, 25 ft. wide—the whole beam of the ship—with about 7 ft. headroom.

It has white enamelled sides and ceiling. A table, long enough to seat ten people at a pinch, runs athwartships, and ranged round it are various straight-backed chairs.

On the after bulkhead is a square mahogany cupboard with a railed top, on which reposes a gramophone, while to the right, in the corner, is another cupboard reaching to the deck above and divided into numerous square lockers. It is really intended for stationery, but provides an equally useful receptacle for bottled beer and stout.

To right and left along the ship's side, with its row of small scuttles, are cushioned settees, and on the foremost bulkhead, to the left of the door, is a bookcase with cupboard underneath. Except on Sundays, when the latter is specially tidied up for the "rounds," it will not bear close investigation. It may be found to contain half a Stilton cheese (rather fruity), pats of butter, two bottles of Worcester sauce, fruit, one tin of Bluebell polish, and a large lump of oily waste. No wonder our butter sometimes tastes peculiar!

To the right of the door is a sideboard, a solid mahogany affair, with racks for glasses and tumblers, and cupboards for wine. In the centre of it is a mirror which, on sliding down into a recess, reveals a small square hatch communicating with the pantry outside.

Overhead, secured to the beams, are various pipes, electric light fittings, brass curtain rods, and a couple of swinging oil lamps. Several more oil lamps are in the bulkheads or walls. They are used when steam is down and the dynamo is not running. The furniture and fittings are completed by a comfortable-looking, well-padded armchair, a couple of steam radiators of polished, perforated brass for warming purposes when the ship is at sea, a red and blue carpet, curtains, a letter rack and notice board, and the stove.

The latter is fitted to burn anthracite. It looks well, with its highly polished brass casing and funnel reaching up through the deck above, but it has a very decided will of its own. Sometimes, in a fit of contrariness, it persists in blazing like a blast furnace on

muggy days until its sides are nearly red-hot and the heat of the wardroom is well-nigh intolerable. But on chilly mornings it occasionally rings a change by refusing to burn at all, and merely vomits forth clouds of acrid, grey smoke. This generally occurs during breakfast, when folk are sometimes apt to be snappish and irritable. We have never really quite fathomed the idiosyncrasies of the stove. Maybe it is sadly misunderstood, but at any rate we can always empty the vials of our wrath for its misdeeds upon the head of its unfortunate custodian, a newly caught officer's steward of the second class, with long hair and a mournful aspect.

We are at war, and there is little or no attempt at decoration in our habitation. The bright red and black tablecloth of the usual service pattern gives the place a touch of colour, but beyond this and a couple of vases of tightly packed flowers on the table, and on the ship's side a print of the gallant old admiral after whom the ship is named, everything serves a strictly utilitarian purpose.

But in spite of its bareness the wardroom is very snug and comfortable. It is particularly inviting on returning from a spell at sea, when one goes below from the wet and chilly upper deck, to find everybody talking at the top of their voices, and pipes, cigarettes, and the stove all going full blast together. If it is after sunset and the ship is "darkened" the scuttles will all have their deadlights down, and the place will be very, what we may call "frowsty." The atmosphere, indeed, what with tobacco smoke and various unnameable but pungent odours from the pantry outside, might well be cut with a knife; but nobody seems to mind. It is warm, at any rate, and is ten thousand times better than the piercing wind and bitter cold on deck.

At sea it is not always pleasant. In heavy weather the stern of the ship has an unwholesome knack of jumping into the air and shaking itself like the tail of a dog. It is disconcerting, to say the least of it, particularly when the water sweeps its way aft along the upper deck in solid masses which no so-called watertight ventilator can keep out.

When the helm goes over suddenly, too, and the ship slaps her stern into the heart of an advancing wave, a miniature Niagara comes pouring down the after-hatch, unless it happens to be shut. It rarely is. As a consequence the mess is sometimes inches deep in water, while the violent motion unships every moveable fitting in the place and flings it to the deck.

At times the dog Cuthbert, in his basket, the gramophone, many broken records, chairs, tumblers, apples and bananas, books, magazines, papers, knives and forks, a tinned tongue, and the cheese play a riotous game of leapfrog on the deck, with the dirty water sluicing after them.

From outside in the pantry come the crashing sounds of our rapidly disintegrating stock of crockery, and, if we dared to poke our noses inside this chamber of horrors,

we should see a pale-faced officer's steward seated on a bench with his head held in his hands. A joint of cold beef, a loaf of bread, an empty pickle jar, and cups, saucers, and plates are probably playing touch-last in the sink. The floor is a noisome kedgeree of broken china and glass, sea water, pickles, chutney, condensed milk, and other articles of food. But the steward, poor wight, is past caring. He does not mind whether it is Christmas or Easter.

A good many of the others are sea-sick as well, for a destroyer in really bad weather is worse than a nightmare, while it is practically impossible to keep dry or to get proper food even if one wanted it. But yet there is a rumour going round that, through reasons of economy, we are shortly to be docked of our "hard-lying" money! But a word as to the inhabitants.

First comes the commander or lieutenant-commander in command. His cabin—which in heavy weather sometimes suffers the same fate as the wardroom, except that the litter on the deck is limited to water, clothes, books, and papers—is a good-sized apartment in the flat just forward of the wardroom. At sea he spends all his hours on the bridge or in the charthouse, and is only seen below for odd ten minutes at a time. In harbour, however, he has his meals in the wardroom with the other officers, but spends no small portion of his day at his writing-table in his cabin answering official conundrums as to why, for instance, two tablespoons and a napkin have been "lost overboard by accident in heavy weather" in the middle of a notoriously fine summer. He also grinds out official letters and reports by the sweat of his brow, and is gradually becoming a pastmaster in the art of "having the honour to be" somebody else's "obedient servant."

Living in the wardroom and knowing all the members of the ship's company by name brings him into very intimate touch with the men and their affairs. He knows of everything that goes on on board, and as most of the official correspondence of the ship is done by him he is a very busy man even in harbour. At one time he also had to write and thank those good-hearted people who sent mufflers, mittens, cigarettes, balaclava helmets, and peppermints to the "dear sailors."

Next comes the engineer-lieutenant-commander, or the "chief," as we call him. He, too, has his hands full, for besides being in charge of the turbines, boilers, and all the machinery on board, he is also responsible for practically all the stores except provisions. They range in variety from what his store books call prenolphthaline, solution of; cans, iron, tinned, 4 galls.; bits, brace, carpenter's, centre, 1 1/4 inches; to flags, hand, nainsook, white, with dark blue stripe, 2 ft. by 2 ft.; watches, stop; bolts, steel, screwed, bright, hexagonal-headed, 1 in. by 2 in.; sealing wax, foolscap, paper fasteners, and pencils; and paint, green, Brunswick, middling, whatever that may be. This is just a small selection of the articles he keeps and has to account for at stocktaking, and if you turned out his various storerooms you would find he had sufficient articles to set up a combined ironmongery, ship chandlery, and stationery

emporium.

Occasionally he also is bothered with conundrums. For instance, the naval store officer at one of the dockyard ports has a cheerful habit of forwarding a communication to the effect that "brushes, paint, three in number, and broomsticks, bundle of, one, demanded" on such and such a date "are in No. 8 store awaiting removal. Kindly send for them as soon as possible, or if ship has sailed kindly say where these articles should be sent." The ship always has sailed, and by the time the letter is received is usually hundreds of miles away in Scotland, Ireland, or Timbuctoo. Moreover, as the censorship regulations strictly forbid the ship's location to be mentioned, the chief curses.

His dilemma rather reminds us of the young and giddy naval officer who, after a riotous night in London forgot whether he had been appointed to H.M.S. Chatham at Dublin or H.M.S. Dublin at Chatham!

Then we have the first lieutenant, the executive officer of the ship and the skipper's right-hand man. He is the go-between betwixt officers and men, is responsible for the ship's interior economy, cleanliness, and organisation, and has to be pretty shrewd and levelheaded. Energetic as well, for though a destroyer is a small vessel and carries under a hundred men all told, there is always something going on. In addition to his other duties, too, he takes turns in keeping watch at sea with the sub-lieutenant and gunner.

Next the sub-lieutenant. He is the veteran of our little party so far as this war is concerned, for before he came to us he was in a battleship in the Dardanelles. He is now the custodian of the charts, and has to keep them up to date, no easy matter in these strenuous times of Hun minefields. He also runs the ship's football team, which goes ashore and disports itself in green jerseys whenever it gets the opportunity. This, in itself, entails some work and an infinite amount of tact, particularly as fully half the ship's company wish to play.

Next the gunner (T), responsible for the torpedo armament, electrical fittings, and the actual mechanism and mountings of the guns. He is a very busy man, for his torpedoes, like children, always seem to have something the matter with their insides.

Then comes the surgeon probationer. He is not a fully qualified medical man, but a student from one of the large London hospitals temporarily enrolled in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. He gives hygiene lectures to the ship's company, attends to their cuts, contusions, and minor ailments, and packs them off to hospital or to the mother ship if necessary. After an action he would be more useful still.

Lastly the "Snotty" of the Royal Naval Reserve, who does odd jobs of all kinds and generally assists the first lieutenant and the sub.

"Cuthbert," our dog, is a Sealyham terrier. He lives either in the wardroom or the skipper's cabin. He has bad dreams sometimes, and makes strange noises in his sleep, but is the only member of our community who is really cheerful in bad weather, and is always ready for his food.

"Bo," or "Hobo," to give him his full name—somebody was reading Jack London's "The Road" when he came aboard as a tiny kitten—is a black-and-white tom-cat of plebeian origin. He is an honorary member of our mess and occasionally pays us visits at meal-times, and after nourishment sometimes condescends to occupy the armchair in front of the stove. He is very friendly with Cuthbert.

The first steward we had was an ex-valet. He suffered from a swollen head and what he was pleased to call a "college education." He may have been an excellent valet, but was no earthly good as the steward of a destroyer, and soon departed. His sins would fill a book. He used our expensive damask table napkins as dish cloths, involving us in endless complications with the Victualling Yard authorities, who objected to their being used for such a purpose. He produced cold ham, biscuits, and pickles for breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner. Excellent in their way, no doubt, but rather monotonous in the depths of winter. On one occasion he skinned a pheasant to save himself the trouble of plucking it—we will draw a veil over what happened.

The next caterer we had was an able seaman who re-entered the Navy as a volunteer for the war. He, during his time out of the Service, had been a sort of general factotum to some dark-skinned South American potentate. He is a real treasure—the A. B. I mean, not necessarily the potentate. He feeds us liberally and well, though it is true that he speedily discovered the virtues of tinned salmon. In fact we don't know what he would do without it, and the ubiquitous pig. Sometimes we have tinned salmon fish cakes and bacon for breakfast, tinned salmon kedgeree, cold ham, and pig brawn for lunch, and roast pork as a joint for dinner. By rights we should have grown cloven hooves and salmon scales, but we always have a pleasant feeling of repletion after meals and have no cause for real complaint.

Our amusements are simple. We talk a great deal of "shop" and argue a lot, read a great deal—some of us get through two "seven-pennies" a day—listen to the gramophone, write letters, play with the doctor's Meccano set, and try to persuade Cuthbert to strafe the cat.

Our arguments are of the usual naval variety. Positive assertion, followed by flat contradiction and personal abuse, terminating in a babel in which everybody shouts and no one listens.

Sometimes, before breakfast, we have our early morning "hates," and are fractious and peevish. We long to strafe someone or something, and if, like the soldiers in the

trenches, we had the Huns always with us, we might vent our spleen on them. But we can't, worse luck!

But please do not imagine that we are unhappy, because we aren't. Our mouldiness in the mornings is merely temporary. If we could but catch a Hun before breakfast!