The Australasian Squadron in New Zealand Waters.

(Continued from page 667.)

engines and the remainder of the vital parts of the ship. Their chief armament consists of eight of the well-known 4.7 and eight 3-pounders. Little need be said as regards their armament, for the merit of the 4.7 inch gun is such as to need no eulogistic references here, and it is doubtful if for this class of vessel a better weapon for defensive purposes could possibly be chosen. All of these ships are now becoming somewhat obsolete, having been built in 1889. The Wallaroo is at present acting as senior officer's ship on the New Zealand division, her commanding officer, Captain F. C. M. Noel, being the senior officer, he having relieved Captain F. St. G. Rich, of the Ringarooma, in that capacity in November of last year. Both the Wallaroo and Ringarooma have spent nearly the whole of their time on this station, arriving here in 1891, in pursuance of the agreement between Great Britain and the colonies of Australia and New Zealand, but the third, the Phoebe, is almost a stranger to New Zealand. Prior to being sent to Australia early in 1901 she had been for several years on the West Coast of Africa station, so that during her, for a ship, long life she has seen service in many parts of the world.

The little Karrakatta has a displacement of but 735 tons, so that it may be easily seen that should she by chance have encountered foul weather she would have been in a most perilous state. Fortunately, however, for the ship and all on board of her, this did not occur. The following are her principal dimensions: Length, 230 feet; beam, 27 feet; mean draught, eight feet three inches. For armament she carries two 4.7 and 4 3-pounders, besides having several torpedoes. Her official description is first-class torpedo gunboat, a type well known in the service. The Boomerang, sister ship, is now in reserve at Sydney. Owing to her small displacement and consequent small coal capacity, the Karrakatta has only once hitherto been ordered on service in New Zealand waters. Her safe passage across was on the present occasion assisted by a friendly tow of 500 miles by the Royal Arthur, in the course of which a wire hawser broke, necessitating a short delay whilst a stronger wire was passed between the ships in mid ocean.

The remainder of the squadron are of a type that is rapidly disappearing from His Majesty's service, viz., masted sloops, and it is only on account of the long distances to be traversed between the Islands, which must necessarily be done under sail, that they are retained on the station.

A BRITISH WARSHIP.

LIFE ON BOARD.

FROM THE CAPTAIN TO THE TAR.

The visit of the Australasian squadron lends interest to the following article describing life on a British warship. It is taken from the London "Spectator":

As in a town, we have here men of all sorts and professions, we find all manner of human interests cropping up here in times of leisure, and yet the whole company have one feeling, one interest in common, their ship, and through her their navy.

FIRST OF ALL COMES THE CAPTAIN, who, in spite of the dignity and grandeur of his position, must at times feel very lonely. He lives in awful state, a sentry (of marines) continually guarding his door, and although he does unbend at stated times as far as inviting a few officers to dine with him, or accepting the officers' invitation to dine in the ward-room, the relaxation must not come too often. The commander, who is the chief executive officer, is in a far better position as regards comfort. He comes between the captain and the actual direction of affairs, he has a spacious cabin to himself, but he takes his meals at the ward-room table among all the officers above the rank of sub-lieutenant, and shares their merriment, the only subtle distinction made between him and everybody else at such times being in the little word "sir," which is dropped adroitly in when he is being addressed. For the rest, naval nous is so keen that amidst the wildest fun when off duty no officer can feel that his dignity is tampered with, and they pass from sociability to cast-iron discipline and back again with an ease amazing to a landsman.

THE WARD-ROOM

of a battle-ship is a pleasant place. It is a spacious apartment, taking in the whole width of the ship, handsomely decorated, and lit by electricity. There is usually a piano, a good library, and some handsome plate for the table. It is available not only for meals, but as a drawing-room, a common meeting-ground for lieutenants, marine officers, surgeons, chaplain and senior engineers, where they may unbend and exchange views, as well as enjoy one another's society free from the grip of the collar. A little lower down in the scale of authority—as well as actually in the hull of the ship—comes the gun-room, the affix being a survival, and having no actual significance now. In this respect both ward-oom and gun-room have the advantage over the captain's cabin, in which there are a couple of quick-firing guns, causing those sacred precincts to be invaded by a small host of men at "general quarters," who manipulate those guns as if they were on deck.

THE GUN-ROOM

is the ward-room over again, only more so, that is, more wildly hilarious, more given to outbursts of melody and rough play. Here meet the sub-lieutenants, the assistant engineers and other junior officers, and the midshipmen. With these latter admirals in embryo we find a state of things existing that is of the highest service to them in after life. Taking their meals as gentlemen, with a senior at the head of the table, meeting round that same table at other times for social enjoyment, once they are outside of the gun-room door they have no more privacy than the humblest bluejacket. They sleep and dress and bathe—live, in fact, coram publico, which is one of the healthiest things, when you come to think of it, for a youngster of any class. Although they are now officers in H.M. navy, they are still schoolboys, and their education goes steadily on at stated hours in a well-appointed school-room, keeping pace with that sterner training they are receiving on deck. The most

GRIZZLED OLD SEAMAN

on board must "sir" them, but there are plenty of correctives all around to hinder the growth in them of any false pride. On the same deck is to be found the common room of the warrant officers, such as bo'sun, carpenter, gunner; sages who have worked their difficult way up from the bottom of the sailor's ladder through all the grades, and are, with the petty officers, the mainstay of the service. Each of them has a cabin of his own, as is only fitting; but here they meet as do their superiors overhead, and air their opinions freely. But, like the ward-room officers, they mostly talk "shop," for they have only one great object in life, the efficiency of their charge, and it leaves them little room for any other topics. Around this, the after part of the ship, cluster also another little body of men and lads, the domestics, as they are termed, who do their duty of attendance upon officers and waiting at table under all circumstances with that neatness and celerity that is inseparable from all work performed in a ship-of-war. Body-servants of officers are usually marines, but the domestics are a class apart; strictly non-combatants, yet under naval law and discipline.

GOING "FORRARD,"

the chief petty officers will be found to make some attempt at shutting themselves apart from the general, by arrangements of curtains, etc., all liable and ready to be flung into oblivion at the first note of a bugle. For the rest, their lives are absolutely public. No one has a corner that he may call his own, unless perhaps it is his "ditty box," that little case of needles, thread, and et ceteras that he needs so often, and is therefore allowed to keep on a shelf near the spot where he eats. Each man's clothes are kept in a bag, which has its allotted place in a rack, far away from the spot where his hammock and bed are spirited off to every morning at 5 o'clock, to lie concealed until the pipe,

"DOWN HAMMOCKS"

at night. And yet by the arrangement of "messes" each man has in common with a few others a settled spot where they meet at a common table, even though it be not shut in, and is liable to sudden disappearance during an evolution. So that a man's mess becomes his rallying point; it is there that the young bluejacket or marine learns worldly wisdom, and many other things. The practice of keeping all bedding on the move as it were, having no permanent sleeping-places, requires getting used to, but it is a most healthy one, and even if it were not it is difficult to see how, within the limited space of a warship, any other arrangement would be possible. Order among belongings is kept by a carefully graduated system of fines payable in soap—any article found astray by the ever-watchful naval police being immediately impounded and held to ransom. And as every man's kit is subject to a periodical overhaul by officers, any deficiency cannot escape notice.

Every man's time is at the disposal of the service whenever it is wanted, but in practice much leisure is allowed for rest.

RECREATION AND MENTAL IMPROVEMENT.

Physical development is fully looked after by the rules of the service, but all are encouraged to make the best of themselves, and no effort on the part of any man to better his position is made in vain. Nowhere, perhaps, is vice punished or virtue rewarded with greater promptitude, and since all punishments and rewards are fully public, the lessons they convey are never lost. But apart from the service routine, the civil life of this little world is a curious and most interesting study. The industrious man, who having bought a sewing machine, earns substantial addition to his pay by making all of his less energetic messmates' clothes (except boots) for a consideration, the far-seeing man who makes his leisure fit him for the time when he shall have left the Navy, the active temperance man who seeks to bring one after the other of his shipmates into line with the ever-growing body of teetotallers that are fast altering completely the moral condition of our sailors, the religious man who gets permission to hold his prayer-meeting in some torpedo flat or casement surrounded by weapons—all these go to make up the multifarious life of a big battleship.