A FINE lifeboat manned by sturdy Danish sailors was alongside the ship; the sea was very rough, but our ship steady, firmly embedded in the sandy bottom. The packages we had decided to save at any cost were put in our pockets, lifebelts and life-saving waistcoats once more put on, and once more we all climbed a ship’s ladder, but as the lifeboat was rising and falling almost the height of the ship with the heavy seas, descent into it was not easy. But nothing mattered now; once over the side of the ship we were no longer in German hands, and were free! The waves dashed over and drenched us as we sat in the lifeboat; we were sitting in icy water, all of us more or less wet through. At last the lifeboat crew pulled for the shore, the high seas sweeping over us all the way. We grounded on the beach, the sturdy sailors carried some, others
jumped into the water and waded ashore, and we were all on *terra firma*, free at last, after weary months of waiting and captivity. Groups of villagers were waiting on the beach to welcome us even at this early hour. They plied us with questions as far as they could, and great was their wonder at what we had to tell.

We had been saved at the eleventh hour, almost the fifty-ninth minute of it; we were at the very gates of Germany, being due at Kiel the very next day. It was a miraculous escape if ever there was one, and came at a moment when all hope had gone. Would that the "Wolf" had gone ashore in the same place! All our fellow-countrymen on board her would then have been free and they could have given information and saved us as well.

What emotions surged within us as we trod the free earth once more! What had we not gone through since we were last on shore! Then it was on British soil; now it was on the soil of a friendly neutral country. We had escaped imprisonment with the enemy, escaped making acquaintance with the
notorious Ruhleben of evil fame—the more we reflected on it, and we did so every minute, the more wonderful did our escape appear. But our thoughts also turned to our friends on the "Wolf" who were doomed to meet the cruel fate from which we had so mercifully been delivered.

Once on dry land, and escorted by the villagers, we walked over the sandhills to the lighthouse about half a mile away. There we were received with open arms. The kindly Danes could not do enough for us. We had only what we stood up in; we dried our clothes, other dry garments were offered us, hot drinks and food were supplied liberally, and we were generally made much of. We had come back to life and warmth once more. The lighthouse staff and villagers vied with each other in their efforts to make us feel at home and comfortable, and after interviews with some Danish Government official, we were taken to hotels in Skagen, the name of the nearest town, a small summer bathing resort, just to the south of the Skaw. After lunch, the first square meal we
had had for months, we set off to telegraph to our relatives and friends, and announce we were still in the world. It was one of our greatest anxieties on board that we could not communicate with our friends, who we knew would be grieving over our disappearance and, we feared, would have given us up for lost.

The same afternoon we walked back to the beach to see if we could go aboard the stranded ship to retrieve our luggage, but the sea was far too rough to allow of this, and the German and Spanish crew had not been taken off. While on the beach we saw two floating mines exploded by a Danish gunboat. We had not only had a narrow escape from the Germans but also from the dangers of a mine field. The next day was also rough for us to go aboard, in fact it was so rough that the lifeboat went out and and took everybody off the ship, both Spanish and German. The Spanish first mate was thus saved and after all did not serve his sentence in Germany. It was reported that a German submarine appeared to take off the
German officers on this day, but as it was too rough to lower the boats this could not be contrived.

The "Igotz Mendi" was now deserted, but as the Danish authorities had adjudged her, twenty-four hours after her stranding, to be a Spanish ship, she had reverted to her original owners. Accordingly, before leaving her the Spanish Captain had hoisted the Spanish flag at her stern, the first time that or any other flag had appeared there since that November morning when the Germans had captured her far away in the Indian Ocean. She was no longer a German prize. She would have been the only one the "Wolf" had secured to take home—a neutral ship with only a few tons of coal on board, and a few married couples, and sick and elderly men as prisoners. Not much to show for a fifteen month's cruise, and even that was denied the Germans; though the "Wolf" had certainly carried home a valuable cargo, and some hundreds of prisoners, besides doing considerable damage to the shipping of the Allies.
A CAPTIVE ON A GERMAN RAIDER

The position of the stranded ship was a unique one. She was a neutral ship, a German prize, stranded in neutral waters, with a crew composed of Germans and neutral prisoners, and carrying passenger prisoners of many enemy nationalities—English, Australian, American, Japanese, Chinese and Indian.

Never was there a more dramatic turning of the tables; the Germans were now interned, and we were free. The German officers were sent off under guard to an inland town, and the sailors sent to a camp in another part of Denmark. The sailors did not attempt to disguise their joy at the turn events had taken. On their return to Germany they would have had a few weeks' leave, and then done duty in a submarine, or at the front. Now, they were interned in a land where there was at least much more to eat than they could have hoped for in Germany, and their dangers were at an end till the war was over. They were marched under an armed guard of Danes, up and down the village street several times on one of these
days; they were all smiles, singing as they marched along.

The next day a hurricane was still blowing, and going aboard was still out of the question. The ship was blown further in shore and it began to look as if she would break up and we should see nothing of our personal belongings. The day after, however, was beautifully fine, and we left Skagen Harbor in two motor-barges and boarded the ship, which was in charge of the Danish authorities. After some difficulty, for the ship was in a state of great chaos, we secured all our baggage, which was landed that night at Skagen much to our relief, as up to that time we had only what we stood up in at the time we landed from the lifeboat. We had set foot on the "Igotz Mendi" for the last time.

During the week we had to give evidence to the Danish authorities concerning our capture and treatment on board. We were overwhelmed with kindness by the Danes who made no secret of their sympathies with the Allies; invitations to dinners and parties
flowed in, and we could not have accepted them all if we had stayed as many weeks as we had days.

On Friday, March first, most of us left Skagen. The whole village turned out to give us a good send off, and snapshots galore were taken—this indeed had been going on ever since we landed. The ladies among us were presented with flowers and chocolates, the men with smokes, and we left with the heartiest good wishes of our warm-hearted hosts. From Skagen our passage home was arranged by the British Consular authorities. We stayed a few days in Copenhagen and then traveled through Sweden and Norway, leaving a port somewhere in that country for another somewhere in this, and so to London, where we arrived in a characteristic pea-soup fog on the morning of March tenth, after incessant traveling by train and sea for a week. We had not relished another sea voyage—and one across the North Sea least of all—but there was no help for it. We feared that as we had escaped the Germans once, they might make a special effort to
sink us crossing the North Sea. But fortunately the U-boats left us alone, though few, if any of us, turned in during those last few nights.

No comment need be made on the German procedure of dragging their prisoners month after month over the oceans. Such a thing had never been done before. The Germans had had opportunities to release us, but had taken none to do so, as they had evidently determined not to allow any account of the "Wolf's" cruise to be made known. They might have landed the "Hitachi" prisoners on the Maldives and left them here to get to Colombo as best they could, the Germans taking the ship; they might have sent the prisoners on the "Igotz Mendi" to Colombo or Java after they had taken what coal they wanted. As the Spanish Captain said, they had a right to take his contraband, but not his ship. But a question of right did not bother the Germans. Many times they promised him to release his ship, never intending to do so. Whenever they were asked why they did not release us when we thought it
possible, they always advanced "military reasons" as the excuse. "That," as I said to the Captain, "covers a multitude of sins." The Commander of the "Wolf" had personally assured the married couples on the "Matunga" that they would be kept no longer than two months. But they were kept seven. Some men had been kept prisoners on the "Wolf" for nearly a year.

It was hard enough on the men, but infinitely worse for the women. One had been eight months, one seven, and others five months in captivity, often under the worst possible conditions. But they all kept cheerful throughout, even when it appeared that they were certain to be taken with their husbands into Germany.

Every man is likely to think under such conditions that he is in a worse case than his fellow-captives, and there were certainly examples of very hard luck amongst us. The American Captain had abandoned his sea-calling for six years, and decided at his wife's request, to make one more trip and take her to see her relatives in Newcastle, N.S.W.
They never got there, but had eight months of captivity and landed in Denmark instead. Many sailors had left the Atlantic trade after encounters with the U-boats in that ocean, only to be caught by the “Wolf” in the Pacific. One of the members of the Spanish crew had been a toreador, but his mother considered that calling too dangerous and recommended the sea as safer. Her son now thinks otherwise, perhaps she does, too!

The Captain of a small sailing ship from Mauritius to West Australia, in ballast to load timber, saw the “Wolf” when a day off his destination. Not knowing her, he foolishly ran up the red ensign—a red rag to a bull, indeed—and asked the “Wolf” to report him “all well” at the next port. The “Wolf” turned about and sunk his little ship. Although the Captain was at one time on the “Wolf” almost in sight of his home in Mauritius, his next port was Kiel, where it is to be feared that he, an old man of seventy, is the reverse of “all well.”

One of our fellow prisoners had been on the P. & O. liner “Mongolia” when she was
sunk by one of the “Wolf’s” mines off Bombay. Later, on the “Hitachi,” he was caught by the mine-layer herself! But he defeated the enemy after all, as he escaped on the “Igotz Mendi.” One of the seafaring men with us had already been torpedoed by the Huns in the Channel. Within a fortnight he was at sea again. The next time he was caught and his ship sunk by the “Wolf” off New Zealand. He also escaped on the “Igotz Mendi,” and when last seen ashore was dying to get to sea again, in a warm corner, he said, so that he could “strafe the Huns” once more. They had held him prisoner for eight months and he had some leeway to make up.

I thought until our timely rescue came, that our own case was a fairly hard one. I had retired after spending twenty years in Government service in Siam, and we had decided to spend some months at least, possibly “the duration,” in South Africa before proceeding home. It seemed hard lines that after twenty years in the Far East we were to come to Europe only to be imprisoned in
Germany! We have escaped that, but our plans have gone hopelessly astray, our health has not been improved by the treatment on our long voyage, and although we took six months to get from Siam to London, the Germans have succeeded in getting us home much earlier than we, or they, anticipated. I had been shipwrecked on my first voyage out to Siam in 1897, and taken prisoner on my last voyage home twenty years after.

Fortunately, one usually forgets the miseries of sea travel soon after one gets ashore. But never, I think, will one of us ever forget our captivity at sea with our enemies, or the canned crab, the bully beef, the beans, and the roll of the "Igotz Mendi."

THE END