CHAPTER VI

THE two ships steamed along in company for the next three days, usually stopping towards sunset for communications and sending orders. On Sunday the eleventh we were invited to a band performance on the well deck forward. It was quite a good one. The first mate came along and jokingly said to us, “What more can you want? We give you a free passage, free food, and even free music.” I replied, “We only want one more thing free.” “What is that?” he asked. “Freedom,” I answered. “Ah!” he said, smiling. “I am afraid you

I had asked him earlier in the day, if he would allow us the use of a room and a piano for a short time in the afternoon, so that we could keep up our custom of singing a few hymns on Sunday. Later on, he told me we might, with the permission of the
A CAPTIVE ON A GERMAN RAIDER

officers, have their wardroom for half an hour. The officers and he had kindly agreed to this, a concession we much appreciated, and the little wardroom was crowded indeed on that occasion.

At daybreak on the thirteenth both ships arrived at the Nazareth Bank, and before nine a.m. were lashed together. On such occasions the “Wolf” never dropped anchor, for she might have to be up and away at the slightest warning; the prize ship was always the one to drop anchor. On the previous Tuesday the “Wolf” had been lashed alongside the “Hitachi”; here, on this Tuesday, the “Wolf” was lashed alongside another captured ship in the very same place! Again the daring and coolness of our captors amazed us. Coaling from the “Igotz Mendi” to the “Wolf” at once began, and a wireless installation was immediately rigged up by the Germans on the Spanish ship. Coaling proceeded all that day, and the German officers and crews on both ships were very busy. The prisoners aft were also very busy catching fish over the side. No sooner
A CAPTIVE ON A GERMAN RAIDER

had the ships stopped than lines were dropped overboard and many fine fish were caught. The prisoners aft wore very little clothing and often no headgear at all, though we were in the tropics, where we had always thought a sun-helmet was a *sine qua non*. But the prisoners got on quite well without one.

On the morning of the fourteenth orders were given to the married couples on the "Wolf" to get their light baggage ready at once for transference to the Spanish ship, as she and the "Wolf" might have to separate at any moment. Our heavy baggage would be transferred if time allowed. Evidently something was in the air, some wireless message had been picked up, as the seaplane was being brought up from the ’tween decks, and assembled in great haste on the well deck. The "Wölfchen" went up about four-twenty and returned about five-thirty and in the interval our heavy baggage had been brought up from the "Wolf’s" hold ready to be transhipped to the "Igotz Mendi." We did not understand at the time why the Germans were so considerate to us in the

69
matter of baggage—but later on, a great deal later on, light dawned on us! At dusk that evening the married people were transferred to the Spanish ship. The next morning we were still alongside the “Wolf” and remained there till the morning of the seventeenth, our heavy baggage being transshipped in the interval. There had also been transferred the Colonel of the A.A.M.C. already mentioned, and three other men—including the second mate of one ship previously captured—who were in ill-health. One of the “Hitachi” prisoners, a man over military age, who had come on board at Colombo straight from hospital, and was going for a health voyage to South Africa, had been told in the morning that he was to be transferred to the Spanish ship. But later on, much to the regret of everyone, it was found that the Germans would not release him. A German officer came up to him and said in my hearing, “Were you not told this morning that you were to go on the “Igotz Mendi?” “Yes,” he replied. “Well,” said the officer, “you’re not to.” Comment
on the brutal manner of this remark is unnecessary.

The message the seaplane had brought back had evidently been a reassuring one, and we heard a long time afterwards that the "Wolf" had picked up a wireless from a Japanese cruiser, presumably looking for the "Hitachi," only thirty miles away. Hence the alarm! Unfortunately for us, if this report were true, the cruiser did not turn aside to look in the most obvious place where a ship like the "Wolf" would hide, so once more the "Wolf" was safe.

If only there had been a couple of cruisers disguised, like the "Wolf," as tramps, each one carrying a seaplane or two, in each ocean free from submarine attentions, the "Wolf" could have been seen and her career brought to an end long before. The same end would probably have been attained on this occasion if a wireless message had been sent from Delagoa Bay to Colombo saying that the "Igotz Mendi" had left the former port for the latter with five thousand tons of coal on board. The strong wireless installation on
the "Wolf," which picked up every message within a large radius, but of course never sent any, would have picked up this message, and the "Wolf" would probably have risen to the bait, with the result that she could have been caught by an armed vessel sent in search of her on that track. For it must have been known that a raider was out in those waters, as the disappearance of the "Hitachi" could only have been due to the presence of one.

Coaling proceeded without cessation till the morning of the seventeenth, when the "Wolf" moved off a short distance. Passengers on mail boats familiar with the process of coaling ship at Port Said, Colombo, or any other port, can imagine the condition of these ships, after three or four days' incessant coaling day and night. The appearance of the "Igotz Mendi" was meanwhile undergoing another change. When captured she was painted white and had a buff funnel with her Company's distinguishing mark. She was now painted the Allied gray color, and when her sides and funnel had been
transferred the two ships sailed away and on the evening of the seventeenth, after final orders and instructions had been given, parted company. For some days after this painting was the order of the day on the Spanish ship, which was now gray on every part visible.

The Captain of the Spanish ship was now relieved of his duties—and also of his cabin, which the German Captain had annexed, leaving the owner thereof the chartroom to sleep in—and was naturally very chagrined at the course events had taken, especially as he said he had been told by the Consul at Lourenco Marquez that the course between there and Colombo was quite clear, and had not even been informed of the disappearance of the “Hitachi,” though she had been overdue at Delagoa Bay about a month.

Consequently he had been showing his navigation lights at sea, and without them the “Wolf” would probably not have seen him, as it was about one a.m. when the “Wolf” picked him up. The remaining Spanish officers took their watch on the bridge,
always with a member of the prize crew in attendance, the Spanish engineers remained in charge of the engine-room, again with a German always present, and the Spanish crew remained on duty as before. There was a prize crew of nine Germans on board; the Captain, Lieutenant Rose, who had also been in charge of the “Hitachi” after her capture, and the First Officer, who had also filled that post on the “Hitachi,” being the only officers. Lieutenant Rose spoke Spanish in addition to English and French, and the Spanish Captain also spoke very good English. Some of the Spanish officers also spoke English, but the knowledge of it was not so general as it was on the “Wolf,” where every officer we met spoke our language, and most of the prize crew spoke quite enough to get on with.

The “Igotz Mendi” had been completed in 1916, and was a ship admirably fitted for her purpose, which, however, was not that of carrying passengers. Ordinarily she was a collier, or carried iron ore. Her decks were of iron, scorchingly hot in the tropics, and
icy cold in northern latitudes. There was no place sheltered from the sun in which to sit on the small deck space, and the small awnings which were spasmodically rigged up were quite insufficient for the purpose. There were no cabins except those provided for the officers, who generously gave them up to the married couples on board, the officers taking quarters much more crowded and much less desirable. The cabins were quite suitable for one occupant each, but very cramped for two; the one occupied by my wife and myself being only seven and a half feet square. Each contained one bunk and one settee, the latter being a sleeping place far from comfortable, as it was only five and a half feet long by about twenty inches wide, and the floor space was very narrow and restricted. There were four cabins, two on each side of a narrow alleyway about two feet wide, while one married couple occupied the Chief Engineer’s cabin further aft on the starboard side, quite a roomy apartment. The port cabin opposite to it was occupied by an old Mauritius-Indian
woman and her little granddaughter, the Japanese stewardess, the Australian stewardess already mentioned, and a colored man going to South Africa with his Chinese wife. Rather crowded quarters, not to mention somewhat unseemly conditions! The Asiatic passengers had been "intermediate" passengers on the "Hitachi"—i.e. between the second-class and deck passengers. The four men above mentioned occupied a space under the poop, it could not be dignified with the name of cabin. It was very small, only one occupant could dress at a time, and immediately in front of it was a reeking pigsty with three full-sized occupants. The passage to it from the saloon on the upper deck was often a perilous one in rough weather and on dark nights, for there was never any light showing on board at night during the whole cruise. The prize crew had quarters on the starboard side under the poop; they were exceedingly small, cramped, and in every way inconvenient and uncomfortable.

This, then, was to be our home for the next few months. We did not know for how
long, but we regarded the prospect with a certain amount of equanimity, as the ship was unarmed, and we knew we should not be fired on by a hostile cruiser, as might have been the case if we had remained on the "Wolf."

When we arrived on the Spanish boat we were served with meals at the same time to which the Spanish officers had been accustomed, i.e. breakfast at nine and supper at four, but these times were soon afterwards changed to breakfast at eight-thirty, tiffin at twelve-thirty and supper at five-thirty. We were lucky to get fresh food for some days. But this soon came to an end, though the stock of muscatels, a quince preserve—called membrillo—and Spanish wine lasted very much longer. There was on board a certain amount of live stock; some chickens, and a couple of cows each of which had a calf born on board; these all met the usual fate of such things on appropriate occasions.

For many days after we parted company with the "Wolf" we ambled and dawdled through the sea on a southwesterly course,
sometimes stopping altogether for an hour or two, sometimes for half a day, sometimes for a whole day. The monotony of this performance was deadly beyond words. On one of these days, the Captain offered to land us at Mauritius on the following morning and give himself up with the crew and ship if we could raise £100,000 for him. Unfortunately, we couldn’t!

On the afternoon of the twenty-third the Germans became very agitated at the sight of smoke on the horizon. At first we all thought it was the “Wolf,” but before long we could see two columns of smoke, evidently coming from two steamers traveling together. The prisoners then became very agitated also, as help might be at hand. But the Germans at once changed the course, and manoeuvred at full speed in such a way that we soon got out of sight of the smoke, when we resumed our original course again, after having boxed the compass more than once, and the German Captain came down from the bridge and told us there was no relief for us yet. We all felt that if the “Hitachi”
A CAPTIVE ON A GERMAN RAIDER

had only avoided distant smoke as the German Captain had done, we need never have made the acquaintance of the "Wolf."

On the twenty-fourth we again met the "Wolf" in the evening. Whenever the "Wolf" had an appointment to meet her prize at a certain time and place, the prize always hoisted recognition signals directly she saw the "Wolf" on the horizon. These were made of wicker, and varied in shape on different occasions.

We were now well to the south of Africa, in the roaring forties, and we saw many schools of whales, and albatrosses accompanied us for many days. By December first we had begun to steer northwest, and on the third the Captain informed us we were the nearest we should ever be to Cape Town, the port to which I had set out. We were then one hundred and fifty miles off. We met the "Wolf" again on the fifth and traveled in her company during the remainder of that day and the next two, stopping as usual for communication and the sending of stores to us in the evenings just before sun-
set. Often, when the ship stopped Lieutenant Rose would go aboard the "Wolf," another Lieutenant boarding us and remaining in charge during his absence. The "Wolf" on this occasion told us she had sunk the American sailing vessel "John H. Kirby," from America to East London with a cargo of four hundred motor-cars on board, when two days from her destination, the officers and crew being taken on board the "Wolf." Many people in South Africa would have to dispense with their motor joy-rides at Christmas in consequence.

The evening of December seventh was the last occasion on which we saw the "Wolf" for many days. The two ships now shaped a course for the Brazilian Island of Trinidad, where it was understood the "Wolf" would coal from her prize, and with her spend the Christmas holidays.