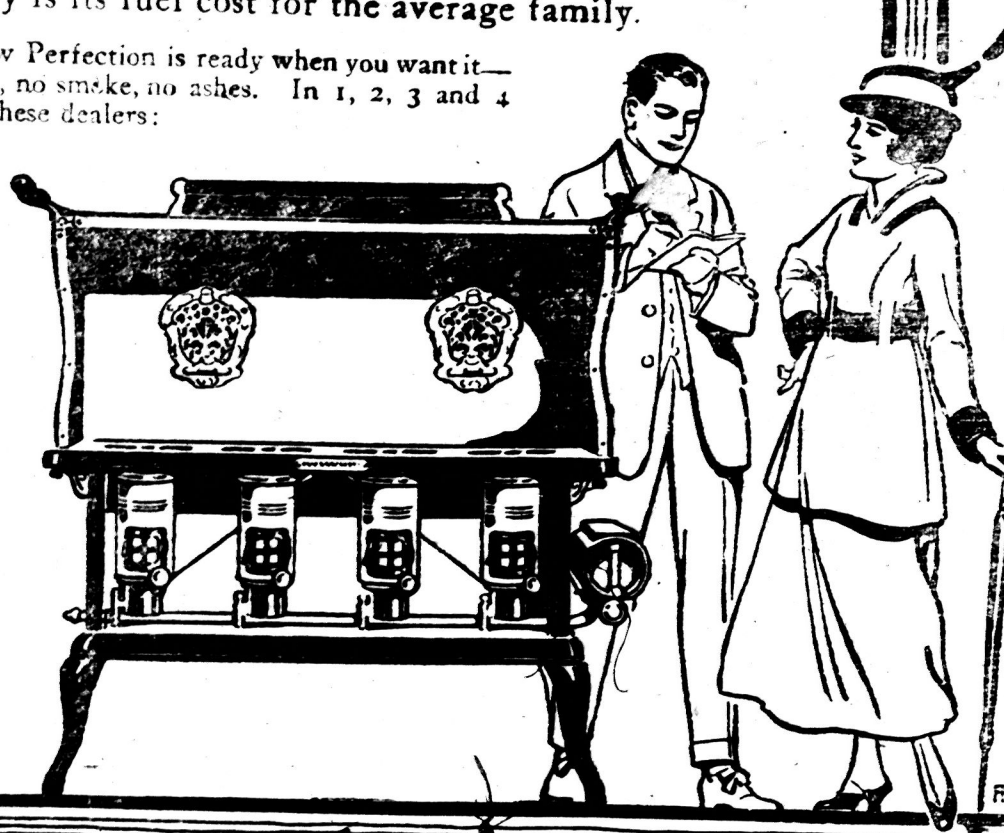


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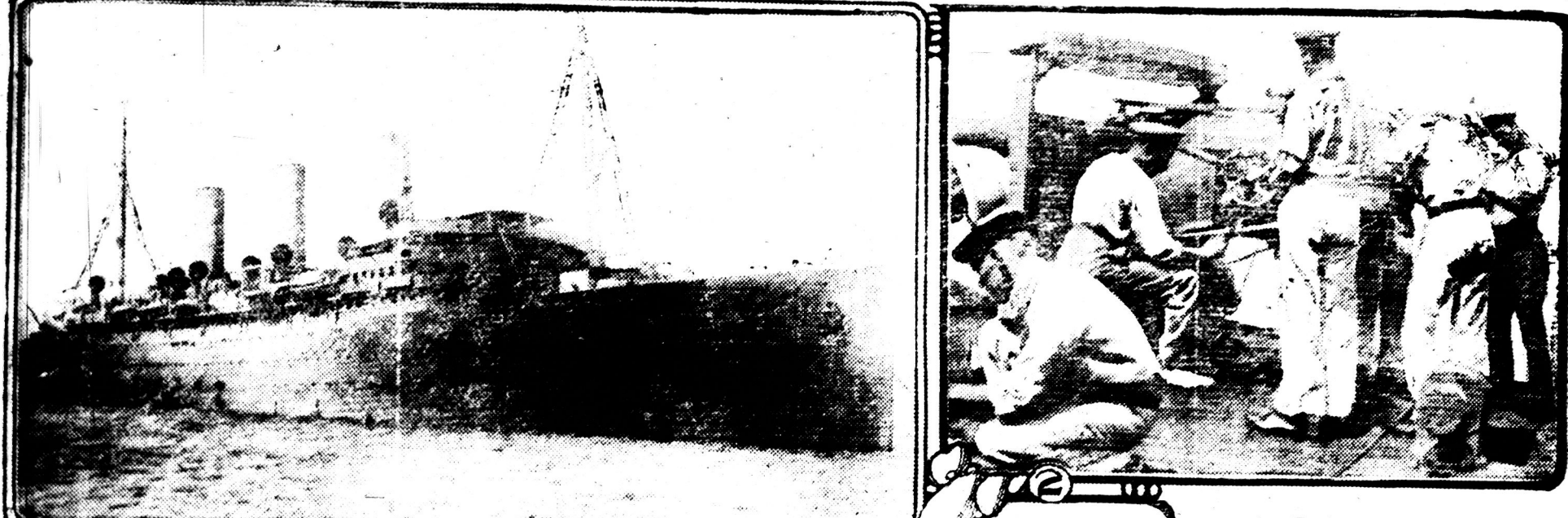
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## WAS FLAGSHIP OF SQUADRON



ERSTWHILE flagship of the admiral commanding the British auxiliary cruiser squadron patrolling the Indian Ocean and Red Sea, but now towing 47 naval guns and war paint completely obliterated, the big transatlantic liner Empress of Asia, of the Canadian Pacific Ocean Services fleet, a short time ago, returned to port after twenty-two months of war service.

She had been converted back to her original status as a peaceful passenger liner, and the transformation was perfect even to the slightest detail. In her interior, the magnificent public apartments, luxurious furnishings, gymnasium, verandah, cafe and one and a thousand things for which the greyhounds of the C.P.R. transatlantic fleet are justly famous, were all intact; in fact, it was the identical ship which put to sea from Vancouver on July 2, 1914. War was declared while the Empress of Asia was in the Far East, and she was at once commandeered, as were the remainder of the company's Pacific fleet, for the more stirring business of war.

The Empress of Asia was the first C.P.R. ship to be commandeered, and she was the first to be equipped as an auxiliary cruiser. Within a few days of the outbreak of war, she was unrecognizable in a coat of warship grey, and with eight 4.7 guns bristling from strategic points forward and aft. In the words of one of her officers, "she was ready for anything."

In the shortest possible space of time the luxurious furniture and painted fittings were torn out of the liner, and she was a machine of destruction. It was a busy dockyard at Hongkong these days. Without pause and without time, the great

authorities at Hongkong had manned the liner with a naval complement, only the R.N.R. men of the original complement remaining, and she was dispatched to sea. Enemy ships were in those waters, and it was vital that the lanes of commerce be kept open.

The Empress of Asia first saw her first war service off the Philippine Islands. She was assigned to a fleet of armed vessels whose duty it was to see to it that no German or Austrian vessels interned in Manila Harbor escaped. The Asia was later joined by the Russia off the Philippine port, and it was here that both vessels figured in the exciting chase after the German steamer Marks, which by slipping within the three-mile limit, succeeded in reaching Manila, closely escaping capture.

Subsequently the Empress of Asia trailed the German cruiser Emden, and on one occasion was within a few miles of her, but the raider gave the auxiliary a clear field. The Asia kept in her tracks, however, and reached Keeling Island, one of the Cocos group, exactly three days after the Australian cruiser Sydney had accounted for her. Frequent trips were made by the Asia's officers to the battered hulk, as illustrated by the many interesting curios now decorating their quarters on the liner. After leaving Cocos, the Asia patrolled the trade routes in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal.

By way of diversion the big C.P.R. liner, during her period of service in the Indian Ocean, acted as conveyer to French and Australian transports.

About this time the small British possessions of the Red Sea were constantly in danger from raids by the Turks, and the Empress of Asia was

ever, the Turks managed to mount other guns in place of those destroyed, and it was necessary for the Asia to deliver a few more broadsides before the Sheiksaid batteries were reduced and the resistance of the Turks shattered in that section of operations.

Interesting pictures are in the possession of officers of the Asia showing the forts at Sheiksaid burning after the bombardment. Other Turkish forts were also reduced by gunfire before the C.P.R. liner turned her association with the Red Sea. Arab slavers operating dhows in those waters also came in for a great deal of attention, and were promptly dealt with. While she was operating in these waters the liner was ordered to hunt for drydocking and overhaul. The terrific heat in the Red Sea made it very uncomfortable for those aboard the Asia, but taken on the whole the cause of sickness were comparatively few.

The news that the Empress of Asia had been released came about the middle of October, and by the latter part of November the liner was back at Hongkong for refit.

Capt. Edward Boothman, R.N.R., C.P.R. marine superintendent, who by the way, returned here as a passenger aboard the Empress of Asia, arrived at Hongkong early in the year to superintend the refitting of the Asia and her sister ship the Russia. The Empress of Asia was brought across the Pacific by Capt. William Davison, R.N.R., former commander of the Empress of Russia, who under instructions from Montreal, changed commands with Capt. Samuel Robinson, R.N.R., shortly before the Russia left Hongkong in March. Mr. G. M. Hughes is chief officer of the Asia, while Mr. Elmer J. Davis is first officer. Chief Engineer W. J. Davis has charge of the engine room, and Mr. E. Spier, formerly of the Russia, is second engineer.