

Malta.

MY DEAR FATHER,—  
There is no news beyond the usual Malta round of polo, dances, etc., so I am going to spin out this letter with a yarn about the enclosed photographs, showing something of life in "the Queen's Navee."

In the first one we have the officer of the watch, midshipman of the watch, and "No. 1"—the first lieutenant—the two former with the badge of office on in the shape of sword-belts, though wearing anything but a quarter-deck aspect on their faces. However, a camera in the hands of an amateur is a privileged occasion, or "enough to make a cat laugh," as that chap used to say at Earl's Court as he exhibited his funny walking-elephant toys.

You will find the second photograph rather a contrast. It was taken immediately afterwards, and as it is "the dinner hour," many men have availed themselves of their

freedom to sleep—or "caulk," as we call it—after their meal. I could not help thinking of the contrast to the real caulking when the Maltese dock-yard "maties" were filling in the seams between the planks of this deck with fresh pitch and oakum. It was one incessant jabber, and I think they must be born politicians by the way they settled down to argument. The guns pointing



HAVING THEIR PHOTOS TAKEN.

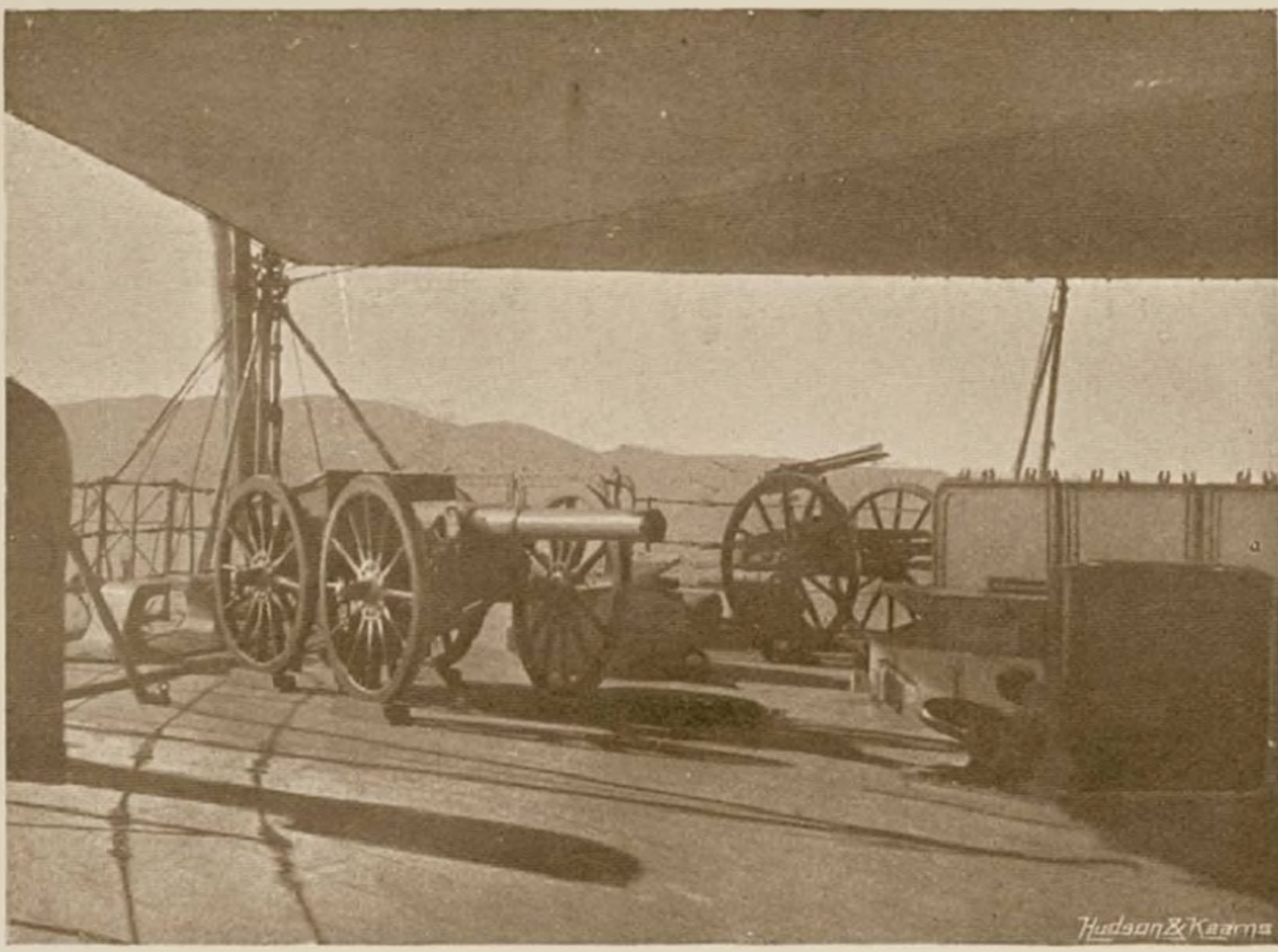
so ominously over the men's heads are our 12-in. barbette guns. If they had been fired then all the men would have been killed, stunned, or deafened by the rush of air.

The next photograph shows the "Cæsar" with some of the external decorations of a man-of-war on Christmas Day,



From Photos.

TAKING A "CAULK."



QUARTER-DECK ORNAMENTS.

died out. I told you that we play at soldiers once a week. Well, one photograph shows a 12-pounder field-gun and Maxim on carriages for landing on these occasions. The 12-pounders are very ornamental, being finely burnished, etc., but I wish during peace-time we could have the old 9-pounder muzzle-loaders that the Blue-jackets chucked about so splendidly at the Agricultural Hall. I know nothing so good as that sight of them running away with all the parts and then recapturing the gun, building it up and firing it at the retreating enemy in a few seconds. But the 12-pounder weighs 8-cwt. and its carriage nearly as much, and this with its fittings will not let it stand much rough usage.



THE USE OF THE HELIOGRAPH.

My last photograph is of a signal midshipman heliographing, with the chief yeoman of signals standing by. Of course, it requires a sunny day, so that the mirrors catch the rays of light.

With love to all,  
Your affectionate son, NED.



THE "CÆSAR" AT ANCHOR.

By a Naval Officer.

in the shape of evergreens at the yardarms and mastheads. Like all the other photographs, this one was taken at Malta, and it also brings in the entrance of the harbour. The men decorated their messes very prettily at Christmas, and we had the usual round of officers preceded by a band, while the men offered us dishes in which plum-pudding naturally predominated. One of the lieutenants told me that Christmas Day not ten years ago used to be a rowdy affair, and the men sometimes carried the officers round on their shoulders. It is quite another story now, and Christmas rowdyism, like Father Neptune's christenings on crossing the line, has