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LONDON, S.E.

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A COASTGUARDSMAN OFF DUTY.

HERE we see one of those who keep watch and ward round our shores, a man of the Coastguard Service, which would supply the first Reserve for the Fleet in the event of war. He is shown off duty, on board one of the vessels of the First Reserve Squadron, one of the eleven coastguard ships which are stationed at certain ports in various parts of Great Britain and Ireland. Our force of coastguards has been styled by high authority "the cream of the Navy," and the phrase is strictly accurate. It is a strictly-selected body of men, a large proportion of whom, indeed, have held petty officers' ratings on board ship in the Channel, Mediterranean, and elsewhere. That our coastguardsmen are the very pick of the Naval Service is shown by the stringency of the terms on which men are admitted. No petty officer or man of doubtful or indifferent character can get transferred to shore duty, the Admiralty requiring that every man must have the recommendation of his commanding officer, and must be fully trained either as a gunner or as a torpedo-man, and he must also possess at least one good conduct badge. Our coastguardsmen at present number 4,200; if they were three times that strength it would undoubtedly be better for the Naval position which we now hold.