

The Quebec at Freetown, Sierra Leone, Africa. (QB-2000)

The Quebec's Winter Cruise

SAILING AROUND AFRICA

THE MOST TRAVELLED ship of the Royal Canadian Navy, the training cruiser *Quebec* (Captain E. W. Finch-Noyes) sailed at 1000 on January 14, 1955, bound for Dakar, West Africa, on the first leg of a goodwill cruise around Africa — the first such journey ever undertaken by a Canadian warship.

After only one day at sea, she met with gales which became progressively more severe and she eventually faced winds up to 92 miles per hour. This severe storm covered an area nearly 2,300 miles across. At times waves and spray covered most of the upper deck of the ship and depth charges, secured in their rails at the stern of the ship, were somehow washed away and disappeared into the sea. The port whaler was reduced to matchwood by repeated heavy waves. The starboard whaler, while not so extensively damaged, was merely broken into several large pieces of woodwork. The sports locker was flooded and much of the gear within damaged.

During this battle with the elements, the engineroom personnel had major difficulties with the fresh water evap-

orators which, on a turbine-driven ship, are essential.

To crown it all, the medical personnel had to cope with an emergency operation (appendectomy, complicated with peritonitis) on Ord. Sea. Jean Boulay of Montreal. The operation took place successfully in heavy weather on January 19, at 1900.

These misfortunes compelled the captain to turn about and make for Bermuda, the nearest naval dockyard, but, after three days rest and repairs the *Quebec* sailed from Bermuda, bound for Freetown (Sierra Leone, West Africa), the proposed visit to Dakar having been abandoned in order to make up time.

The crossing of the Atlantic was tolerable even though winds were still present for most of the way. In Freetown for refuelling, the *Quebec* went through an extensive cleaning and repainting schedule in order to appear her best in Capetown. During this cleanup job almost everyone, officers and men, joined in and the ship was repainted within 12 hours.

Between Freetown and Cape Town, the sick bay staff was again called upon

to perform their second major operation on board. The patient, CPO E. G. Kimber, was successfully operated on for appendicitis, and soon made a rapid and excellent recovery.

In view of the shortage of time, no "Crossing the Line" ceremony was held on board when the *Quebec* crossed the equator on February 2, this traditional ceremony being left for the return trip up the East African coast.

THE QUEBEC sailed into Cape Town on February 7, to see Table Mountain draped in a tablecloth of clouds. The ship's company, after 17 days on board made off happily ashore on the only formal visit of the cruise. To say that they received an open-armed welcome is only a mild description of what actually took place.

Official calls were carried out by the captain and many officers. Dances, parties and many other forms of entertainments were arranged by various Cape Town organizations for the benefit of the ship's company and were overwhelming in their number and the sincerity of their goodwill. A concert

party arranged by Cdr. (L) J. C. Gray, and augmented by the ship's band entertained the patients at a convalescent home for crippled children. This entertainment, got up at very short notice, was a great success and much appreciated by patients and staff.

The ship sailed from the legislative capital of South Africa on February 11, at 0900, leaving an impression of good behaviour and courtesy which merited the following message from the Canadian High Commissioner in Cape Town.

"My staff and I thank you for your co-operation and hospitality. Please convey to the ship's company my appreciation, pride, and congratulations on success of visit and manners in which they carried out their individual roles of ambassadors for Canada. We join with Capetonians in saying, *Quebec* welcome here anytime."

The next port of call, Port Elizabeth, one day away from Cape Town, was

reached on February 12. This city was founded in 1820 by British settlers. Their descendants received the *Quebec* that afternoon with an enthusiasm rarely seen by the ship in past visits to foreign countries. An unusually large crowd was gathered for the ship's arrival. A reception and a dance, organized by His Worship the Mayor of Port Elizabeth, was held at city hall for officers and men. Another children's hospital was visited by the concert party (as in Cape Town) and again its efforts met with marked success.

The following day, the ship was open to visitors who were so numerous that many never got the opportunity of visiting or even boarding the ship at all, an occurrence which was to repeat itself the next day.

During this visit, most of the ship's company took the opportunity of visiting the world-famous Snake Park where snakes, still with their poison fangs intact are handled with seeming impunity by attendants. The *Quebec* left the most hospitable city February 16, bound for Durban some 700 miles further north along the East African coast.

THE SHIP crept up the intricate channel leading to Durban harbour for a visit which was to last eight days. Unfortunately, the "Lady in White", Mrs. Perla S. Gibson, who had never before missed the arrival of any man-of-war in Durban, was not present when the lines were thrown. It

Strolling in Barcelona. (QB-2253)

was most regrettable, as she had anxiously awaited the arrival of the first Canadian warship in Durban.

The captain, as usual, called on city and military officials. Many organizations, particularly one known as the "Apostleship of the Sea", had prepared dances, trips and visits for the ship's company and these were thoroughly enjoyed. Many officers and men were invited to spend an afternoon, a day or perhaps more in the home of kindly citizens. Many were taken on a tour of the city, its environs and the surrounding countryside, while many others spent enjoyable afternoons on the beaches which, around Durban, are beautiful.

The "Valley of the Thousand Hills", now home of the once-mighty Zulu tribe, was visited by many of the ship's company both as guests of the local inhabitants and in organized groups. A large party of officers also visited Pietermaritzburg as guests of the Reserve Naval officers in Durban.

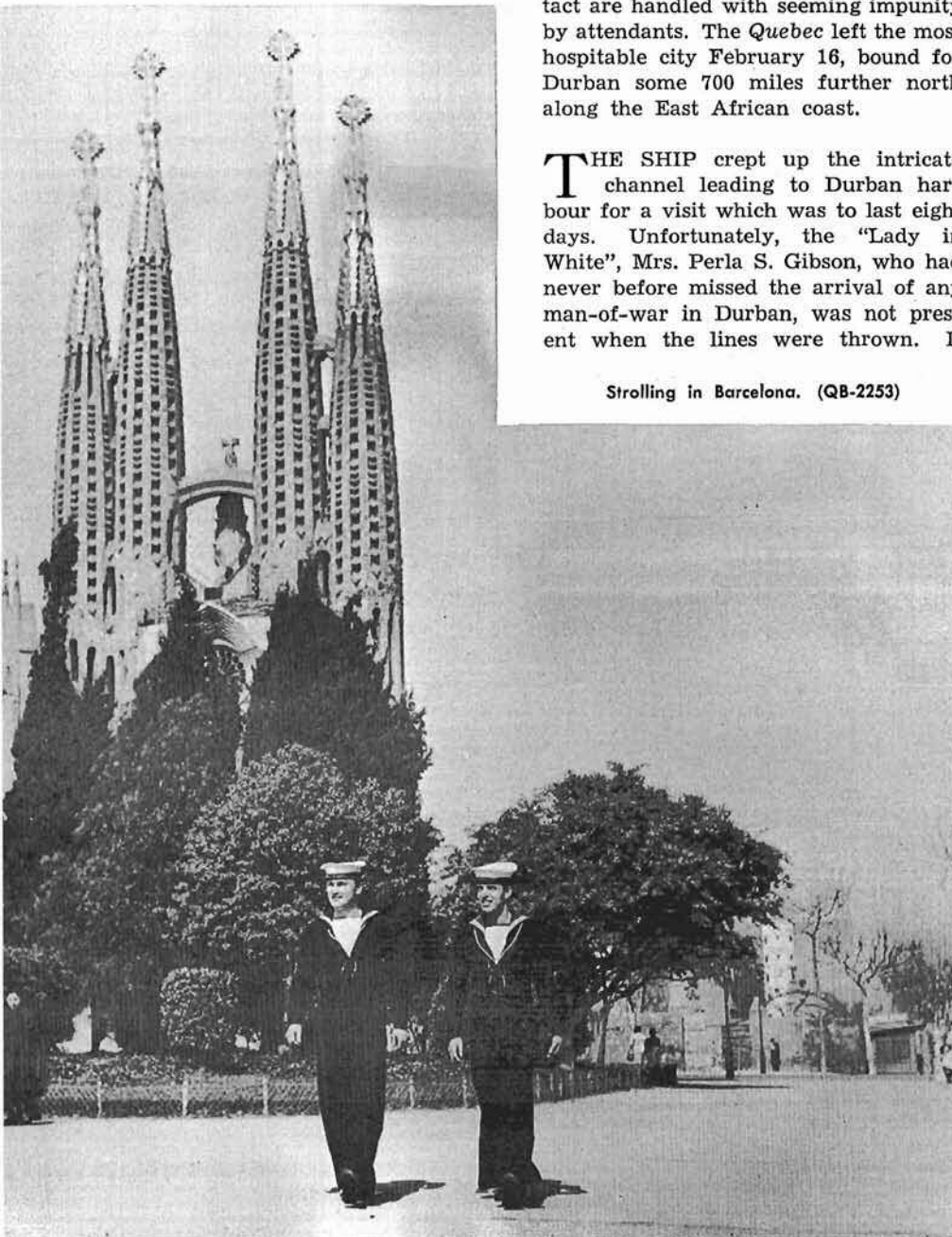
The countryside around Pietermaritzburg and the "Valley of the Thousand Hills", with its expanse of green grazing land, woods, and its patches of magnificent gum trees left an image in the memory that one without the power of description cannot record.

Durban itself, its colourful rickshaw boys in their costumes of a bygone time and its modern buildings, gives the impression of a mixture of the old and the new worlds seldom seen or met with elsewhere.

On February 19, an ice hockey team, 25 in all, left to play a match in Johannesburg. The party was met by a delegation headed by H. G. Conrad, chairman of the South African Hockey Association. After preliminary practice games, the *Quebec* team played a representative South African all-star team, on February 22. The Canadian team did very well, considering the altitude (6,000 feet), lack of practice and borrowed equipment, losing 15 to 9. The whole party was most hospitably received and entertained and, among other things, some visited a gold mine, and a small party of officers called on Dr. W. Nicol in Pretoria. Because of incidence of poliomyelitis in Durban, the ship's concert party did not visit any hospital in this city.

The "Lady in White" saw the *Quebec* off, singing "O Canada" and other Canadian popular songs on the morning of February 24.

ON EACH TRIP between ports, normal training activities such as boat drill, target practice, ABCD exercises and so on were carried out.





Competitors in a sports tabloid in the Indian Ocean. (QB-2158)

On leaving Durban, the final South African port of call, en route for Mombasa, Kenya, the memory of the hospitality of the Union was such that no one of the ship's company was quite sure whether to be glad of the rest or sorry for the departure.

The trip from Durban to Mombasa under perfect weather conditions took eight days and the *Quebec* carried out normal training during this time. This part of the voyage was made fairly close in shore within sight of long stretches of sandy beaches.

On nearing Mombasa, the first Arab dhows were sighted and these craft, unchanged in appearance for centuries, aroused a lot of interest.

Kilindini harbour was reached at 1000 on March 1 and the ship went alongside for refuelling. The captain again set off on his busy rounds of official calls and these were returned the same morning. One of the most colourful figures seen on the trip to make a call on the ship, was the representative of the Sultan of Zanzibar, the Sheikh Mbarak Ali Hinawy, dressed in his rich Arab costume. After refuelling, the ship anchored in the stream.

An interesting spot in Mombasa was the "Old Harbour" where the Arab dhows dropped anchor. These dhows make the trip to Mombasa from the shores of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, trading in products of their lands.

Further entertainment in Mombasa consisted of tours in the surrounding

countryside. Quite a few of the ship's company went on safari into the interior of Kenya. A dance had been organized for members of the ship's company which enjoyed itself thoroughly to the music of the ship's band.

The *Quebec* sailed from Mombasa at 1000 on March 4 to complete the last long leg of the East African cruise. Daily training routine was carried out

and the traditional "Crossing the Line" ceremony was observed on Sunday, March 6. Nearly 200 officers and men went through the ceremony of conversion onto shellbacks, some, it is reported with regret, against their will.

The trip continued uneventfully until an uncharted wreck was sighted on the shores of the Hafun Peninsula at about 1800 on March 7. This aroused much interest and speculation on board. The captain took the *Quebec* close in to investigate and render assistance if necessary. After observing the wreck for some time with searchlights, it was decided that she was abandoned, so the *Quebec* carried on her way once more.

THE JOURNEY up the Red Sea was made under almost perfect weather conditions and the number of tankers sighted, of all nationalities and tonnage, made one realize the importance of oil in the world's economy and of the Suez Canal in world strategy.

Suez Bay was reached at 1600 on March 12 and the *Quebec* dropped anchor to await formation of the north-bound evening convoy before passing up the canal. The first part of the passage through the canal unfortunately was made during the hours of darkness with the *Quebec* leading the convoy; but the second part of the passage was completed at 1100 on the following day and was particularly interesting to those of the ship's company who were passing through the canal for the first time. The ship passed Port Said and carried



An Arab dhow unfurls her canvas, preparatory to sailing from Mombasa, Kenya. (QB-2112)

on directly to Alexandria for an unofficial visit.

The usual calls were made by the captain who later received Egyptian officials on board. A dance was held for the ship's company but the pastime enjoyed most by the crew was trading with the many and various merchants of the ancient city. Many historical buildings and sites were visited but organized tours to Cairo and the pyramids were not possible.

The ship sailed on the morning of March 17 and, because of high winds, had great difficulty in getting away even with the help of four tugs. Normal sea routine was resumed once more. A brief halt was made in Malta where saluting ammunition was picked up. Here, also, the standard of HRH the

Duke of Edinburgh, flying on HMRY *Britannia* was saluted.

The voyage to the French Riviera was completed at 0900 on March 21 when the *Quebec* dropped anchor in the roadstead of Villefranche-sur-Mer, near Nice. Usual courtesies were exchanged and the ship settled down to a six-day visit. Numerous trips up and down the Riviera were made and most members of the ship's company visited Monte Carlo, Monaco.

Many sporting events took place between teams from the *Quebec*, Villefranche, and USS *Newport News* which arrived on Tuesday, March 22. After a most successful visit, the ship sailed on Sunday March 27 at 1400.

On this day, the *Quebec* had a sad and solemn duty to perform in the

burial at sea of AB W. J. Warner, RN, late member of the crew of HMS *Apollo*, who had drowned in the harbour of Villefranche. This ceremony was carried out with full naval honours at 1500 that afternoon.

At 0900 on March 28, the *Quebec* reached the ancient city of Barcelona where the ship tied up for an unofficial visit of six days. This city (1,500,000 population), one of the largest in Spain, offered shopping facilities which compared favourably with any other port visited during the cruise. Calls made by the captain were returned by official Spanish delegates.

The Spanish people made the Canadian extremely welcome even though the language at first seemed to present a barrier. Everyone, as usual, got on very well ashore. Most members of the crew went at least once to see a bullfight and these performances caused quite a lot of controversy. A replica of Columbus' *Santa Maria*, lying in dock near the Columbus monument, attracted many amateur photographers.

To sum up, Barcelona, a centre for tourists on the Mediterranean coast of Spain, provided all forms of entertainment, all of which were thoroughly enjoyed by the entire ship's company.

WATCHED BY a considerable crowd, the *Quebec* left Barcelona at 1400 on April 3 bound for Gibraltar, the last port of call prior to her return home. Between Barcelona and Gibraltar, the *Quebec* performed evolutions in company with HMS *Glasgow* and HMS *Surprise*, which flew the flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Guy Grantham.

The *Quebec* went alongside at Gibraltar at 1000 on April 5 for a brief stay, mainly to refuel. Some last minute purchasing was done and a few organized games were played against local Royal Navy teams.

This last port of call of the cruise was also the theatre for the last Sunset Ceremony, performed before an audience which included personnel of the Royal Navy and the United States Navy. As in previous ports, this ceremony was much admired and the guard and band were complimented for their excellent performance.

On leaving Gibraltar, the following message was received from the Flag Officer (RN) in Gibraltar: "We have much enjoyed your visit and look forward to your return." The *Quebec* set off on the final stage of her 18,000-mile voyage around the African Continent, arriving in Halifax on April 15.—D.A.M.



An ancient harbour light stands at the narrow entrance of a street in Mombasa. (QB-2121)