

Letter from an Officer.

THE following is a letter received by one of the Mistresses from a young officer on one of H.M. ships, a torpedo boat destroyer, belonging to the 1st Destroyer Flotilla.

H.M.S. * * * *

At Sea.

DEAR * * * *

I must start by thanking you all for your very kind present. The men were delighted with the woollies and I with the sweets. We have been having pretty keen frosts at night, and the mitts and socks are most useful. Now with regard to telling you things: I have to be very careful. We are not supposed to say where we are or with what ships, or anything like that. All the letters are censored, and as I happen to be the censor, I have, if anything, to err on the side of strictness with my own letters.

I might say, however, as a start that I am not a hundred miles from where Phil went to school, Geoff, Laurie and all the rest of them. This packet is, of course, a fairly small ship, 750 tons, to be exact. We are commanded by a Lieutenant-Commander, who ranks with a Major in the Army. Then the second in command is a Lieutenant, who ranks with a Captain in the Army, and then your humble servant, who ranks with a Lieutenant in the Army. We have a doctor, who is a medical student not quite fully qualified, an engineer who ranks with, but is junior to me, and a gunner, who is a warrant officer, i.e., promoted from seaman. That comprises the officers. We all get a cabin, or, I should say, a glorified dog kennel each, except the doctor, who has a bit of the board-room (that's our mess) curtained off. The Captain has quite a decent-sized cabin. At sea the First Lieutenant, myself, and the Gunner, work in three batches as officer of the watch, as, of course, the Captain must be always prepared to stay on the bridge any time up to twelve hours as well. A generous and grateful country has supplied us with a Kapot safety waistcoat each, which is made of some vegetable fibre which floats. As this garment is about three inches thick, I generally can't be bothered to wear it, but risk it. (N.B.—This is not bumptious bravado, but crass laziness.) I am afraid it is not frightfully exciting at sea. At least, not my idea of excitement. One can hardly call it exciting to go on the bridge at midnight, having failed to get any sleep up till then through continually finding oneself on the deck instead of the bunk, and then stand there for four hours, gradually getting wetter and