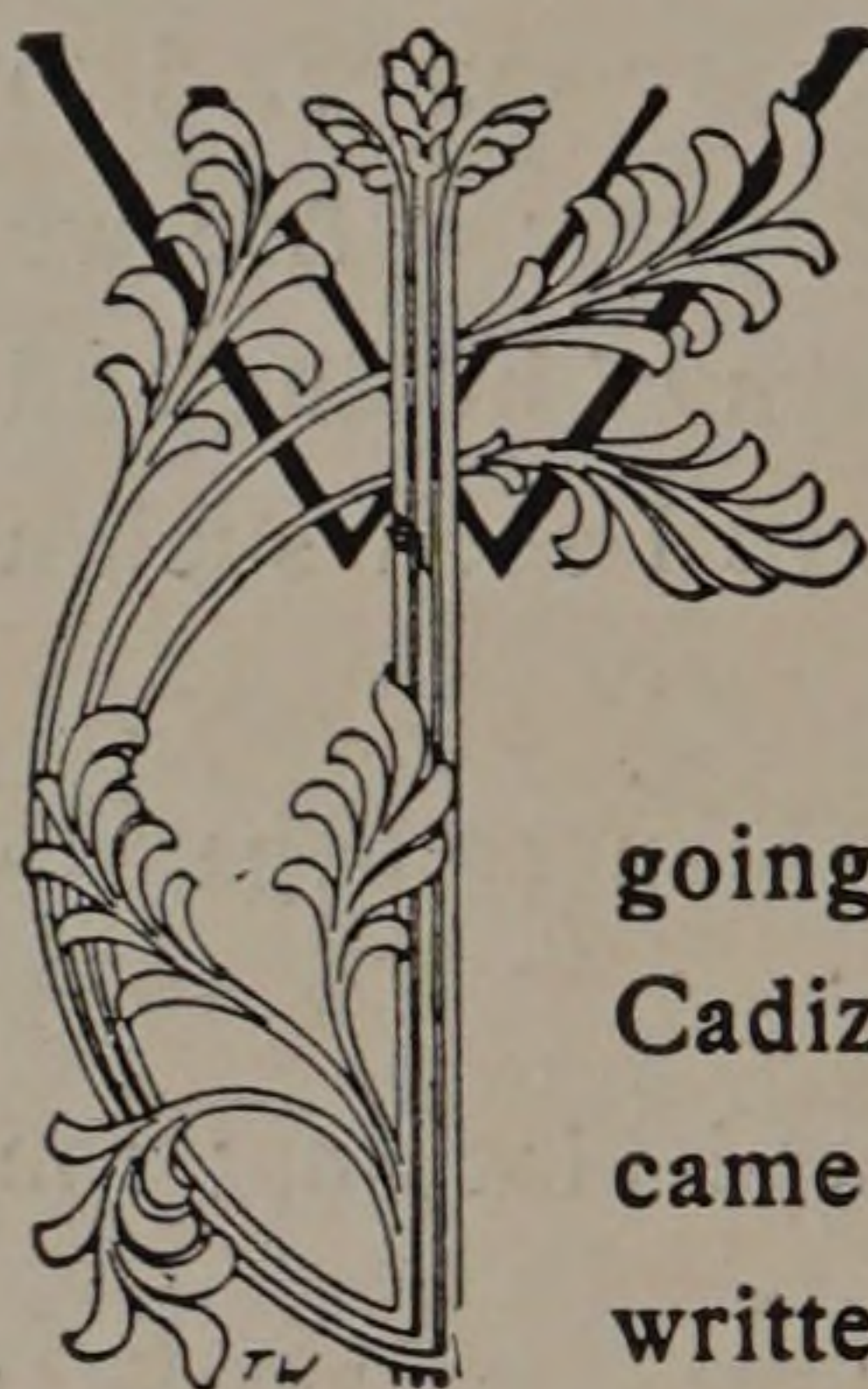


Our Trip from Guantanamo Bay and Reception at New York



WELL, believe me or not, but we were all disappointed when peace was declared. During the latter part of July the very air was charged with rumors that five ships were going to Spain with the Oregon as flagship. Nobody talked then on any other subject. We all wrote letters home telling that the Oregon was going across. There were vivid pictures in my mind of bombarding Cadiz and Barcelona. On the evening of the twenty-eighth definite word came to "sail tomorrow." Everyone was telling everyone else; joy was written on every face. The doubt and uncertainty were at last settled. We were going to Spain. Nobody thought of wanting to go home.

When we turned into our hammocks that night it was with gladness in our hearts. We got up the next morning only to find that word had come during the night to "wait." That surely meant that we would not go, and the disappointment was keen. In a day or two word came that peace was settled, and then we began to think of home.

After the excitement of the expectation of going to Spain was gone, and one monotonous day followed another, this thought grew to enormous proportions. Finally we could think and talk of nothing but New York and home, as a few days before we could think and talk of nothing but Spain.

On the morning of the fifteenth of August, to the unbounded joy of all, we started to haul up the anchor. Smoke was pouring from the smokestacks of the other ships. We were off at last. Homeward bound! What a feeling. Nobody who was not there can realize it. Everyone, in the excess of joy, seemed to think it incumbent upon him to hit everyone in reach. Something had to be done.

The Oregon had always been lying the nearest to the mouth of the harbor, and now began to move ahead, slowly, so as to let the other ships pass and take up their respective positions in the line. By the time the open sea was reached the ships were in position and going at full speed ahead. It was a grand sight. I took a last look at old Guantanamo Bay. A few ships were still there, and when I thought of the immense fleet that was there, the small boats and launches plying in all directions, and the scene of constant movement and activity, all this only heightened the loneliness of it now. How we took in deep breaths of the good sea air and thought of home.