

"AMETHYST" HOME IN TRIUMPH

Through the mists of a grey November morning, a little ship comes home from the Yangtze. Steaming slowly into Plymouth Sound is "Amethyst" - her 10,000 mile journey now at an end. And as she ties up at No. 6 wharf, Plymouth's welcome speaks for all Britain.

Proudly flying the White Ensign that she carried during her dash down the Yangtze, "Amethyst" still bears the scars of battle. It is a 101 days since her bid for freedom first made naval history. And only today - as the men who were wounded in the action lead the welcome to a gallant ship - can the nation repay the debt it owes to the men of "Amethyst." For by their bearing and fortitude, they provided a tonic for Britain and the free-thinking world. A message of cheer, when there was little to cheer about. As Lieutenant Commander Kerens - the "Amethyst's" commander - prepares to receive the official welcoming party, the nation's vote of thanks is translated into action. For as Lord Hall, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Admiral Lord Fraser step aboard the frigate, it is announced from Buckingham Palace that the King has approved the award of a special clasp to the men of "Amethyst," and others who took part in the battle of the Yangtze.

After the official welcome, it's the turn of the relatives of "Amethyst's" company; of the mothers and wives, some of whom have waited more than three years, for their men to come home. Their's was a young ship's company, united by comradeship in action. Of men like Leading Stoker Mechanic Omerod of Devonport. Of Telegraphist Jack French of Ashburton, whose exploits won him the D.S.M. They were led by a young Commander who has this to say: "On behalf of myself, my officers and my ship's company, I thank you indeed the West country for this magnificent reception. Of all the receptions along the line, this, I am sure, is the one reception everyone has been looking forward to."

As the men pour off the ship, "Amethyst" remains silent - with Simon, the cat, in sole possession. To him goes an extra issue of milk, while his masters march through the streets of Plymouth to a rearing home-ported welcome.

Cheering thousands crowd the city's centre as "Amethyst's" crew hear the home port's official welcome by Admiral Sir Robert Burnett - Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth: "This message is usually sent by signal so that all who are concerned may read. Today it comes to you in a more intimate manner, by word of mouth - "Amethyst well done - up the standard!"

Only now can the full story of "Amethyst's" exploits be revealed. If her crew had not succeeded in their bid for freedom, her captain would have blown up the ship. Happily they escaped, to enjoy the leave now so rightly theirs.