

GALLANT GENTLEMEN

By

E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

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BOOKS ON THE SEA
BY
E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

SAILING SHIPS AND THEIR STORY
SHIPS AND WAYS OF OTHER DAYS
FORE AND AFT: THE STORY OF THE FORE AND AFT RIG
THE STORY OF THE BRITISH NAVY
KING'S CUTTERS AND SMUGGLERS
STEAMSHIPS AND THEIR STORY
THE ROMANCE OF THE SHIP
THE ROMANCE OF PIRACY
THE OLD EAST INDIAMEN
Q-SHIPS AND THEIR STORY
THE ROMANCE OF SEA ROVERS
THE MERCANTILE MARINE
THE AUXILIARY PATROL
WHALERS AND WHALING
CHATS ON NAVAL PRINTS
THE SHIP UNDER SAIL
BATTLES BY SEA
SHIP MODELS
STEAMSHIP MODELS
SEAMEN ALL
WINDJAMMERS AND SHELLBACKS
THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA
CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH
OLD SHIP PRINTS
VENTURES AND VOYAGES
OLD SEA PAINTINGS
ON THE HIGH SEAS
ENGLISH SEAMEN AND THE COLONISATION OF
AMERICA
THE SEA RAIDERS
THE BIG BLOCKADE
GALLANT GENTLEMEN
THE KÖNIGSBERG ADVENTURE
CRUISES
DOWN CHANNEL IN THE *VIVETTE*
THROUGH HOLLAND IN THE *VIVETTE*
THE YACHTSMAN'S PILOT



AFTER THE FALKLANDS BATTLE

Showing the condition of H.M.S. *Kent*'s funnels after
hard steaming and hard fighting against the *Nürnberg*.

(See [Chapter V.](#))

GALLANT GENTLEMEN

By
E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

AUTHOR OF
"THE SEA-RAIDERS," "THE BIG BLOCKADE,"
"THE KÖNIGSBERG ADVENTURE," ETC.

WITH 31 ILLUSTRATIONS
AND 5 MAPS

FIFTH IMPRESSION



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PREFACE

For the sources of authentic history such items as private diaries, personal narratives, letters, and actual conversations with those who played the principal parts in their great events, are not merely of permanent value but the most reliable of all material.

The following pages of naval history, dealing with outstanding features of recent occurrence, may seem at times to be fiction and incredible: yet they are plain, uncoloured truth derived almost exclusively from the four sources just indicated. Here, indeed, are faithful records with the thrill left in. The background is the sea and modern ships, the chief characters are still happily alive, their memories keen and fresh. The result is that we have a personal illumination of unforgettable incidents, and no amount of self-effacement can prevent the revelation of a veritable galaxy of gallantry. These battles of brains and bravery, the narrow escapes from death, the exciting adventures, are remarkable for their test of grit, good judgment, coolness, courage; but they are so full of curious twists and surprises, that it would have been a pity not to have collected the stories before death has closed eloquent lips, or time's rude hand has destroyed priceless documents already yellowing with age.

Here, for example, we get at the reason why the *Goeben* and *Breslau* escaped; the cause of the Coronel disaster: the thrilling chase and sinking of *Nürnberg* at the Falklands are given by the principal eye-witness, whose mind directed the very operations. Similarly, the first-hand narrations of the smaller ships' duels, which occasionally read (as one distinguished Admiral expressed it), "like fairy tales," are more full of dash and action than any imaginative writer would dare to place in a novel. Had we waited a little longer, it might have been too late. There is so much humanity, so much that is a lesson for posterity, contained in these chapters that it seemed highly to be desired there should be even a reopening of closed doors for the admittance of new evidence and a flooding light.

I have to acknowledge the valuable and courteous assistance in regard to information and permission to use illustrations obtained from the following, to whom I would offer my fullest gratitude: Admiral F. W. Kennedy, C.B., Admiral John Luce, C.B., Vice-Admiral J. D. Allen, C.B., Captain F. E. K. Strong, D.S.O., R.N., Lieutenant-Commander G. C. Steele, V.C., R.N., Lieutenant-Commander F. Capponi, R.I.N. (the Italian Naval Attaché in London), the Imperial War Museum (particularly for many of the photographs), and Messrs. John I. Thornycroft & Co., Ltd.

The map of the Cameroon estuary is reproduced by kind permission from *The*

Great War in West Africa, by Brigadier-General E. Howard Gorges, C.B., C.B.E.,
D.S.O.

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GALLANT GENTLEMEN

CHAPTER I

WHY THE *GOEBEN* GOT AWAY

IN the world's history of the last few hundred years, few minutes have been so decisive as that period which passed away between 9.40 and 10.10 on the morning of August 4, 1914.

Now that we are able to look back on events from a sufficient distance, and to sift the facts which have poured in from all sides, it is permissible to draw the following conclusions. No one at the time could have been so far-sighted and prophetic as to have suspected that within this half-hour it was determined that Russia should become isolated from the influence of Western Europe and driven into Bolshevism; that Germany should be allowed to drag Turkey into the impending war, and thus be the direct cause not merely of the wasteful Dardanelles campaign, but of the costly hostilities in Mesopotamia. The spread of unrest and revolution through Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Spain, upsetting thrones on its way, extending even through Egypt to India, and not omitting to have some influence in Great Britain, France, and the United States, is all traceable to a sea event in the Mediterranean on that summer's morning.

But this is a volume of exciting and gripping gallantries, not an inquiry into political consequences: yet the influence of sea power on history is largely expressed by the great dramas when ships and men have been at death-grips. There have been, however, some occasions when the mind, rather than force, has been on the verge of winning a great victory, only to be thwarted at the last by some curious defect in the controlling system, some failure in the details of its working. Strategy, whether on the sea or land, in sport or commerce, is the art of seizing situations and bespeaking positions or opportunities, so that all is favourable for putting a plan into execution. Checkmating in itself is a mental delight, and the most brilliant victory is that when the enemy sees himself already beaten by his rival's superior forethought before ever a shot need be fired.

The memorable contest in which the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were the principal figures is pretty well unique because it lasted for eight days; the opposing parties were at no time very far distant from each other, yet never was there a serious engagement, and only the briefest action. Nevertheless this week, with its vacillations on both sides, definitely gave to the story of nations a permanent twist. It is illuminative to witness the shortcomings of politicians both British and German, the mistaken and narrow ideas of the higher command through lack of historical study,

the ignoring of the main objective whilst being hypnotised by the importance of an inferior consideration, the lack of cohesion in the various departments, an inability to view the problem as a whole rather than a series of parts; but, finally, a defective organisation in regard to communications.

How was it that two German ships, the battle-cruiser *Goeben* and the small cruiser *Breslau*, went west and east up and down the Mediterranean as they pleased, and finally got away safely up the Ægean into the Bosphorus in spite of a British Fleet comprising three battle-cruisers, four armoured cruisers, four light cruisers, as well as destroyers and submarines; and a French Fleet which included twelve battleships, six armoured cruisers, four older ships, destroyers and submarines? If this immense force in one sea could not sink two enemy units, there must obviously be something wrong in the policy, strategy, communication of orders, or some unsuspected item. It cannot wholly be a question of luck.

Now during the last decade this break-through has been considered from more than one angle, and a vast controversy has arisen. Recently, however, we have been given the official German version; but I have had placed at my disposal the story as seen from the bridge of the senior British battle-cruiser *Indomitable*, and thus, by supplementing these with other authentic accounts, it is possible at last to get through the fog into a clear understanding of what actually happened, and why. Even after monographs have been published, interesting and valuable data still keep accruing, which make the mosaic as nearly perfect as we can hand on to posterity.

Apart from the dramatic poet Emil Ludwig (who published *Die Fahrten der Goeben und der Breslau* in 1916), and one of *Goeben's* junior officers Leutnant zur Zee Kraus (who published *Die Fahrten der Goeben im Mittelmeer* in 1917), and one of *Breslau's* officers Ober-Leutnant zur Zee Donitz (who published *Die Fahrten der Breslau* in 1917), we have the narrative by Admiral Souchon himself, as seen from the *Goeben's* bridge, written in *Unsere Marine im Weltkrieg 1914-1918* under the general editorship of Admiral Eberhard von Mantey. Published in 1927, this personal account together with the official *Der Krieg Zur See* provides a very fair appreciation: but it is the viewpoint from the *Indomitable* which will especially and particularly aid us in witnessing the British aspect.

As to the rival Commanders-in-Chief, we have to think of Vice-Admiral Souchon as one who was every inch a naval officer but also something of a statesman: one who would have made an astute Minister for Foreign Affairs. His fine strong face, clear cut, clean shaven, with a firm mouth, cleft chin and distinctive nose, suggested the senior officer accustomed to handling big occasions with confidence. He had been in command of the Mediterranean Division for nearly a year, and at

Constantinople he was a considerable personality among the Turks. I have been told on the best authority that on one occasion when lying off that capital a few months before the war he gave a dinner party at which British naval officers were present; at the end of the evening he asked the Captain of a certain British cruiser to remain behind and then told the latter that he was in the Bosphorus with the hope of selling the *Goeben* to the Turks as she was drawing 1½ feet more than her designed draught, and consequently with a loss of 3½ knots in speed.

Whether this was dust in our eyes, or a statement of fact, it was not forgotten when hostilities were opening: but it is true that in June 1914, the *Goeben* was steaming very unsatisfactorily, that 14 knots was her best continuous speed and 20 knots possible for only short bursts. So she was retubed, after the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand at the end of June suggested complications, and here we perceive the far-sightedness in looking weeks ahead to a likely logical political conclusion. She could now do her 24 knots.^[1] On July 31 she had come down from Pola to Brindisi where she was joined by the *Breslau*, whence they proceeded to Messina, arriving there on August 2.

As recently as March 1914 Admiral Souchon and Admiral Hans (Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian Navy) had agreed that in the event of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy) being at war with the Dual Alliance of France and Russia, Admiral Souchon should at once attack the transport of the French Army from Algeria, and that Messina was to be the Triple Alliance Navies' rendezvous. This then explains why the Sicilian port from the very outset became of prominent value, even though Italy was for a time a doubtful ally but eventually came over to the opposite side, and Austria delayed showing her intentions for a few days. When on August 2 Admiral Souchon had coaled at Messina and received news that war with France was imminent, he waited not for orders but left that night at 17 knots, then steered west in order to arrive off the Algerian coast during the early morning and harass the French by shelling transports and transport gear. On the way he heard about 6 p.m. on August 3 that war had broken out with France, and twelve hours later the *Goeben* was off Philippeville bombarding the harbour works, whilst the *Breslau* had shelled Bona harbour works, and did certainly delay the transports for three days from leaving Algeria for southern France. Thus, by reasonable anticipation, Souchon had wasted no time in dealing a notable blow.

Now at 2.35 a.m., August 4, that is to say before reaching the Algerian coast, Souchon received a wireless message from Nauen, Germany, that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were to proceed immediately to Turkey, a Turco-German Alliance having just been concluded. That meant steaming 1500 miles eastward, but *Goeben* still

had boiler defects and needed more coal, so Souchon decided to call first at Messina again. We will therefore leave her for an interval steaming from the north African coast towards Sicily.

At Malta Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne, Bt., G.C.V.O., K.C.B., was in command of the British naval forces, an officer who had been a great personal friend of Queen Alexandra, an admiral who (like the name of his flagship *Inflexible*^[2]) was rigid in character, most firm in his decisions. This battle-cruiser, like her sisters *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable*, was of 17,250 tons, armed with eight 12-inch and sixteen 4-inch guns, as compared with the *Goeben's* 22,600 tons, ten 11-inch, twelve 6-inch guns and nominal 29 knots. The German thus had an individual superiority to either of these ships in size, speed, range, and weight of shell. Only a *Lion* or *Queen Mary* would have been her match.

On July 24 the *Indomitable* went into Malta for a much needed annual refit that was now four months overdue. She had not been in dockyard hands since March 1913. But before this overhaul had barely begun, the political horizon looked ugly, bunkers had to be refilled, magazines replenished, and machinery brought back from the dockyard workshops. On Sunday morning, August 2, Admiral Milne sent for Captain F. W. Kennedy, the *Indomitable's* commanding officer; at 2 p.m. he was ordered to raise steam for full speed, recall everybody to the ship; and at 9 p.m. she left Malta with *Indefatigable* temporarily under the orders of Rear-Admiral Troubridge, who had with him the three armoured cruisers *Defence*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Warrior*, and the light cruiser *Gloucester*, preceded by two divisions of destroyers. At 3.15 on the afternoon of August 3 the *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* were detached in order to search for Souchon between Cape Bon (Tunis) and Cape Spartivento (South Sardinia); for, whilst we were not at war, the enemy was carefully to be shadowed.

The question suggested itself: how would it be possible for ships of several knots inferior speed to shadow the *Goeben*,^[3] and was there any truth in the yarn about her drawing 1½ feet in excess and therefore being unable to do her 29 knots? Only time could answer those questions. But it was known that she had been at Brindisi on August 1, yet at 7 a.m. on August 3 the light cruiser *Chatham*, which had been sent to investigate the Messina Straits, reported that the enemy was not there. Then whither had they gone?

It may be well here to mention that the dominating official British idea responsible for the subsequent strategy was based on the firm belief that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* would operate not in the far eastern Mediterranean, but would either attack the French Transport line, Algiers-Marseilles, some 860 miles in length, and

escape through the Gibraltar Straits; or, possibly, run back up the Adriatic to unite with the Austrians. It is to be noted that our authorities did not contemplate Admiral Souchon making Constantinople his genuine objective. The British Admiralty's primary concern was the safe transit of the French Algerian Army Corps to Marseilles, and on July 30 Admiral Milne was ordered that "your first task should be to aid the French" in this.

But the weakness here lay, paradoxically, in rigidity. These orders were several days pre-war, the political situation was still fluctuating, the intentions of Italy and of Austria were still unknown, and the French Commander-in-Chief, Admiral de Lapeyrère, was altering the transport plan, postponing departures, and organising convoys. Moreover he did not (as we shall presently note) require British aid, but even offered to help us. Thus the three battle-cruisers of Admiral Milne were kept west of Sicily in accordance with the hide-bound plan, and this left an insufficiently barred gate through which Admiral Souchon would be free to break on his way to Constantinople. But the fault was not exclusively that the strategy remained inelastic and never kept up to date: the communication system between the French and British Admirals was seriously deficient. It was impracticable for the one to know what the other was doing as the situation changed. It was regrettable that on August 3, the eve of war, the day when the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were on their westward course to bombard Algeria, Admiral Milne was unable by wireless to get in touch with the French Admiral, and had to send a letter by the light cruiser *Dublin* which should have been employed on a more important duty.

In a highly disciplined organisation such as the Royal Navy, where a Commander-in-Chief of unswerving habit imparts Admiralty orders that have not kept pace with the developments; and the Foreign Office intelligence system has been unable to keep the Admiralty informed that a secret treaty had been signed on August 2 between Turkey and Germany; the whole value of obedience becomes jeopardised, and the perfect machine may revolve in the wrong direction. Whatever individual captains might infer privately from their own observations and being on the spot, it was useless and painful to see the whole weight of authority inclined west instead of east. But if only the secret treaty had been known in time, it would surely have made crystal clear the reason why Admiral Souchon was on August 4 steering *east*. And there was ample time to make such a concentration in the *Ægean* that he could never have reached the Dardanelles. It seems curious, too, that no provision had been made on the assumption that the enemy might go through the Suez Canal to assist their sisters in the East, or to go raiding as *Emden* and the East Asiatic squadron operated. Was it to be expected Souchon would tarry in the western

Mediterranean, longer than a spectacular act of frightfulness, when the numerical strength of Britain and France was so preponderating? It is true that, unless Admiral Troubridge's armoured cruisers could have chosen the range, *Goeben* could have knocked them out one after the other like ninepins; yet our light cruisers were all more powerful than, though not so fast as, *Breslau*. And, when the Admiralty on the afternoon of July 29 flashed out the "Warning Telegram," would it not have been well to have stationed any vessel with wireless off Messina and Cape Matapan to keep the Commander-in-Chief, Malta, informed? But, again, our strategy was defensive rather than to seek out the enemy and sink him wherever he might be found.

Just before 9 p.m. on the night of August 3 the *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* were raising steam for 22 knots, showing no lights, bound for Gibraltar Straits to prevent *Goeben* leaving the Mediterranean for the Atlantic; and so continued till after breakfast the next morning, ninety extra hands being sent below to assist the stokers. But at 9 a.m. came an extraordinary piece of information that the Germans early this morning had bombarded Dover. It seemed incredible. The respective Captains of *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* suspected that "Dover" should read "Bona," and twenty minutes later it was learnt that this supposition was correct.

So here was news indeed, and that whilst the two British battle-cruisers were still on their westerly course down the Mediterranean, the enemy a few hours ago were only a hundred miles ahead! It was reckoned that if Souchon was really bound for the Atlantic he would either have to ease down, or else coal at sea soon after reaching the longitude of Gibraltar. The immediate question aboard *Indomitable* was, therefore, whether to continue at 22 knots, or push on to Gibraltar Straits at full speed, the visibility at this time being about nine miles.

But then happened one of those great dramatic surprises; and the decisive minutes mentioned at the beginning of this chapter commenced.

"In a very few moments," Captain (now Admiral) F. W. Kennedy, C.B., has been good enough to write, "the question of the Germans' whereabouts was settled: for at 9.35 a.m. G.M.T., the *Breslau* appeared 2 points on our starboard bow. We were at the moment steering N.84½W., and she appeared to be steering N.E. by E. at a very high rate, having a large bow wave. One hardly had time to order 'Look out for *Goeben*,' when she was seen on our port bow, steering a bit more to her starboard; then *Breslau* probably about E. by N., also going fast. Almost as soon as she saw us, she altered course as if to cross ahead of us to the *Breslau*, but I altered to starboard, whereupon she apparently resumed her original course. We had sounded off 'Action Stations' directly *Breslau* was sighted, and I ordered sundry officers to go to their stations, the Commander and Lieutenant (N) amongst them. I

also ordered that the guns should be kept trained to their securing positions; and, carefully, the *Goeben* was watched. Had she an Admiral's flag? Were her guns trained on us? She at first was somewhere about 17,000 or 19,000 yards off. No sign of the Admiral's flag, so no salute had to be fired, and she kept her guns fore and aft. We passed each other on about opposite courses, *Breslau* on our starboard side and *Goeben* to port of us. Speed of the Germans somewhere about 20 knots."

Now just at this stage there arose quite a delicate point. It must be recollected that Britain and Germany were not yet at war with each other; that the Cabinet meeting in London had not yet given its fateful verdict; that not till after two this afternoon did the Admiralty inform all ships the ultimatum to Germany would expire at midnight, and no hostile act was to be committed before that time. Nevertheless both parties knew that in a very few hours the two pairs of ships would be at enmity. "Be prepared for hostile actions on the part of English forces," was the wireless message which the German Admiralty had sent twenty-eight hours previously. Under these circumstances Admiral Souchon was ready to open fire when the ships passed each other; but, in order that nothing should be visible externally, the guns were left in their securing positions.

"Directly we had sighted the *Goeben*," says Captain Kennedy, "the question 'Has she an Admiral's flag flying or not?' was thoroughly investigated from the bridge; for had there been one, I of course had to salute it, by Regulations and Customs of the Sea. I had well considered the question, and I believed that the salute was very likely to be the cause of the German replying by shot and shell: for this I was fully prepared. But there was no such luck: for there was not a flag up."

Now, precisely the same thought was passing through Admiral Souchon's brain, who took the view that in any case the British would not be punctilious at such a moment. Nevertheless, it has been suggested in Germany that the *Indomitable* should have paid the customary respect to a flagship, and when I called Admiral Kennedy's attention to this interesting episode, he gave a definite answer which should surely settle the matter for all time. "Perhaps," he remarked, "you will believe me when I say that every sort of telescope, binoculars, as well as range-finders, etc., were on the *Goeben*—but not a sign of a flag was seen by anyone on board *Indomitable* or *Indefatigable*."

Now supposing Captain Kennedy had anticipated orders and opened fire? The ships passed each other (according to the German official history) at about 9850 yards. If the *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* were ever to have their chance, it was then and then only. During a few moments he had the opportunity, though not the authority, to send Admiral Souchon's battle-cruiser if not to the bottom at least to

incapacity. Looking back on the long chapters of events—the Dardanelles disasters, the Russian collapse, the thousands of lives and millions of pounds destined to be lost—it would have been better for the world that in this moment all four ships should have foundered as gallant victims. If ever there was a temptation, which would afterwards be rightly acclaimed as justly yielded to, it was at this mighty minute.

The position where the enemy had been sighted was Lat. 37.44 N., Long. 7.56 E.; or about fifty miles north and slightly east of Bona; for, after having bombarded the coast, Admiral Souchon had steered west (intentionally to deceive) till out of sight, and then turned north-east. It may be wondered that, since the width of the Mediterranean between the southern extremity of Sardinia and the northern coast of Africa is about a hundred miles, the rival forces did not miss each other; but the Captain of *Indomitable*, whilst obeying his Admiral's orders, was employing his private judgment, and that judgment was still animated by the belief (pondered over for days) that the *Goeben's* ultimate goal was not the western Mediterranean.^[4]

Captain Kennedy at once wirelessly information of the meeting to Admiral Milne, then proceeded to shadow her at full speed; at 10 a.m. was turning round to port to get in astern of *Goeben* and *Breslau* who were opening out to the north; and the ding-dong chase had begun, but by 11.30 a.m. the *Breslau* was already out of sight from *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable*, though the *Goeben* was being held. The hazy weather, however, got worse and would occasionally obliterate the enemy. "The Germans, at times, from now on altered their speed very considerably," Captain Kennedy noted. "I had to ease down to 8 knots on one occasion to keep my distance." This at the time was rather puzzling. Why should a shadowed ship slow down? We now know from German sources that *Goeben's* boilers were still giving her considerable trouble, yet Souchon was doing his best to maintain the belief that she was the fastest ship in the Mediterranean. Speed was being increased at a cost of boiler tubes and men. As in the *Indomitable*, so in the *Goeben*, seamen ratings had to be employed trimming coal. It was a severe strain in the *Goeben*; one man next morning was found dead in a bunker, tubes kept bursting, the speed would suddenly drop. Moreover, like the *Indomitable*, the *Goeben* badly needed a scrub; it was ten months since the latter's bottom was cleaned.

Thus, whilst there were spurts when the German flagship's engines were making revolutions for 24 knots, she was so foul that the average speed over the ground from 8 a.m. till noon was only 17 knots, but for the next eight hours it was 22.5 knots. The *Indomitable*, with her foul bottom and unfinished refit, was not able to exceed this. Ample distance had to be kept from the enemy, for even 6500 yards

meant that the British were well within German torpedo range. Suspicion was roused when *Breslau* at 1.20 p.m. closed her Admiral, and the two ships began zigzagging. Captain Kennedy, thinking the enemy might be dropping mines, accordingly kept his ships clear of the Germans' wake.

Now about 2.30 p.m. the light cruiser *Dublin* was sighted. After her visit to Bizerta, she had been ordered to proceed immediately at full speed in support of Captain Kennedy, and the *Dublin* with her additional knots was valuable in being able to get ahead. In fact at 6 p.m. she had an opportunity of engaging the *Breslau*, which had now parted company from the *Goeben*, having been detached by Admiral Souchon with instructions to hurry into Messina and there make arrangements for 1500 tons of coal to be ready for the *Goeben*. The position at this time was that the *Indomitable* was steaming as fast as she could, doing 22 knots, steering N.85 E., *Indefatigable* about a mile away on her port beam, the *Dublin* about six or eight miles away fine on the *Indomitable's* starboard bow, whilst the German smoke could be seen in the far distance ahead. By 7 p.m., the *Goeben* with at least half a knot's superiority over *Indomitable*, was just becoming to the latter invisible; so the *Dublin* had the duty of continuing to shadow, but at 9 p.m. the weather thickened and she lost contact with the enemy.

There now followed a period of anxiety for all Captains, friend or foe. What exactly was Italy going to do? Which side of the war would she enter? As the Germans approached Sicilian waters and tried to communicate by wireless, our battle-cruisers of course were doing their best to jamb messages to the shore stations. When the Germans off the north end of Messina Straits sighted Italian torpedo-boats ahead, there were "some minutes of extreme anxiety" on the part of our late enemies, says the German official history. Similarly, says Captain Kennedy, "I did not want to get near any Italian coast, as I still believed it possible the Italians would join in with Germany, and if I continued on too near Italian torpedo-boat destroyer stations—some were at Palermo and some at sundry other places—the *Goeben* might give my position away to them, and they be able to attack us easily."



THE DAY OF DECISION

This shows the track of the British battle-cruiser *Indomitable* from 8.5 a.m. of August 4, 1914, to 11.40 a.m. of the following day. At 9.40 a.m. of August 4 she sighted the *Goeben* in Lat. 37.44 N., Long. 7.56 E., and at 10 a.m. was turning to port in pursuit of the enemy. At 6.50 p.m. the *Indomitable* was ordered to steam west. Next day, just before noon, she rejoined Sir Berkeley Milne off Pantellaria. The French Transport line will be seen well to the westward.

So he decided to patrol north and south that night clear of Italian waters and then sweep east at daylight along the north Sicilian coast, “for I strongly suspected that they would communicate with Vittoria^[5] by wireless, and possibly coal off the coast of Sicily.” But just before 7 p.m., to his great surprise and disappointment, Captain Kennedy was ordered to steam *west* with *Indefatigable* at slow speed: so the two battle-cruisers now turned their backs on the enemy and jogged along at 7 knots. Admiral Milne was still impressed with the belief that the *Goeben* might turn westward, and the *Dublin* had informed Sir Berkeley that a German collier was waiting at Palma in Majorca, this news having been obtained on visiting the French Admiral at Bizerta. The British Commander-in-Chief was therefore still more inclined to think the enemy was not going to tarry off Sicily. Nevertheless, it was a curious situation that the chasers, only five hours before the ultimatum should take effect, were now going away from the chased. Next morning, the first actual morning of war, the battle-cruisers were ordered to concentrate with all despatch on Admiral Milne in the *Inflexible*, and this rejoining was effected before midday (August 5) off the island of Pantellaria.

Let us now go back to see Messina, in whose roadstead the *Breslau* let go

anchor at five on the morning of this August 5, and just before eight o'clock was followed in by the *Goeben* with five Italian torpedo-boats ahead and astern. The Germans were badly in need of coal after all this hard steaming west and east, yet here was a neutral port and the period of hospitality limited. In order to appreciate the Teutonic thoroughness, we shall not forget that as early as July 10 the *Goeben* had begun preparing for war in feverish haste at Pola, the Kaiser having given his Navy and Army a month's start of his enemies. On July 29 she had gone up to Trieste to coal, but did not complete: she was afraid lest war would burst on her whilst still well in the Adriatic, and that was why she steamed south to Brindisi, where Admiral Souchon came aboard.

On July 31 the officers were given special instruction in Prize Law, identity disks were served out, and preparations made for jettisoning all superfluous woodwork. When on August 2 the ships coaled at Messina, it was in spite of Italian protestations; but the German Ambassador in Rome had overcome the problem, and here three days later the same two ships, after bombarding French colonial ports, were back once more with the same greed for coal. Now the lie has been spread in Germany that this coal on August 5 was obtained from a British collier named *Wilster* through the influence of whiskey and bribery. It may therefore be well to state the true facts.

The S.S. *Wilster*, whose master was P. A. Eggers of Sunderland, left Penarth some days before the war bound with a cargo of Welsh coal consigned to the Hugo Stinnes Coal Company at Messina. The collier arrived off the entrance at sunset on August 4 and was met by a tug who ordered Captain Eggers to anchor in the roadstead, and come ashore next morning for instructions. Next day at 8 a.m. he was in his boat coming off when he saw the *Goeben* arrive and anchor near his ship, and it was only now Captain Eggers learned that war had broken out. He duly received from the consignees the order to bring his ship into harbour and moor alongside a coal hulk.

When he stepped out of his boat and was again aboard his ship, the Chief Officer informed him that a German naval officer during Captain Eggers' absence had called and left a message instructing Eggers to bring the *Wilster* alongside one of the two German cruisers. This the British skipper refused to do, and brought his ship into harbour. He was still busy mooring, when a small boat arrived alongside, and a young German naval officer leapt aboard, mounted the bridge, requested Eggers to unmoor again, and take the *Wilster* alongside a German cruiser. According to a letter which Captain Eggers contributed to the press in February 1920, the young visitor attempted to push some money into the master mariner's hand saying, "That is

for you, Captain.” But the bribe was indignantly thrust aside, the young man was informed that Captain Eggers had nothing to do with the cruisers, and that the cargo was consigned to the Hugo Stinnes Coal Company.

Eggers then went ashore and called at the office, where he found the manager together with several senior German naval officers. The manager requested the *Wilster*’s master to go into the roadstead and coal the cruisers, but Eggers declined. The latter next interviewed the British Consul, who stated that England and Germany had been at war since midnight, and no coal was to reach the *Goeben* and *Breslau*. “On return to the coal office,” says Captain Eggers, “the German officers were still there, and I opened my mind and told them straight what I thought of their action.” The result was that our enemies did not get this British coal.

But we know that 1580 tons were put aboard the *Goeben* by 11.30 a.m. next day (August 6) and that just after midnight of August 5-6 the *Breslau* took in 495 tons. Whence were these supplies obtained? Eggers writes as follows:

“The coals procured at Messina by these ships came from the German East Africa liner *General*, which ship had arrived at Messina a few days previous; she was outward bound, and had worked night and day discharging her general cargo to get at coals which were stowed in the bottom of her holds, and I understood she had several thousand tons of coal on board; they also commandeered the bunker coals of one of the North German Lloyd boats, which had taken refuge in Messina.”

According to the German official history, the *Goeben* received her coal from the *General*, the Hansa liner *Kettenturm*, and the Hamburg-Amerika liner *Umbria*, as well as from lighters belonging to the Hugo Stinnes Coal Company’s depot; the *Breslau* coaled from the *Umbria*, the Hamburg-Amerika liner *Barcelona*, as well as the Hugo Stinnes lighters. But the statement is added that some of the Stinnes coal had first to be discharged into lighters from the “English steamer *Wilster*, and then to be brought alongside”; that in spite of the British Consul’s efforts, the Stinnes agent succeeded in placing the coal at the disposal of Admiral Souchon.

Of course the British Consul telegraphed news of the Germans’ arrival at Messina, but the *Dublin* had been sent back to Malta to coal, and thence was despatched with two destroyers to join Rear-Admiral Troubridge at the approaches to the Adriatic. According to Admiral Milne’s own monograph,^[6] Sir Berkeley on August 4 received the report that the *General* had landed her passengers at Messina and was remaining. On the 5th he knew that the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were within the Messina Straits. Now the distance from Malta to the southern exit of these Straits is less than 150 miles. Lying at Malta were three small British submarines, viz. B 9, B 10, and B 11. What a glorious opportunity these might have seized, if they

had been towed till nearly up to six miles from the Italian coastline, and there left to await Admiral Souchon's emergence! It is true that the light cruiser *Gloucester* was watching this very spot, yet the *Goeben* was capable of blowing her out of the water; the ratio being ten 11-inch and twelve 6-inch guns as opposed to two 6-inch and ten 4-inch. Moreover the *Breslau* with her twelve 4.1-inch guns intensified the formidability. But torpedoes in the narrow waters off this defile would have had almost ideal conditions.^[7]

It is established that the French were far from nervous lest the enemy should come west, for late on August 6 the former offered to lend Admiral Milne four cruisers. On this date the British Commander-in-Chief was cruising off the north-west side of Sicily with the *Inflexible*, *Indefatigable* and *Weymouth*, still expecting the enemy would come west and not east. And then, soon after 5 p.m. of this August 6, came that memorable wireless signal from the *Gloucester* that *Goeben* was coming out of the Straits followed by *Breslau* a mile astern and steering east. The fact that Admiral Milne did not now go in support of *Gloucester*, but went back to Malta for 900 tons of coal—her maximum stowage room being 2500 tons—has been much criticised. It is admittedly easy enough to be wise after the event, but, having made the error of assuming the enemy might come west by northern Messina entrance instead of east by the southern exit, there would have been a chance to make up for this by remaining at sea and at least injuring the *Goeben* before she reached the Dardanelles, and possibly of sinking the *Breslau*.

The *Inflexible* was back at Malta by noon of the 7th, and did not leave till half an hour after the following midnight, when the *Indomitable*, *Indefatigable* and *Weymouth* went with her, this time at last eastward bound. Thus over thirty hours had passed before any force at all commensurate with *Goeben's* warlike strength was sent in pursuit of Admiral Souchon. And of course it was too late, though (as fate fashioned the Dardanelles affair) by the narrowest margin.

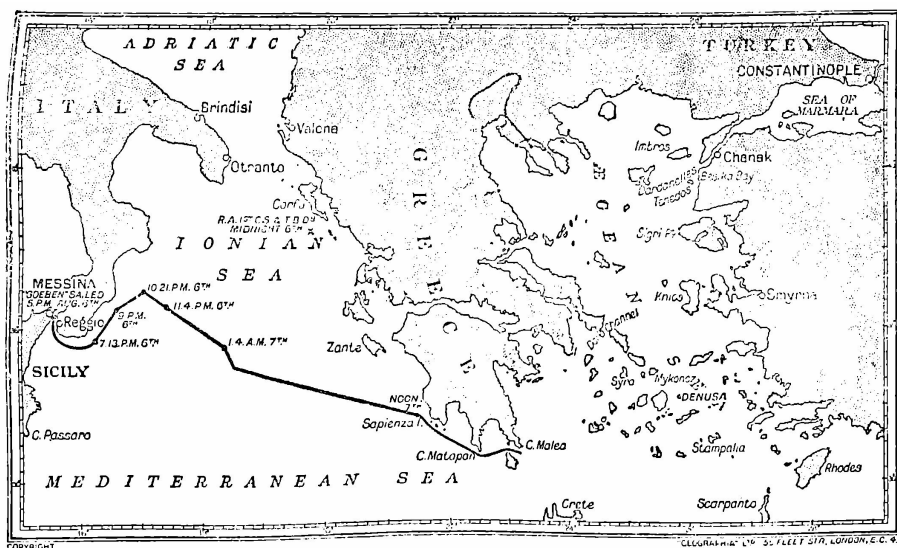
At Messina the Germans had a tough time coaling intensively amid the windless heat of a Sicilian summer's day. Souchon, too, had his troubles and anxieties, so that it must have been a relief when he once more put to sea. The Italians were strictly neutral, and nothing but sheer strength of personality on the part of the German naval officers got over the difficulties in respect of coaling and provisions. Souchon appealed to the Austrian Admiral Hans to come down from Pola and escort him, but that flag-officer was not prepared to help: nor was Austria yet in the war.

Another anxiety was that no sooner had the German Admiral issued his sailing orders for the break-through to the Dardanelles than a telegram from the German Admiralty came announcing that for political reasons it was at the present impossible

to arrive off Constantinople. So, just as the ancient seamen used to dread the Scylla and Charybdis of Messina's Straits, so this modern seaman found himself threatened in a twofold manner: if he remained in Messina he would become interned, and if he went outside his enemies were awaiting him.

But he knew the Turks and their politics better than they knew themselves; he knew that the Turks would be influenced and mesmerised into *practical* alliance if they saw the big *Goeben* arrive. Souchon was very much a *persona grata* at Constantinople, and we must regard him as a gallant gentleman for his independent decision, in spite of everything, to reach the Dardanelles—British cruisers and Turkish politics notwithstanding. At present he was in a most lonely and perilous situation, but with unwavering moral pluck, and in spite of his defective boilers, he resolved to make the original attempt.

The *Goeben* left Messina at 5 p.m. on August 6, speed 17 knots, followed twenty minutes later by the *Breslau*. The *General* (as Captain Eggers witnessed) had painted out her name, and her funnel black. She departed at 7 p.m., having been ordered to make for the island of Santorin, which lies at the southern end of the *Ægean* some seventy miles north of Crete. The *Goeben* had barely got under way before she was sighted by the *Gloucester* (Captain W. A. Howard Kelly) an hour later. In accord with Admiral Souchon's original intention, the *Goeben* made a feint to suggest that he was bound up the Adriatic, but by 10.30 p.m. she had reached her farthest north and thence in a south-easterly direction steamed towards Cape Matapan, the southern extremity of Greece, which for thousands of years had seen warships of all sorts row, sail, or steam, past her headland.



THE GREAT ESCAPE

This indicates the track of the *Goeben* from the time she left Messina on August 6 till she passed Cape Malea next day. The Island of Denusa, where the *Goeben* and *Breslau* coaled, will be seen to N.E. of Cape Malea. The position of Rear-Admiral Troubridge's squadron is shown by a × below Corfu.

The night of August 6-7 was calm, clear and moonlit. Although these three British and German cruisers were to be in sight of each other most of the way to Cape Matapan, and the Germans did their best to shake off *Gloucester's* unwelcome company, yet it led to no serious engagement. But why? The answer is that—as regards the Germans—(1) the 6-inch guns of *Gloucester* were regarded as superior armament to that of *Breslau*; (2) Admiral Souchon's main objective was not to destroy, but to hurry towards the Dardanelles where he could do far more harm to the Allies' cause by influencing Turkey, so driving a wedge between Russia and the Franco-British forces. On the other hand the *Gloucester* performed the true office of a light cruiser, which is to be the eyes and ears, the intelligence-gatherer, for the main fleet. Captain Kelly withheld his fire, "rightly considering it" (as Admiral Milne has written) "to be his first duty to follow the *Goeben*."

Rear-Admiral Troubridge, with his four armoured cruisers *Defence*, *Warrior*, *Duke of Edinburgh*, *Black Prince*, and destroyers was on the east side of the Otranto Straits ready in case the enemy had come up the Adriatic; but, having learned they had gone south-east, came down to intercept them, though later abandoned this intention, feeling that his primary duty was to remain on his allotted station. About 1 a.m. the light cruiser *Dublin*, with two destroyers bound from Malta to join Admiral Troubridge, sighted the *Breslau*, but turned away as she was seeking

Goeben whom she hoped to torpedo. She failed to find the German battle-cruiser, so continued on her course to join Admiral Troubridge. Thus to *Gloucester* was left the solitary task of shadowing the enemy through the night.

Indeed, the one bright spot of this first week's Mediterranean campaign from our side was the gallant skill with which Captain Howard Kelly (whose brother happened to be the Captain in *Dublin*) stuck to the enemy and harassed him by making one or the other unit keep turning back to shoo the *Gloucester* away. Solely with these tactics in mind did the British light cruiser at 1.35 p.m. (August 7) open fire on the *Breslau* at about 12,000 to 14,000 yards. This had the desired effect of causing the *Goeben* to turn back and open fire. It is admitted that the firing on both sides was good, but it was all over in fifteen minutes.

The chase then continued as before during three more hours, by which time Cape Matapan had been reached, but the *Gloucester* getting short of coal turned back in accordance with Admiral Milne's orders and at 4.40 p.m. laid a course to join Admiral Troubridge. We now know that it was Souchon's intention to reach the mountainous, wooded island of Cerigo (to the east of Cape Matapan) first, remain at the back of it hidden, let the *Breslau* lure the *Gloucester* on in action, and then *Goeben* would have come forth with a heavy fist.

Captain (now Admiral) Kelly received high commendation from the Admiralty, and decorations followed. His pertinacity won the admiration of the Germans and is still recognised universally as a model achievement in cruiser duties. Not till 4 a.m. of August 10 did Admiral Milne's squadron round Cape Malea, which is just beyond Cerigo. The last phase of the great German escape therefore begins in the southern Ægean, and again it is full of difficulties for both contestants. So far the German Admiral had succeeded perfectly: by that good luck which so frequently accompanies courageous determination he had for the second time passed through the British net. But now his will, somehow or other, must compel the Turks to admit him through the Dardanelles into the Bosphorus, and he must hide until that insistence could metaphorically open the door. Meanwhile, after rapid and extravagant steaming from Messina, he needed coal.

There are two features of German overseas operations (as have been emphasised in a previous study^[8]) which stand out in a remarkable manner. One is the excellent pre-war arrangement by which the Germany Navy abroad was nearly always able to find colliers waiting at the right time and place; the other is the manner by which they utilised to the full every geographical facility, and especially with regard to lonely islands. The S.S. *General* we have seen suddenly to change herself from passenger liner to auxiliary, and to be found rich with hidden coal at a critical

date. Souchon kept in wireless touch and was able to send her on up the Ægean to Smyrna, where she arrived on August 9 without molestation, and was able thence to send the Admiral's telegram by land-wire through to Constantinople. This was cleverly worded, and its purport was to obtain permission to pass through to the Bosphorus on the grounds that Russia must be attacked in the Black Sea. Knowing the hatred of Turkey for the Russians, this was an astute effort.

Souchon had concealed himself at the secluded Ægean island of Denusa,^[9] so that he was now conveniently linked up with his objective via the *General*. To Denusa was directed a German collier from the Piræus disguised as a Greek coaster, and at the very time on the early morning of August 10 when Admiral Milne's squadron was rounding Cape Malea, both the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were being coaled, but about two hours later resumed their voyage to the Dardanelles. For a telegram had come from Constantinople through the *General* giving the requisite Turkish permission. That evening the two German warships were inside the Dardanelles and being piloted by a Turkish torpedo-boat. Next morning the *General* arrived also. Admiral Souchon has referred to the period between his arrival in the Dardanelles and the end of October, when hostilities against Turkey began, as the most difficult in all the war from his personal standpoint. It was one thing to have had the secret treaty of August 2 signed: it needed the arrival of *Goeben*, *Breslau*, and Souchon's personality to make Turkey positively hostile to the Allies and thus to render the Dardanelles impassable. Germany was not less surprised than we that the two cruisers reached Constantinople: indeed the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, could imagine only two alternatives. Either Great Britain intentionally withheld her hand, so as to prevent any decision which might prolong the war; or else there had been "a gigantic mistake of the British Admiralty."

But, none the less, Admiral Souchon was in real peril all the while he was in the Ægean. At the time when Admiral Milne rounded Cape Malea, the Germans were only a matter of seven hours' steaming to the north-eastward. To have taken them by surprise would have been impossible by day in any case: for the enemy had at once erected a signal station on the hill (as another of Germany's commanding officers once did on Easter Island in the Pacific) to give due warning. Both the *Goeben* and *Breslau* had steam ready to proceed at half an hour's notice. But, as we have seen, the departure from Denusa practically coincided with the entry of Admiral Milne into the Ægean off Cape Malea.

Having begun searching that many-island sea, a most difficult area for finding a lurking enemy, the *Inflexible* at 9.30 a.m., August 10 (relates the British Admiral), did intercept "wireless signals of the note and code used by the *Goeben* . . . but the

direction could not be ascertained,” and early next morning the *General's* wireless also was heard. Only at 10.30 a.m. (August 11), was the news to reach the *Inflexible* that quite definitely the two cruisers had slipped into the Dardanelles, and at 3 p.m. it was learned that the *General* was already at Constantinople.

The whole of this eight-day episode will ever be a subject for interesting discussion, and, whilst it accentuates the need for clarity, perfect co-operation, vision, adaptability, and aggressiveness rather than the attitude of waiting on the defensive; yet conversely there are permanent lessons to be remembered from the brave determination of both Captain Howard Kelly and Admiral Souchon, in their respective situations, that needed bold initiative yet prudent decision.

In the accompanying photograph *Indomitable* is shown as she appeared in November 1914, with her topmasts still up, and the hull painted in a speckled manner for the deception of enemy submarines; for this was still the time when every commanding officer used his own private ingenuity, and fake bow-waves would even be seen. There were many months to follow before standard dazzle designs were invented. When before the end of 1914 this fine battle-cruiser was required for North Sea work and recalled from the Mediterranean, her sisters of the Grand Fleet found difficulty in recognising her. “I had her painted that fashion,” Admiral Kennedy tells me, “before we came home from Malta. I had meant to have the design bolder, but let it go, so to speak.”

And so in December she reached the North Sea.

“We were wirelessed about the 23rd to rendezvous somewhere E.N.E. of the Forth—about midway between Scotland and Norway. Drove through a gale up the west coast of Scotland, through Pentland Firth, and down into the North Sea. About 1.30 a.m. on Christmas Day we met a British destroyer flotilla coming north. They were 60 miles out of their reckoning! Sighted the *Lion* (Admiral Beatty's flagship of the battle-cruiser squadron) next day. Typical North Sea weather—drifting haze and mist. Made our private signals. Ordered signalmen to tell any other ships seen with her. *Lion* knew we were to meet her, but the others did not. So (the battle-cruiser) *New Zealand*, seeing a funny-coloured ship with topmasts still up (I kept them up as long as possible to get the best wireless range, but struck them before going under Forth Bridge) was amazed. ‘There's an enemy—open fire on her at once!’ ordered the *New Zealand's* captain.

“Luckily her Commander overheard the Captain and saw us. ‘For Heaven's sake, sir, don't,’ he begged. ‘That's one of the *Invincible* class.’ So we were saved by pure luck. We kept to our speckled-hen colour for a good few months till it was suggested that we should all be the same colour. Next time we went to sea, Admiral

Beatty had a careful and critical inspection of us in North Sea light, to judge which was the best colour—ours or the usual grey. At times, as the various ships passed in and out of mist and rain, sunlight, and so on, sometimes we were least seen, sometimes more seen than the other ships. Roughly speaking, the difference was so small that we painted *Indomitable* grey again. But I believe we were the first ship to be camouflaged.”

It was not long afterwards that the *Indomitable* was to play her part in the Battle of the Dogger Bank, and eventually it fell to her lot that she must take the *Lion* in tow after the latter had been injured by the enemy. The reader will find a unique photograph of this towage in the next illustration; unique, because such a subject often used to be depicted in the old engravings of the Anglo-French wars, when one sailing ship would tow another home, but hitherto there has never been seen an illustration of a modern flagship being thus brought into port after action. It is just such occurrences as these which a contemporary historian might not consider worth while relating: yet posterity cannot fail to be interested by learning how in the steam age enormous men-of-war had to be handled.

“The *Lion* at the time,” relates Admiral Kennedy, “was down by the bow and heeling over a bit, too. Steaming towards her base—the Forth—slowly. We got ahead of her, and sent a grass-line to her. As she was just tautening it, she signalled to us: ‘Must stop engines.’ And did so. She promptly swung away to starboard and parted the grass line. We had to take up a new position—not handy to do so in a 565-foot ship! Then got a 6½-steel wire to her. Wanted really to get another one also, but time being a factor, trusted to the one 6½. Meanwhile Admiral Beatty was wirelessing us to hustle (as if we were sitting down to a ‘second cup of tea, please’); and the Admiralty, with their large-visioned Winston, wirelessed us that all the German destroyers, etc., were leaving their ports to attack us. Cheery! Wasn’t it?

“But we were splendidly guarded by Commodore Tyrwhitt with his craft and our Forth ones, too. Then the Admiralty sent us another wireless saying, ‘Cancel former signal.’ When we had secured the 6½-inch hawser, we steamed as slow as possible with one engine only, at first; and, as we got way on *Lion*, increased very gingerly to 13 knots, or rather revolutions which would have given us that speed, had we not got *Lion* astern. That gave us a bit over 8 knots. We made May Island, and turned up the Forth during the first watch—pitch-dark—saw the *Britannia* (one of the Fifth Battle Squadron) ashore on Inchkeith, and passed through the boom defence gates. We went on for the open part under the Forth Bridge. It was very badly lighted. Only had a fixed light on it. I had always wished for a flashing light. However, when we got to where we thought we were about 3½ cables from it, and estimated it

should be right ahead, we saw a fixed light well on our port bow.”

Anyone who had experience during the war of this bridge will realise the difficulties of towing a big ship through the darkness and not being able to see the iron girders from which the anti-submarine steel net used to be lowered or raised. Nor was it possible for the *Indomitable* to calculate how much her speed would be diminished by the shoaling of the water acting on the two ships. The tide under the bridge flows strongly, and altogether to-night’s bit of seamanship was a most exacting business at the end of an anxious day when submarines had been expected at all moments. Finally Captain Kennedy decided to anchor short of the bridge for a few hours.

“I anchored and went to bed. Done to a turn! So were some of the others. That must have been about 2.30 or 2.45 a.m. Fog still holding. We had slipped the *Lion*, of course, in anchoring the two ships. She slipped the wire, too, and it was (I believe) never found—too deep into the mud. Pity of it! Good stuff.” About midday, fog having cleared, the *Indomitable* again took the *Lion* in tow, took her up the Forth and turned her round, bringing her right up to her buoy. When one considers that the tide was now flooding, that the *Lion* had no steam at all—not even for the steering but had to use a hand-wheel—that she was down by the bows and extremely awkward; when we recollect, further, the narrowness of the space above the Forth Bridge, and that the *Indomitable* was now being assisted by only the weakest tugs (‘the size of the Portsmouth-Gosport ferry-boats sort,’ Admiral Kennedy likens them); we can well claim that this was a most able bit of seamanship which will stand comparison with any of those sailing ship achievements so proudly perpetuated by the eighteenth century artists.

“The whole credit of the tow lies with my Navigator (and still good friend) Commander Morgan Tindal,” insists Admiral Kennedy. But such modesty and unselfish acknowledgment are only part of the great story.

The *Lion*’s officers were under no delusion as to what they owed for this patient persistence, and presented *Indomitable* with their gratitude symbolised by a silver trophy “Winged Victory,” which now adorns Admiral Kennedy’s dining-room table.

CHAPTER II

THE DUMMY FLEET

DURING the War the expression "Special Service" was a convenient but comprehensive synonym which might mean nothing, or a great deal; but in naval matters it was a useful hint to signify something of the hush-hush type. Special service ships might be decoys, or they might be detached units for keeping an eye on particular localities where the ocean cables ran the risk of being cut by a U-boat; or, again, those steam yachts were said to be on special service when they cruised off the Iberian peninsula gathering secret intelligence regarding enemy activities.

But whilst there were all sorts of units working individually, sent out on particular missions, there was only one Special Service Squadron; and so little has been written on this subject, except by casual mention, that it is well to give for the first time a complete account from many sources of an experiment which was thoroughly original, extremely interesting, and not without humour. Elsewhere the reader is made familiar with the plan that was developed for disguising commissioned ships of war to resemble innocent merchantmen, the intention being for the purpose of enticing enemy submarines, and the said vessels always worked independently.

The Special Service Squadron was the exact opposite of what eventually became constituted as Q-ships. The basic idea was to disguise genuine merchant steamers so that in every visible detail they appeared to be battleships or battle-cruisers; and to employ them not singly but together. Nor was the prime object to deceive U-boats (though this was not excluded), but generally to mystify by their presence and confuse the German intelligence system. What, it may be inquired, was the direct reason for putting this broad notion into execution at a given date?

For answer we have to throw our minds back into those dark days of late October 1914, when Admiral Jellicoe had taken his Grand Fleet right away the other side of Scotland and down to Lough Swilly in north Ireland until there was a base more inviolate from submarine attack than Scapa Flow at present afforded. It will be remembered that on October 27 one of these battleships (H.M.S. *Audacious*) after emerging from Lough Swilly had struck a German mine and foundered, but that before the final act of this disaster there had arrived on the scene the big White Star liner *Olympic* whose Master (Captain H. J. Haddock) did his best to tow the battleship as long as she seemed inclined to remain afloat. The *Olympic* then steamed into Lough Swilly, where she was kept several days, no

communication being allowed with the shore, and every effort was made to preserve secrecy. Admiral Jellicoe telegraphed the Admiralty suggesting that the loss of the *Audacious* should not be revealed. The whole military outlook at that period was, in fact, so grave that it was considered vital that neither the strength nor the geographical position of the Grand Fleet should become known in Germany.

Now when it is alleged of a person that he was seen on a particular occasion in a certain locality, he has a perfect reply if he can plead an alibi. In the sphere of fictional literature we know the countless possibilities when a man has a double. And on the very day after the *Audacious* went to the bottom, the Admiralty took the novel determination to bring into being a squadron (afterwards increased to a fleet) which could show itself at sea to all beholders, and would pass for all practical purposes as part of the Grand Fleet. German spies ashore, or travelling in liners, or scouting U-boats, would be very welcome to report that they had noticed battleships and battle-cruisers in a certain locality steaming on an observed course. In other words the aim was to provide an alibi for the Grand Fleet, and to give them the chance of mistaken identity.

Thus was born the plan to produce in the minimum time a force that was first designated the "Tenth Battle Squadron," afterwards changed to the "Special Service Squadron" (lest there should be any possibility of the term being confounded with the "Tenth Cruiser Squadron" that were engaged in carrying out the Northern Patrol); but unofficially the ships were hereafter always referred to as the "Dummy Dreadnoughts," and the title was so fitting, so easy to the tongue, that it was generally accepted. Before the month of October was out, arrangements had been made to take over a number of good sized steamships from well-known lines and to have them fitted out by Messrs. Harland & Wolff at Belfast. All this necessitated a vast rush of work, consultations with Lord Pirrie, the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Admiralty draughtsmen, and so forth. Special arrangements had to be made for preventing leakage of this secret endeavour, but of course the news did reach Germany within a few weeks.

The problem of converting so bold an idea into fact required enormous effort, but the essential scheme was started when the draughtsmen prepared the tracing of a selected steamer on the same scale as the tracing of a battleship's design. By placing one over the other, it was possible to determine how the transformation would work out. The next stage was to let 2000 of Harland & Wolff's men get busy on so many of the steamers as had arrived in the Lough. Ten ships were obtained readily, and so promptly were the conversions begun that within a week the first seven liners were rapidly changing their external characteristics.

It may be said at once that the faking was conceived with extreme cleverness. Structures of wood and canvas were ingeniously designed to reproduce in detail such striking features as guns, turrets, funnels, boats, tripod masts, bridges. Between the modern battleship and liner there is such fundamental difference in architecture, that the vast undertaking was far more awkward than one at first realises. For instance, a liner possesses much greater free board than a man-of-war, but this was overcome by giving the merchantmen ballast to bring them down into the water. Then there was the problem of the stern. In the Merchant Service this end is usually a counter: in the Navy it is like what is known as a canoe-stern, or more accurately what is called a cruiser-stern. So the designers got over the difficulty by filling in the under part below the counter. Similarly, the steamers' bows had to be modified to bring them into line with naval practice.

Another item was how to make both funnels have reality. Smoke could exhaust itself through one, but what about the other? It would never do if this always seemed inactive. So a small fireplace was fitted to burn fireballs, and clouds of smoke could be emitted freely. As to the anchors, apart from the liner's own customary gear for practical use, wooden anchors were secured to the bows Navy fashion, or else painted on. Internally there was no similarity to the pretended original battleship. Inasmuch as mines were causing such losses, it was decided that neither officer nor man was to berth forward, but only stores were placed in that part of the ship, so that if her forefoot caused mines to explode, the loss of life ought not to be great. The men were accommodated aft, whilst officers were amidships.

In the carrying out of this imitation theory, time was of principal importance. Ordinarily the work should have taken months: actually only the fewest weeks were permitted. It could not therefore be expected that the disguise was without blemish, and the most which might be expected was to produce an effect that possessed accuracy only at a distance of several miles. No fraternity is more critical than seafarers; every ship sighted on the ocean is mentally analysed and placed in her proper category. But it was hoped that with the kind of climate habitual to the British Isles these ships when descried in silhouette would pass for the real thing.

With one exception, the ten chosen steamers were of ancient or middle age. Thus the Ellerman liner *City of Oxford* was built as far back as 1882, the White Diamond S.S. *Michigan* dated from 1887, the Royal Mail Steam Packet *Oruba* from 1889. The *Perthshire* had been launched in 1893, the *Montcalm* four years later; and four of the Canadian Pacific Railway liners, *Mount Royal* (built 1898), *Montezuma* (built 1899), together with the twin ships *Ruthenia* and *Tyrolia* (both built in 1900), comprised nine which had to be bought in the usual way. But the tenth

was the North German Lloyd *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*, which was a handsome American liner only nine years old and confiscated as a prize at the beginning of hostilities. The necessary figures of the respective tonnage will be found set forth on another page, but it will suffice for the present to add that the German (8684 gross tons) was the biggest of the ten, and the *City of Oxford* (4019 gross tons) was the smallest. These measurements, by the way, represent them as peace-time merchantmen: their displacements when fitted out as dummy men-of-war and well ballasted, had no regard to these figures.

The above ten were altered to resemble battleships of the *St. Vincent*, *Orion*, *Iron Duke* and *King George V* classes. So expeditiously were the *City of Oxford* and *Michigan* transformed into *St. Vincents* that within five weeks from the initial decision they steamed away from Belfast, *Ruthenia* (alias *King George V*) and *Montezuma* (otherwise *Iron Duke*) leaving five days before Christmas. But within another five weeks all the rest had departed with the exception of the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*. It was a smart bit of co-operation to have brought about a dummy squadron inside three months. At the end of November (1914) it was further decided to take up four more steamers which were to represent the battle-cruisers *Queen Mary*, *Tiger*, *Indomitable*, and the *Invincible*. For this end there were adopted respectively the White Star *Cevic*, *Merion*, the *Manipur* (Messrs. T. & J. Brocklebank), and the *Patrician* (Messrs T. & J. Harrison), and once more only three months were required.

Three administrative minds at the Admiralty concerned themselves in launching this ingenious proposition: Lord Fisher, Admiral Sir Percy Scott, and Mr. Winston Churchill. But all three had individually the same officer in mind to go afloat in charge of this remarkable squadron. It was to be that same Captain Haddock who had been in command of the *Olympic*. No better choice in all the Merchant Service could be found. Not merely was he eminently suited by his long Atlantic service in the biggest liners, but he had for years been known to, and admired by, both Lord Fisher and Sir Percy Scott. The notable effort of towing *Audacious* a few days previously by the 43,000-ton *Olympic* was an achievement in daring seamanship which Admiral Jellicoe has described as "most magnificent." There could be no doubt that Captain Haddock must be appointed the squadron's Commodore, a rank which instantly was reminiscent of that fine engagement when little more than a century previously Commodore Nathaniel Dance on his way back from China in command of East Indian merchantmen had met and defeated a squadron of French warships commanded by a Rear-Admiral.

"When I came back to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord on October 31, 1914,"

wrote Lord Fisher,^[10] “I at once got hold of Haddock, made him into a Commodore, and he commanded the first fleet of dummy wooden ‘Dreadnoughts’ and battle-cruisers the world had ever looked on, and they agitated the Atlantic.” The bluff old First Sea Lord had first met the great Master Mariner in 1910 when the latter was commanding the famous Atlantic flyer *Oceanic*, and did not hesitate to regard Captain Haddock as the “Nelson of the Merchant Service.” “If this should meet the eye of Haddock,” added Lord Fisher, “I want to tell him that had I remained [at the Admiralty], he would have been Sir Herbert Haddock, K.C.B., or I’d have died in the attempt.” Greater expressions of praise could not have been forcibly framed by one whose frequent phrase was “sack the lot!”

But Sir Percy Scott also claimed^[11] to have been responsible for this choice. In his reminiscences he related that on being sent for by the First Lord (Mr. Churchill) on November 3, 1914, and being ordered to take supervision of converting and fitting out the dummy fleet, he found “the question of equipping this squadron with officers and men was a difficult one, but I had the good fortune to meet Captain Haddock, C.B., who had given up command of the *Olympic*. He had been with me in H.M.S. *Edinburgh* in 1886. I took Captain Haddock to the Admiralty, and suggested that they should make him into a Commodore, and place him in command of the squadron, with full power to ship the necessary officers and men.” It was Scott who suggested the title “S. C. Squadron,” which could be used to mean either the “Special Coastal Squadron,” or even the “Scare Crow Squadron!” According to this authority the cost to the nation of this experiment—that is to say the purchasing and alteration of thirteen ships, with the alteration of the fourteenth—amounted to £1,000,000.

Captain Haddock, then, was readily given command of these comic ships on November 6, 1914, and the rank of Commodore (First Class), R.N.R. The plan was to have in each vessel a Commander, R.N.R., and two Lieutenants, R.N.R. The remuneration was based on the usual Mercantile Marine pay plus 15 per cent. Even from the first so experienced an officer was invaluable in arranging preliminary details connected with personnel, and inspection of the ships.

It was on December 7 that Scapa Flow was interested, if amused, by the arrival of two *St. Vincent* class battleships from Belfast. These were Nos. 1 and 2, being hitherto the *City of Oxford* and the *Michigan*. Others followed, and the remoteness of Scapa Flow seemed specially suitable, as it would keep the squadron away from spies and public notice. But the ships’ original names were removed and (apart from the individual numbering) they were reported in all seriousness as *King George V*, *Centurion*, *Dreadnought*, and so on. Within a week of Christmas, however, the

plain blunt fact emerged that here was another of those instances where theory and practice can never agree.

In the realm of literary ingenuity the employment of a “double” has on various occasions been the basis for a rattling good story. It is common experience that nearly everyone of us has his counterpart, and that nature seems to use the same pattern for very different personalities. Thus the reader of mystery novels is quite willing to accept the convincing situations into which the hero is led. Now the novelist, to be frank, would have to admit that he won over the reader simply because the latter was too lazy, or too lacking in imaginative penetration to bother excessively. It is only when the double-identity theme comes to be vitalised by the stage or cinema that the whole idea collapses because it is inherently weak. Less than twenty years ago the whole literary world was thrilled by a novel of this class, and when it appeared first as a serial story in a popular magazine, the suspense and uncertainty were so worked up that at least one man on his death-bed, fearful that he would pass out before knowing the sequel, sent a letter to the author begging to be informed as to the final chapter. Now in course of time this immensely successful story was produced by the late Sir George Alexander at the St. James’s Theatre, where it became an immediate failure simply because the double-identity idea, whilst powerful in the imagination, will not work out in such details as voice, mannerism, and other decisive items. But, until the two characters were seen in the flesh by the reader-spectator, this consideration had not been appreciated.

Precisely the same thing happened with these dummy battleships. The essential idea was perfect, but the impossibility of winning conviction could not be ascertained until the experiment was fully tried out. In order to succeed beyond question, every minute part of the composite whole must be 100 per cent infallible. And this is just where the Special Service Squadron flopped badly: it was neither one thing nor the other, but a proper misfit. The tactical utility of a battle squadron rests on its homogeneity, so that it can be employed as one mighty machine. In this imitation from Belfast the only homogeneity consisted of an attempt to deceive. By the time ballast and alterations had been put aboard there were only two ships which were identical in size: some were more than double the displacement of the others. In fact the tonnage now varied from 7430 to as much as 16,500. So, too, whilst the individual speeds were as high as 15 knots but as low as 10, it obviously meant that the squadron’s speed must be less than that of the slowest member. In practice it was found that 7 knots was the best rate at which this collection of dummies could steam when proceeding together to represent part of the Grand Fleet.

Apart altogether, therefore, from imperfect disguise, the faked battleships were

condemned as soon as they were tested. A 7-knot squadron could certainly not be used in operations with the Grand Fleet of three times that speed. "The ships," remarked Admiral Jellicoe, "could not under these conditions accompany the Fleet to sea, and it was very difficult to find a use for them in home waters."^[12] So, quite early, the thought of using these improvised vessels as bait for the shy High Sea Fleet was found impracticable, though had it been attempted there might have ensued a remarkable ending to a grim joke. I wish to stress here the fact that every officer and man serving in that dummy fleet was potentially a hero: they were by willingness, if not in act, ready victims for the Allies' cause. They knew that if once they were sighted by the enemy, it was all over, yet it might have the most desired opportunity for the Grand Fleet to step in and deal a smashing defeat. For this end these gallant Mercantile Mariners were fully prepared to sell their lives, and to this day they have never been conceded by the public that esteem which was most justly due. It makes no difference that officers and men were not called upon to immolate themselves in some such affair as a Dogger Bank action.

Had they been (as they fully expected) sent down the North Sea, to meet the enemy, they would for a few minutes, during the first misty recognition, have created a thrill: but a 7-knot speed would have enabled neither a protracted advance nor a rapid retreat. And the Germans would not have been puzzled for long by any camouflage. The first salvo would see wooden turrets and toy guns *floating* in the water or burning like a haystack. And then the joke would be transferred: within a few minutes not one of those converted steamers would be afloat nor one man alive.

So, it was ultimately settled, that instead of the dummy squadron being allowed to remain at Scapa as an unwanted embarrassment and occupying sheltered berths which were needed for better ships, they should be sent to Loch Ewe on the west of Scotland where loneliness and therefore secrecy could still be preserved. Here, during January, as the units one after another were commissioned and sent from Belfast, the collection grew, and Commodore Haddock worked them up to carry out fleet movements. "This," wrote Admiral Jellicoe, "he did most successfully, so that had the ships possessed the requisite speed, use might have been made of them as a squadron for various decoy purposes. But under the conditions existing, this was impossible."

On January 8, 1915, came the change of title from the "Tenth Special Service Squadron" to the "Special Service Squadron," and we have it on the authority of Mr. Winston Churchill^[13] (then First Lord of the Admiralty) that the German Naval Staff had already by this time learned all about these dummies. But the laughable feature is that the Teutonic mind took them with a seriousness greater than we ever

had conceded. Throughout the Royal Navy, regular or temporary, criticism of these imitation battleships was open and drastic. Everyone derided any possible good being practicable. But Germany was quite uneasy, and connected this costly production with some dire plan for blocking up some of their principal ports on the Elbe, Weser, Jade, and so on. What else could those silly English be contemplating?

Certainly the First Lord that month strove hard to keep this squadron compact. On January 26 he suggested to Admiral Jellicoe that the Grand Fleet should be transferred from Scapa to the Firth of Forth, which at that time was being made fairly proof from submarines; and those of us who recollect the complicated wire curtain hanging down from the Forth Bridge, together with the outer booms then being perfected, will not forget the great security that enabled anxious commanders to sleep restfully. It was also part of Mr. Churchill's scheme that Scapa should, after the Grand Fleet's transference, be occupied by the dummy battleships, together with a certain number of genuine destroyers and trawlers. But Admiral Jellicoe thought otherwise, and Mr. Churchill's views did not prevail. So the time passed on, and still the big Belfast undertaking had not attained.

The exact position was still one of uncertainty, and there were now fourteen imitation battleships and battle-cruisers being kept in commission with a hope that they might be of service for some undefined purpose. Meanwhile a large number of valuable officers and seamen were being prevented from performing more necessary duties. But the Dardanelles campaign suggested that here would be an opening for at least a few of the dummies, and the Admiralty resolved to send out Nos. 11, 12, 13, and 14 (ex-*Manipur*, *Cevic*, *Patrician*, and *Merion*) which pretended to be respectively the four battle-cruisers *Indomitable*, *Queen Mary*, *Invincible*, and *Tiger*.

Now at this point comes into the story Captain W. B. Forbes, R.N., who had been born as far back as the year 1845, and was remarkable for his innate bravery. Here was one who had been for many years retired, but now at the age of seventy came back to offer his services, and was accepted. He thus had the distinction of being the oldest naval officer afloat, and if his body was not as virile as it once had been, there were the same courage and the same devotion to duty which marked his early career. Such a spirit is an inspiration among any body of men. As an indication of his character we may picture ourselves in the month of September 1870, aboard H.M.S. *Rapid* which was proceeding under sail bound from Tarragona to Barcelona.

It was a pitch-dark night, Forbes was down below at dinner in the wardroom, the vessel was cruising along at 6 knots, when suddenly there rang through the decks

the cry of "Man overboard!" The gallant Forbes, without stopping even to divest himself of his dinner jacket, rushed up, dived off the stern and began swimming about for the man through the inky waves. Within two minutes a boat was lowered, and luminous lifebuoys were thrown over, followed presently by the lowering of two more boats. The *Rapid* was hove-to, and waited, the minutes sped by, eager eyes looked out towards the flaring buoys, but no good news came along. One of the crew named Pritchard had fallen from the main yard and, instead of dashing his head lifelessly against the deck, he had dropped clear into the drowning waters. The *Rapid* rose and fell to the waves and at the end of an hour the second with the third boat could be seen returning, but they arrived alongside having failed in their search. Half an hour later came the sound of oars again, and the first boat bumped against the ship, but two inert figures were noticed lying on her floor boards. They were Pritchard and Forbes.

But Forbes had been able to rescue Pritchard, and it was found that whilst both were almost lifeless there was still hope. They were given every possible care, and the glorious result was that by midnight the crisis had been passed, so that both happily recovered after escaping death by the narrowest of margins. Had it not been for the instant, unhesitating bravery of the 25-year-old officer hurrying straight from a pleasant dinner table to the chill sea, Pritchard's expectation of rescue would have been about one in two million. For this life-saving act Forbes received the Albert Medal. He continued in the service until the year 1888, and during his long retirement the Navy had so thoroughly been transformed that there was scarcely one characteristic which belonged to the days when he was handling ships under yards and canvas.

But here was just the personality who, whilst unsuited for the super-mechanical modern "Dreadnoughts" full of such wonderful gadgets, had the right daring for any kind of special stunt involving peril. On January 5, 1915, when the *Oruba* (otherwise dummy No. 6, alias H.M.S. *Orion*) was completed, Commander Forbes was appointed in command, being the only Royal Navy officer in the squadron; all the other Captains such as Commanders P. Tonge, A. Murray, G. I. Price, W. S. Quinn, R. J. Trotter, C. Calvert, R. M. Robertson, J. Cunningham, G. M. Comber and J. Brown, belonging to the Royal Naval Reserve. Five days later, however, Commander Forbes was summoned by Lord Fisher to the Admiralty and entrusted with the command of the four dummy battle-cruisers, which he was to take out to the Dardanelles. They were to proceed in company from a rendezvous near Barra Head, that solitary southern extremity of the Hebrides. They were fitted with short-distance wireless, and each had one 3-pounder gun! I believe that these four battle-

cruisers were the only units to have even so indifferent an armament. Commander Forbes himself was in No. 14 (*Tiger*, ex-*Merion*).

Careful staff work was of course necessary to prevent any untoward action against these strange vessels, and our patrols had to be warned not to interfere with them. It had been intended that this detached squadron should leave on February 16, and proceed by the west of Ireland; but, owing to an accident, only Nos. 11 and 14 (*Indomitable* and *Tiger*) got away, and after some postponement. The former left Belfast on February 17, was held up in Loch Ewe the same day and the next, owing to bad weather, but this couple finally began their voyage south on the evening of the 19th. By midnight of February 26-27 they were passing through Gibraltar Straits, but even though they sheered off when inquisitive merchant steamers approached to investigate these quaint objects, there was no deceiving British skippers, who promptly reported their true nature.

The voyage was satisfactorily accomplished, and the pair steamed through the Mediterranean slowly, thence up the *Ægean* to Tenedos where they arrived on March 12. No. 12 (*Queen Mary*, ex-*Cevic*) never came out and was used for other purposes, but No. 13 (*Invincible*, ex-*Patrician*) started from Loch Ewe on March 26 bound for Mudros via the north of the Hebrides. By keeping fifty miles off the Spanish and Portuguese coasts when in the Atlantic, but allowing themselves to pass only so near to steamers as to enable the dummies to be reported as battle-cruisers, every effort was made to keep up this bluff. The latter were forbidden even to enter Gibraltar, so all three made a non-stop run.

Mr. Churchill^[14] has indicated that the Admiralty regarded the dummy ships as “indistinguishable” from the genuine men-of-war “at three or four miles distance,” though most practical seafarers would regard that as somewhat optimistic. These three dummies were ordered to be used “with due precaution to prevent their character being discovered, and should be shown as part of the Fleet off the entrance to the Dardanelles. They may mislead the Germans as to the margin of British strength in Home Waters.” Such were the orders written by the first Lord and approved by Lord Fisher.^[15] “We now know,” adds the same writer in regard to these three fakes, “that they completely deceived the Turks, who identified and reported one to Germany as the *Tiger*.”

But from another source we may explain exactly what happened, and perceive how truly do adventures continue to await the adventurous even after the lapse of forty-five years. Commander Forbes in the harmless *Tiger* had been doing meritorious work for some weeks guarding the transport route in the *Ægean*, through which so many thousands of shipping tons and lives were being carried northward. It

will be recollected that April 25 was the date when the famous landing took place at Gallipoli. But on this self-same day did the enemy begin sending out from Germany their submarines to the Ægean, the first being U 21, which after refitting at Pola in the Adriatic reached the Dardanelles and created an historic sensation by torpedoing the British battleship *Triumph* on May 25, and the *Majestic* two days later.

Now on the evening of May 30 Commander Forbes in his imitation *Tiger* was patrolling about half a dozen miles to the east of that Ægean island Strati, off the coast of Asia Minor. It was just ten minutes past eight, and about the time when forty-five years ago he had heard that summons aboard H.M.S. *Rapid*. But to-night there was not utter darkness. The ship was using her best anti-submarine precautions by zigzagging at eight knots, when, all of a sudden, the fluffy white wake of a torpedo was seen approaching at high speed, and before anything could be done the vessel had been struck just forward of the starboard beam. The missile penetrated the hull between engine-room and stokehold, a violent inrush of sea immediately extinguished the furnaces, sweeping engineers and firemen from their stations.

As might be expected, Commander Forbes' organisation and discipline were such that there was no further noise nor any confusion. The crew were piped to "Abandon ship," boats were lowered and manned without trouble, every man going to his allotted place exactly as he had learned at drill, and the Captain supervising everything with quiet efficiency. When the boats had stood by the sinking ship for some time, and there was nothing more to be done, they rowed in the direction of Mudros and spent the next day still in the Ægean. But at 2.15 a.m. on the first of June they were picked up by a tug who duly brought them safely to Mudros.

The incident of this not very valuable unit, which had caused an experienced submarine commander, owing to the limitations of light and periscope lens, to be fooled into loosing off a torpedo uselessly, certainly has its humorous aspect when we think of the wooden 13.5-inch "guns" with their buoyancy and reluctance to sink. But 117 men were poised between life and death and, whilst only two engineers and two firemen were killed instantly, the casualties would have been much heavier except for the training which had been kept up during these weeks. The wireless operator, through his own persistent pluck, had quite a narrow escape. After the torpedo struck, an attempt was made to call up other ships, but the explosion had knocked everything out of condition. The *Tiger* was without electric light and in darkness, the door of the wireless office was firmly jammed: but, presently, by the aid of two men who voluntarily risked their lives, it was burst open. Thereupon the operator remained tapping his Morse key, ticking the message until the water had risen so high that he was made to stop.

Unfortunately this message never passed through the ether, for the aerals had collapsed through the explosion. But such were the undaunted characters of Commander Forbes and a large number of his crew that, instead of being sent home to England, they begged to be kept actively employed on the Dardanelles station. It was a fine gesture for a septuagenarian, and the Admiralty did not fail to send him a letter of appreciation for his conduct. But not even the strongest will could prevent an aged physical body from feeling the effects of that Ægean sinking, and Commander Forbes eventually had to return, though he was given employment with the Dover patrol.

With regard to the ten dummies which still remained in the British Isles, fluctuating events always so affected them that the original intended method for employment was never possible. Certain special operations which were planned for the early spring, in which the Special Service Squadron were to play their part, never matured; but by April there was a feeling that something important was about to happen. Perhaps the German battle-cruiser *Von der Tann* might be about to attempt breaking through the blockade and reaching the American coast to succour the two raiders *Kronprinz Wilhelm* and *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, and combine with a general exodus of the thirty German liners which remained interned at New York. The position on April 11 was that both these two raiders had arrived in the United States harbour of Newport News at the end of a long cruise, but only the latter had been interned and there was no telling what might happen.

British cruisers were too few for the many jobs of hunting raiders, patrolling trade routes, and watching for any sudden rush of internees from New York or other port. It was therefore deemed advisable to send the dummy battle-cruiser *Queen Mary* (ex-White Star S.S. *Cevic*) as soon as possible across the Atlantic. True, her one 3-pounder gun gave her no fighting value, but she would be able to patrol up and down to seaward of New York in waters so familiar to White Star officers; and by economising coal would be able to remain there for several days. Whilst keeping her distance from steamers, she could exhibit herself sufficiently to let the news reach the interned that a British battle-cruiser was outside in readiness.

She came out of Belfast, grounded on Rathlin Island during a fog, returned to Belfast but was found undamaged and started off westward from her Scottish base on April 13. On April 25 early in the morning she was off New York, and on the next day the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* was interned. After remaining some time on her station, the crisis eased up and the United States gave assurance of their determination to maintain watch on the interned fleet. So the *Queen Mary* was able to come home again.

Commodore Haddock used to fly his pennant in No. 9, the ex-German American liner *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*, which now pretended to represent the *King George V* and had one of those imitation bow-waves which at this time were fondly thought likely to put a submarine Captain off his stroke. One used to see destroyers and all sorts of craft so painted, but before long such “waves” were abolished. The 7-knot H.M.S. *Vanguard* (alias S.S. *Perthshire*) was the slowest duck of the squadron, it seemed useless to keep her any longer in the service, and indeed the time was now approaching when the question would in all decisiveness have to be faced concerning this collection of misfits. First of all, it seemed futile to keep them based any longer at Loch Ewe. The Humber was suggested, as this would be so far south and nearer to Germany that the dummies’ slow speed would matter less when ordered to a North Sea rendezvous to meet the Grand Fleet. But the Humber was a very busy thoroughfare throughout the war, and one was impressed with the large trade that was being done in foreign steamers, especially from Denmark and Scandinavia, whose opportunities for carrying back information of booms and warships up the estuary were almost unlimited. Such considerations ruled out likewise other anchorages, and on May 14 the squadron moved from Loch Ewe to Scapa.

It seems ludicrous to add that these alleged “Dreadnoughts” were for safety’s sake escorted by armed trawlers and a steam yacht! But all those hastily contrived theatrical effects so cleverly fashioned at Belfast had after fair trial proved themselves unable to face rough weather: the external fittings were too frail except for smooth water cruising. So what with lack of speed and inability to keep up their appearances in Northern waters, the big idea had failed, and back the dummies were banished to Loch Ewe. No Commander-in-Chief wanted them, for they were at the best a continuous source of anxiety. On the other hand the shortage of shipping, thanks to losses by mines and submarines, thanks also to the increased demands of tonnage, was now making itself to be felt.

By June it was decided to drop the dummy “Dreadnought” notion, to remove all the fake fittings and convert the units to straightforward purposes. One ship (No. 6 which resembled H.M.S. *Orion*) was retained for a time by Admiral Jellicoe, and in August of this year, 1915, she was intentionally sent to sea from Scapa to Rosyth with a heavy list to suggest a disabled battleship going south for repairs. Escorted by destroyers, she tried to attract the attentions of submarines which had been busily active up and down the North Sea this summer. But no attention was paid to No. 6, so the destroyers were robbed of any fun.

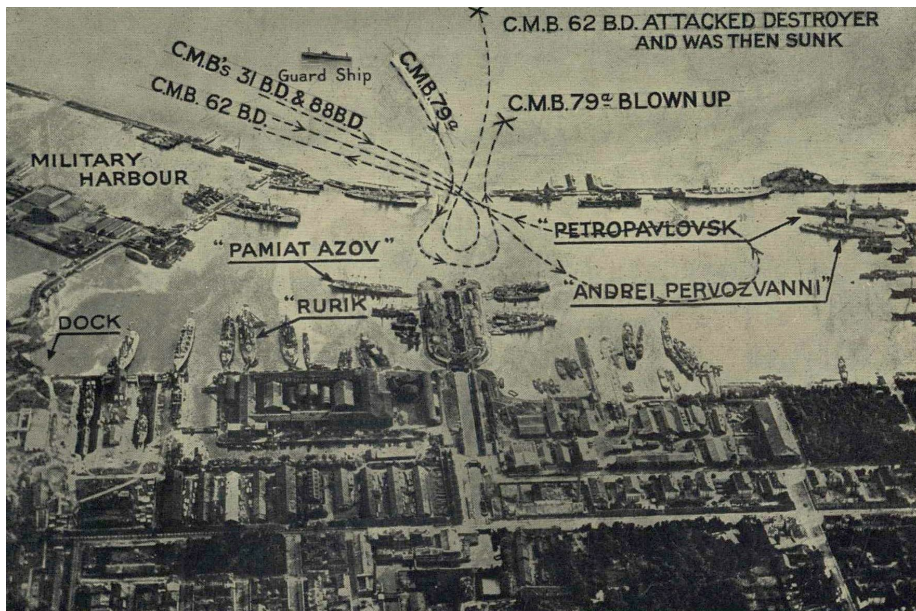
Looking back on events, we can be thankful that the Special Service Squadron

never paraded in the North Sea, but spent its time to the west of Scotland away from submarines and the High Sea Fleet, either of which would have sent hundreds of men straight to their destruction. The collapse of an ingenious idea was brought about because it was impracticable under the conditions of weather, sea, and speed; but also because no particular and unique occasion (such as a feint) offered itself. It is, however, conceivable that during a war whose main theatre is not the spy-infested North Sea but an ocean such as the Pacific with its great manœuvring distances, that the same idea might be carried out with greater leisure and material strength. The enemy might be put to considerable confusion as to the real position of the rival force at any given moment. There is too much concentrated traffic round the British Isles, through the Gibraltar Straits, and up the Ægean for the scheme to succeed in Europe.

Name of Ship.	No.	Disguise. H.M.S.	Best Speed Knots	Displacement when fitted for Dummy Service.	How Employed when Disbanded.
<i>City of Oxford</i> <i>Michigan</i>	1	<i>St. Vincent</i>	12	7,430 tons	Block ship at Mudros
	2	"	11	—	
<i>Montezuma</i> <i>Ruthenia</i>	3	<i>Iron Duke</i>	10	15,250 "	Oiler <i>Abadol</i>
	4	<i>King George V</i>	12	11,850 "	Royal Fleet Auxiliary water-carrier
<i>Tyrolia</i> <i>Oruba</i>	5	" "	12	11,850 "	Oiler <i>Saxol</i>
	6	<i>Orion</i>	15	9,800 "	Block ship at Kephalo Bay
<i>Mount Royal</i> <i>Montcalm</i> <i>Kronprinzessin</i> <i>Cecilie</i>	7	<i>Marlborough</i>	12	15,000 "	Oiler <i>Rangol</i>
	8	<i>King George V</i>	12	11,800 "	Oiler <i>Crenella</i>
	9	" "	15	—	Transport. Discharged on private service
<i>Perthshire</i>	10	<i>Vanguard</i>	7	—	Royal Fleet Auxiliary water-ship
<i>Manipur</i>	11	<i>Indomitable</i>	12	16,500 "	H.M.S. <i>Sandhurst</i> , Depot ship
<i>Cevic</i>	12	<i>Queen Mary</i>	13	—	Oiler <i>Bayol</i>
<i>Patrician</i>	13	<i>Invincible</i>	13	—	Oiler <i>Teakol</i>
<i>Merion</i>	14	<i>Tiger</i>	12	—	Sunk by

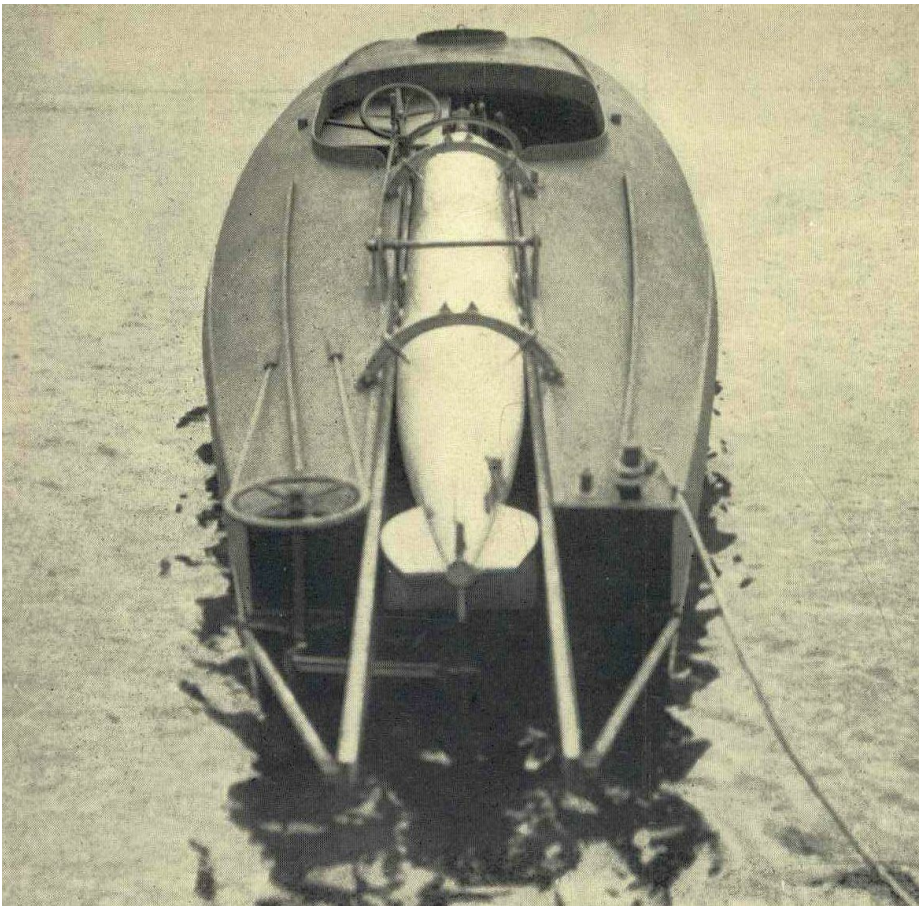
So the grand disbandment of the dummy fleet began. Nos. 11 and 13 were recalled from the Dardanelles, the latter bringing home the survivors of No. 14; and before the summer was over the whole list, from No. 1 to 13 inclusive, were being turned into kite-balloon ships, oilers, water-ships, torpedo depot ships, blocking ships, though the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* was used for transport work until paid off in April 1916. No. 2 (*Michigan*) was filled up with ballast at Swansea in December 1915 and sent out to be sunk as a block ship at Mudros. In October, after being ballasted with concrete at Peterhead, No. 6 (*Tyrolia*), without troubling to have her disguise removed, was sent out to Kephalo Bay, there to prolong the breakwater.

Thus, within a year from the time when the first dummies had been ready for sea, the squadron as such had been swept into things forgotten. For that reason there is reason in collecting and arranging the facts of so interesting an experiment. The table opposite will enable the reader to read their careers at a glance. The study forms a fitting pendant to that of decoy ships in time of war.



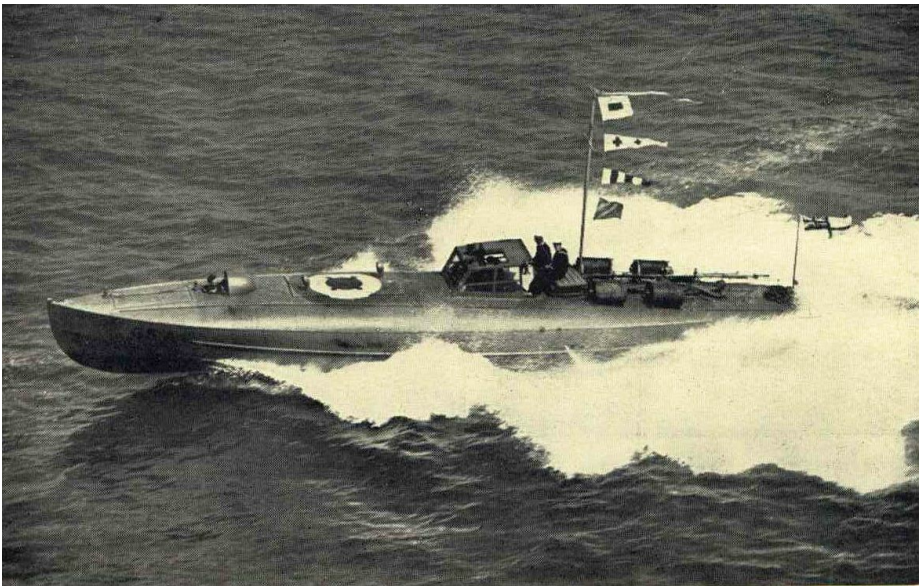
THE DASH INTO KRONSTADT

Aerial photograph taken of Kronstadt harbour, showing objectives to be attacked by Coastal Motor Boats. The enemy's guardship is seen outside. Arrows and dotted lines indicate courses of the C.M.B.'s on the night of the famous raid, August 17-18, 1919.



THE TORPEDO TROUGH

Showing the method for launching the missile from the stern of a
Coastal Motor Boat.



ONE OF THE KRONSTADT CRASHERS

A 55 foot Coastal Motor Boat of the type which dashed into
Kronstadt harbour.

CHAPTER III

CRUISERS AT CORONEL

THE circumstances which drew the respective squadrons of Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock and Admiral von Spee together, the one from the east and the other from the west till they clashed at Coronel, were like two mighty hands of fate outstretching and gripping. It is not the horrible slaughter of battle which fascinates the imagination as that prelude, lasting weeks, which indicates how inevitably rival ships were being moved across the map to a common centre—a mere patch of ocean—for a tragic tournament that should last less than an hour.

On the principle of viewing great sea events from one selected warship of prime importance, we may in this case imagine ourselves aboard H.M.S. *Glasgow*, a light cruiser of 4800 tons, armed with two 6-inch, ten 4-inch, and five small guns. She was one of the "Town" class, sister ship to the *Gloucester* which chased the *Goeben*, and was designed for 25 knots though her best speed had beaten that figure by more than a knot. In command of her was Captain (now Admiral) John Luce, R.N. In July 1914 he had held that command for nearly two years, as well as of Senior Officer on the east coast of South America. He had thus been away from home for a long while, there was no other British ship on the station, no British naval base, and the only British possessions were the Falkland Islands, where there were 2000 people but no coal supplies.

About every three months stores were sent out from home, but coal was obtained for the *Glasgow* from British firms in foreign ports. Admiral Luce, who has been kind enough to lend me his personal documents leading up to and after the Coronel battle, says: "We had planned secretly to form a coaling base at the Abrolhos Rocks, where a coral reef lies about 15 miles from the Brazilian coast between Rio and Bahia. Though it lay in the full strength of the S.E. trade winds, there was a certain amount of shelter from the sea, and war experience showed this to be sufficient to carry out coaling operations though at some risk to hulls. Anchorage could be found outside the 3-mile limit from the reefs above water. This placed the proposed temporary base outside territorial waters, and Brazil could not complain of infringing her neutrality."

When on July 27 the Admiralty telegram indicating the possibility of war reached the *Glasgow*, she was at Rio de Janeiro. Captain Luce set about buying coal and chartering a collier to attend on him. Some peace-time gear was put ashore, and information as to the latest known positions of German ships obtained from our

intelligence centres; but, whilst the enemy cruisers were all a long way off, there was the danger of fast German merchant vessels being converted into men-of-war. Numbers of the latter, warned by wireless, began to take shelter in different South American harbours.

On August 4 arrived a telegram foretelling the ultimatum to Germany, and at midnight the *Glasgow* slipped out of Rio, heading for the Abrolhos and warning all British shipping on the way. High speed cruisers consume large amounts of fuel, and that means there must be adequate arrangements for attendant colliers. One of these destined for Captain Luce had left Cardiff only three days previously, could not be expected in less than a fortnight, and the Brazilian authorities might prevent the sailing from Rio of the steamer already chartered. But anxiety vanished when the *Glasgow* chanced to meet a British tramp carrying 10,000 tons of Welsh coal early on the morning of August 5. She was bound for Rio, but Captain Luce commandeered her and took her to the Abrolhos.

Weeks of uneventful patrolling, and therefore of frequent coaling, now occupied the *Glasgow*. The German S.S. *Santa Catherina* was captured and brought to the Abrolhos, but "sounds of German wireless, which had a distinct note from our own, began to be intercepted, great activity amongst the German vessels in the ports was reported, and everything pointed to the approach of" German cruisers, two of which were in fact working south. It is known that the *Dresden* passed the *Glasgow* in the south Atlantic on August 18, but well out to sea, neither cruiser knowing of the other's position. Captain Luce had been joined by H.M.S. *Monmouth*, an 11-year-old armoured cruiser of 9800 tons, but with a crew largely consisting of coastguardsmen and boys, and at the end of August by the liner *Otranto*, which had been fitted out as an armed auxiliary.

Ample supplies of coal from England had been concentrated by this time at the Abrolhos; the trade routes were being patrolled by these three ships, though the areas were so extensive that the enemy could not help making captures of steamers. But the Admiralty were beginning to anticipate the impending danger of Admiral von Spee sweeping in from the Pacific into the south Atlantic. Therefore Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock with his flag in the *Good Hope* was sent south, wireless touch was made with Captain Luce, and the net result was that all four ships *Good Hope*, *Glasgow*, *Monmouth*, and *Otranto* met off Montevideo where they coaled outside the three-miles limit. They were considerably delayed by gales, and repairs which were needed to the *Good Hope's* engines; but on September 22 the squadron swept south. Whilst the German cruiser *Dresden*, which had been assaulting our merchant shipping, was now in the Pacific, a concentration of the enemy was on the

way; for the German Admiral had left Samoa on September 14, and Tahiti on the date when the British Admiral departed from Montevideo. The appearance of von Spee so far to the east, and so distant from his Chinese waters, seemed to Captain Luce and his brother commanding officers a sure indication that an encounter would eventually take place.

On September 28 Cradock's four ships were as far south as Punta Arenas, Magellan Straits, and events took on a more definite character. "We discussed the situation exhaustively, which appeared to be this," Admiral Luce narrates: "everything pointed to a German concentration in the South Pacific, but von Spee could hardly reach the coast until the middle of October. The Admiralty had informed Cradock that the *Canopus*, an old slow battleship, was on her way to reinforce him and that the *Defence*, a cruiser of somewhat more gun power than von Spee's flagship *Scharnhorst*, was being sent from the Mediterranean. The *Cornwall* was also coming south. Admiral Stoddart had moved down in the *Carnarvon* from mid-Atlantic to the vicinity of the Abrolhos. . . . We were a long way from our stores, and the store ship had to supply far more ships than had been anticipated, with the consequence that we were short of provisions and clothing in a bitter climate. Moreover, the Admiralty seemed to be pressing Cradock to push on to the West coast as soon as the *Canopus* joined; for there were reports that our trade was held up, while the German ships were active. The *Canopus* was quite unfitted to search out the enemy, as her speed, never more than 17 knots, was now (through age and defects) much less; whilst all the German ships could be relied on for 20 knots or more.

"It was decided that after coaling at Port Edgar in the Falklands, where I had previously sent a collier, *Glasgow*, *Monmouth*, and *Otranto* should proceed to the West coast, where I was to find a temporary base in unfrequented waters for coaling, and then go on to Valparaíso to obtain provisions and stores, so far as was possible. The Admiralty had directed that we should not go further north than that port. It seemed to both the Captain of the *Monmouth* and myself that we were running a considerable risk without much object, and I should personally have preferred to go alone in the *Glasgow*, which I knew to be faster than any of the Germans and, unless caught against the land, would be able to avoid a superior force. The *Monmouth*, which had been long due for refit, was at the best only equal in speed to the Germans, and her fighting value would not avail against the latter's superior armoured cruisers. I was therefore very anxious to complete my mission as soon as possible before von Spee should appear on the coast."

So, to the accompaniment of "a hard gale with an enormous sea," the three ships

battered round into that ill-named Pacific, and the temporary base which Captain Luce chose out was Vallenar Road. This seemed an ideal spot for coaling. "It lay off the entrance to a network of channels running into the mountains, and in the event of being surprised there it might be possible to steam right through and come out some distance away. Here I left the *Otranto* and a collier, and with *Glasgow* and *Monmouth* went up the coast. Nothing was seen, and we arrived at Valparaiso on October 17th., (the day before von Spee left Easter Island) to find a number of German merchant vessels seeking refuge and appearing to be very busy. Some provisions were obtained, and the British community did all they could towards providing us with warm clothing, and we got away without delay.

"Steering first to the northward, to give a false impression, we turned south when out of sight and returned to Vallenar to find the *Otranto* had struck a rock but without serious damage. There was always the chance of the Germans hitting on the same place as ourselves for a base, so a party was landed to keep a look out from a neighbouring hill.^[16] Here we remained a few days cleaning boilers and making temporary repairs to *Monmouth*. Meanwhile we were intercepting some of Cradock's messages to and from home, which could only be sent through the Falklands wireless station (a very weak one) to Montevideo, whence they were cabled on. Many were in a mutilated condition, but it was clear that he was apprehensive as to his position and asked for reinforcements since, in his opinion, the *Canopus* was only fit for protection of colliers. At the same time he realised the danger of von Spee passing us on the West coast and reaching the Atlantic to appear off the River Plate where immense damage could be done unless there were a force to meet him in those regions.

"It always appears to me that we fell between two stools. There was not force available at the moment to form two squadrons of sufficient strength and speed, and we should not have advanced into the Pacific until this was forthcoming but have concentrated in the vicinity of the Straits, using the Falklands as a base. The trade on the West coast was not of vital importance, and could have been kept in harbour for a time until von Spee's position was revealed—which was bound to happen if he was to do anything. Cradock seems to have thought, however, that the Admiralty were pressing him to attack, and his ardent fighting spirit could not brook anything in the nature of defensive strategy . . . Cradock arrived at Vallenar with *Good Hope* on the 27th, having ordered the *Canopus* to follow, and immediately despatched *Glasgow*, alone this time, much to my satisfaction, to reconnoitre the Coronel area and visit that place to send and receive news."

The *Defence* had in the meanwhile been allotted not to Admiral Cradock but to

Admiral Stoddart, so the squadron was still weak and weighty events were now only a matter of a few days. As the *Glasgow* steamed north she was able to intercept wireless messages in German code, and it was obvious that the enemy were not far away, though it was impossible to estimate how many were the enemy's units. The signals were, however, so strong as *Glasgow* was approaching Coronel, "that we expected to sight the enemy at any moment. I saw the risk by entering a port of being caught in a position where my higher speed would be of no avail, and obtained permission from Cradock (whom I had informed of the proximity of the enemy) to defer doing so till the last moment."

As we know from the diary of a German naval officer that was obtained after the sinking at the Battle of the Falklands, von Spee had already arrived off Valparaíso on October 29, and was issuing his orders for the ensuing fateful hours. He was still off that port on the last day of the month, the very date when *Glasgow* slipped into Coronel; so, less than 400 miles separated the British from German. Cradock left Vallenar with the *Monmouth* and *Otranto* early on the 30th, without waiting for *Canopus*, who was ordered to follow as soon as possible. The northerly advance was thus in its final stage, but anything might happen now at almost any hour.

Captain Luce had indeed arrived off Santa Maria Island, Coronel, on the evening of the 29th, but there was need for extreme caution now that the enemy's wireless signals were so strong. It were useless to enter a neutral harbour only to be trapped. Moreover, there was the unfortunate historic precedent of the Russo-Japanese War when the Japanese Admiral Uriu, who had been escorting some transports, so attacked the Russian warship *Varyag* lying in Chemulpo harbour that the latter shortly afterwards sank. Cradock had left the entering of the Coronel entirely to Captain Luce's discretion, so the *Glasgow* cruised about west and north-west of Santa Maria Island until the forenoon of the 31st and at 1 a.m. had actually heard the *Leipzig's* call sign in close proximity; but about 11 a.m. *Good Hope* wirelessly that *Glasgow* was to enter Coronel, send off telegrams, obtain newspapers, telegrams, mails, and leave next day. So about half-past six in the evening Captain Luce reached Coronel as ordered.

"We found several German vessels in port, with their wireless aerials still in place, and the German Consulate was alight all night, showing great activity. A southerly blow made boat work difficult, and I had many anxious moments before we got the provisions and mails on board and put to sea early in the forenoon. I should have been in the same position as the Russian cruiser *Varyag* at the opening of the Russo-Japanese War, had a superior force appeared to seaward."

At 1 p.m. Captain Luce sighted *Good Hope*, with *Monmouth* and *Otranto*, on

this ever lamentable November the first. There was still a strong wind and there was such a heavy sea running that it was inadvisable to lower a boat, so one of the oldest bits of seamanship, which even the age of steam cannot dispense with, had now to be employed. The idea consists in towing anything in the nature of a small barrel across the other ship's bows, when the second vessel by the use of a line and grapnel picks up the line and hauls the barrel on board. Just before half-past one Admiral Cradock signalled the *Glasgow* to place copies of telegrams and newspapers in a 6-inch cartridge case and tow it across the *Good Hope's* bows from the latter's port to starboard side, the flagship's way being in the meantime stopped. But the *Glasgow* did not carry such cartridge cases aboard, so placed all the articles in a small rum cask, carried out the manoeuvre in the manner intended, and received a congratulatory signal from the Admiral for having ably done so.

The squadron now began sweeping to the north, and the Admiral had the opportunity to go through his correspondence, while his ships steamed in line-abreast fifteen miles apart, a formation which meant that a channel forty-five miles wide would be covered and thus it would be difficult for the enemy to pass south unobserved. Von Spee's squadron, as we know from the German diarist, was making towards Coronel at 14 knots at the time *Glasgow* had started from Coronel. At 4.30 p.m. smoke was sighted by the British squadron in a north-easterly direction. "Turning to investigate," writes Admiral Luce, "a few minutes were enough to show us that we had in sight the two German armoured cruisers." These were von Spee's flagship *Scharnhorst* with *Gneisenau*. "Our arrival at Coronel had been reported to him, and he was coming south in the hope of catching *Glasgow* before she could clear the land, as I had foreseen.

"The weather was clear, with a strong southerly wind, and as we turned away the enemy was about 12 miles off. They immediately turned to follow us and all ships raised steam for full speed. *Good Hope* was out of sight to westward and, as soon as I called her on my wireless, the enemy started jamming us; but, nevertheless, we were able to call Cradock's attention, while we, picking up *Monmouth* and *Otranto*, soon met her coming back to the southward. On joining him, we were ordered to form line-ahead on a southerly course in the order: *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, *Glasgow* and *Otranto*. The distance had remained about the same, and the enemy were seen to have increased by two light cruisers, the *Leipzig* and *Dresden*, as it appeared later, though we were not able at the time to identify them. They had also turned to the southward, and for some short time with battleflags hoisted, the two squadrons on slightly converging courses took stock of each other.

"We were in manifest inferiority without the *Canopus*—not much less than 300

miles away—but in touch by wireless; and in my opinion, then and now, a rendezvous could have been arranged at dawn without much chance of our being brought to action. I remember discussing the question with my second-in-command as to whether Cradock would do this, but, knowing the Admiral as I had for nearly thirty years, I thought he would fight in spite of the odds; and an intercepted message to the *Canopus* giving his position, and informing her that he was going to attack the enemy, set all doubts at rest.

“It was now after six, and we had so far the advantage of position. The sun was behind our gunlayers, while those of the enemy had it in their faces and, being to seaward, we could accept or decline action at will, the day being so far advanced that we could in all probability throw off the enemy in the dark. Cradock kept edging in towards the enemy and increasing speed; but von Spee was in no hurry until he had his ships together. And it was not until the sun had set at seven o’clock, and we had lost the advantage of light, that von Spee opened fire at a range of 12,000 yards, and the *Good Hope* replied.”

Thus began the Battle of Coronel, which had started so late in the day that, as Admiral Luce remarks, “I thought it could not be decided before darkness had set in: but I was speedily disillusioned.” According to the German diarist the action began at 6.35 p.m. and was over at 7.30 p.m. Admiral Luce gives 7.30 p.m. as the time when the enemy opened fire at about 12,000 yards range, followed immediately by the *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, and *Glasgow* in succession. From this point of the story, I have thought it well, having regard to the value of first-hand narrative, to give the actual words of Admiral Luce recording so notable an occasion, destined this evening to produce such a reverse that the tidings were to come as a sad shock for a nation unaccustomed to naval defeats. The Battle of Trafalgar for over a century of peace and prosperity had remained as a proof of invincibility, a token of perpetual pride and confidence in our senior service. But now the tradition seemed suddenly and rudely shattered.

“The Germans, having their target silhouetted against the afterglow, quickly found the range, while the fading light made it impossible for us to mark the fall of our shell—the only means of attaining accurate shooting. Before we were in action ourselves, I had seen both *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* hit, and fire break out. As the range came down, we were quickly in action ourselves with the *Leipzig*, and later (when the *Otranto*, which was quite unfit to fight in line, owing to his low-range guns, absence of protection, and immense target, hauled out to starboard) with the *Dresden* also. In spite of the wind and sea, which was dashing the spray over the guns and affected all the light cruisers as well as the lower-placed guns of the *Good*

Hope and *Monmouth*, the German fire was very accurate. The 8-inch shell of the German armoured cruisers made little of the light armour of our leading ships, but the range was just too long for the light cruisers to obtain equal results on us before the light failed.

“Still their shells were falling around us, and an occasional thud told me that some had got home. Twilight does not last long in Latitude 30°, but before dark we could see that both *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* were in a very bad way. By 7.50 the *Good Hope* was silent, was burning furiously, and had wandered off her course to port, so that she was lying between us and the enemy, when a huge burst of flame rose from her which I could only put down to the explosion of a magazine. After this all was black on board her, and she was never seen again.

“In the darkness and stress of fighting, our gun crew mistook her for an enemy and raised a cheer. At the moment it shocked me, but now I like to think of it as a tribute to our gallant Admiral, his officers and crew, who had gone down fighting to the last. The adverse conditions of light had by now again changed. The moon was rising behind the enemy, dimly showing him up at times while they could no longer see us, and only fired when they saw the flash of our guns. We kept up our fire a little longer until I realised that each time we fired we brought the combined fire of the whole squadron on us. The *Monmouth*, by this time quite silent, though she seemed to have overcome her fires to some extent, turned to starboard just after 8 p.m., *Glasgow* ceased fire and followed her round.

“In reply to a signal from me, she reported that she was getting stern on to sea, as she was very badly holed forward, and one could see that she was down by the bows. The course she was steering appeared to me to be bringing her nearer to the enemy, and since with the rising moon we must shortly be again discovered, I told her to steer to the north-westward, but apparently she was unable to do so. The enemy was now again seen under the moon, apparently approaching; and, with great reluctance, I felt that I could not help her, but must be destroyed with her if we remained. I therefore turned to the north-west, and increased to full speed. Half an hour later we saw firing astern, and concluded that the German squadron had again fallen in with her. As a matter of fact, von Spee had circled around her, and it was the *Nürnberg* which had been detached and had taken no part in the action but, coming up to rejoin, had fallen in with her and finished off, in my opinion an already sinking ship.

“Having thrown off the enemy, we turned gradually to the west and then south. Our first duty was to inform the *Canopus* (whose Captain was senior to me) of what had taken place. She was still steaming as fast as possible to join Cradock, and

daylight might bring her in sight of the enemy. As soon as I began my message, every German ship started at full power to interfere. By great skill our operator eventually got the news through, and by midnight I knew that the *Canopus* had turned and was steering to the south. By this time we had taken stock of our damage so far as could be seen from on board, and it proved far less than I had any reason to suspect. We had six direct hits, but none had penetrated the protective deck, and only one had properly detonated, blowing a large hole on the waterline just over the port propeller. When we went full speed, a quantity of water came in, but the intact protective deck kept it from going below. There were no killed, and only a few wounded, none very severely, all cases recovering on board.”

The *Otranto* had got clear away, but she proceeded via the Horn whilst the *Glasgow* went through the Magellan Straits. Rather a surprising and alarming factor was noticed in the *Glasgow* just as she altered from a southerly to easterly course for heading through these Straits. Every navigator knows that the Magellan waters are about as tricky as in any part of the world, with strong tides and indifferently surveyed depths. By careful steering, and due regard to the compass, safety is practicable. It was now discovered that the *Glasgow's* compass on an easterly course was 20 degrees out! This error had been caused by the 409 rounds which *Glasgow* had fired at the enemy. Before reaching the Straits' Atlantic end, there was time to make some temporary repairs outside the three-mile limit, but she also picked up a wireless *en clair* message giving a report of the Coronel action as issued by von Spee on arrival at Valparaiso. Immediate pursuit by the Germans was therefore not to be feared, so Captain Luce, after waiting for the *Canopus*, accompanied the latter into Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, “where eager volunteers from the shore assisted my worn out crew to complete with coal.”

It was here that Captain Luce was able to sit down quietly and write his long report of Coronel to the Admiralty, whose First Sea Lord was already hurrying up the two battle-cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* to bring about that great vengeance at the Falklands battle. We shall watch that action from the bridge of another ship, but it may be added that after spending only a few hours alongside the collier, the *Glasgow* steamed off to the north. On coming in she had heard the good news that the armed merchant cruiser *Orama* had chased a German merchant ship, which on being overhauled had set herself on fire. Thus perished stores and ammunition intended for von Spee.

To Rio de Janeiro the *Glasgow* came with a view to effecting repairs at the waterline. By international law she was entitled to remain 24 hours, but the Brazilian Minister of Marine and Foreign Affairs not merely permitted twelve days (as he

considered the ship unseaworthy) but allowed use of the Government floating dock, whilst a local French firm undertook the repairs, working magnificently and sometimes for twenty-four hours on end. Thus in five days the ship was in as good condition as at the opening of the war and was able to reach the Abrolhos before Admiral Sturdee with his battle-cruisers arrived. True, the Brazilians showed their kindly pro-British sentiments, yet here is another case where a commanding officer's outstanding personality was simply invaluable for getting things done. Captain Luce, like Admiral Souchon at Constantinople, was both respected highly and widely popular in South America. Two years on the station thus had not been forgotten.

Von Spee's movements are readily traceable from the German naval officer's diary. On November 3 his squadron reached Valparaiso at midday. "Germans ignorant of action. Germans ashore highly delighted. Dined at club," continues the record. "Received many presents from people ashore." Next day it is, "Filling up with provisions. Received fifty reservists. Went for a ride on shore with ladies. First meeting with ladies since the outbreak of war. Left 11 p.m. under cheers from German steamers in port. Shaped course for Mas-a-fuera. Hear from English people received no information of *Glasgow*. Absolutely nothing as regards *Good Hope*."

Whilst double-handed fate was again contriving so as to bring Admiral Sturdee down the Atlantic and Admiral von Spee down the Pacific towards the Falklands, the latter was to experience heavy weather. Thus one of his officers wrote in a diary under November 27: "Very bad weather. Force of wind up to 12.^[17] Sea 9. Steaming without any definite formation. Had to reduce to 5 knots. Evening weather moderated a little so that we could proceed at 8 knots." But next day, "Weather still very bad. Again had to reduce speed so that colliers could keep in touch. On the whole shipped remarkably little water. 4 p.m. increased speed again. Sea and wind now astern. From 4 to 6 beam sea. . . ."

But on November 29 the wind was still blowing force 8 (48 miles an hour), though the sea was bigger than ever, so the diarist adds that even one of this squadron of vessels (not smaller than 3200 tons) was partly invisible. "Impossible to lay the tables. Broken up furniture thrown overboard, all crockery smashed. In the ship and in the mess there were water leaks everywhere. Impossible to be on deck. Necessary to secure oneself with ropes. We are about off the entrance to the Magellan Straits." That these statements were far from exaggerated will be seen from the accompanying German illustration, as the scene appeared off the Chilean coast from the fore-bridge of the *Dresden*. One cannot estimate from a photograph a wave's height, but from the angle at which the next ship ahead (*Nürnberg*, of 3400 tons) is heeling, and the heavy weather she is making, the squadron was having no

pleasant time. In the farthest distance but scarcely visible, is the *Scharnhorst*, next comes *Gneisenau*, followed by the *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Dresden*. The weather on the occasion of the Coronel battle was not quite so vile, yet Admiral Luce tells me that it was certainly too bad for any ship to have lowered boats *at night* in the hope of rescuing friend or foe.

After the Falklands battle was over several interesting scraps of information were obtained and are worthy of mention. One had reference to the enormous sums of money German men-of-war were carrying. This ensured their being able always to purchase meat and other provisions for cash at any Pacific island. The *Leipzig* carried £160,000 in gold, but there is no saying how much was borne in the flagship. It was the *Leipzig* also which found it not inconvenient (for obvious reason) to use a Marconi wireless set on certain opportunities, this set having been obtained from a captured British ship.

Few vessels during the war had a more varied and useful experience than the *Glasgow*. After Coronel she performed invaluable work at the Falklands battle, followed by several months of searching for the *Dresden*, including the tricky Last Hope Inlet where the tide actually reaches 12 knots, and she was present as senior of the three ships when the German cruiser was finally sunk at Juan Fernandez in the following March. And of the latter incident the *Glasgow* was to retain an amusing memento. Between the arrival at this island of the *Dresden* and the morning when the *Glasgow* with her two consorts steamed in, the Germans had taken on board a three-months-old pig from the shore. Now when the *Dresden's* crew escaped to the beach whilst their ship was in her death agony, they seem to have left the unfortunate pig to its fate, so he took to the water and swam towards the *Glasgow*.

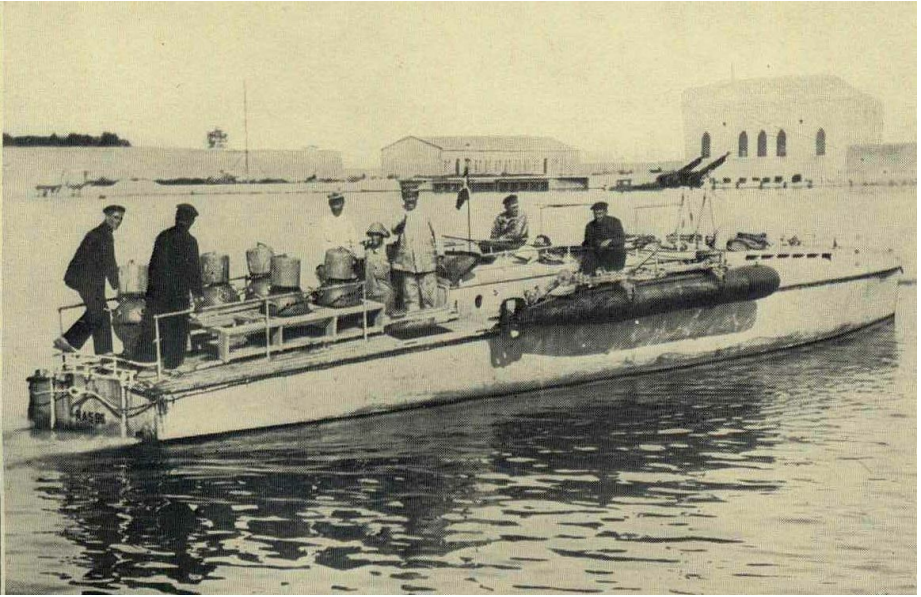
But, having just been in action, the latter's boats were still swung in, therefore one of her sailors dived overboard to the rescue. The pig struggled valiantly with the sailor and nearly succeeded in drowning him, until another went to his assistance and the animal was hoisted on board. The ship's company decided to award the pig an Iron Cross, for having been the only one who stuck to a sinking ship, and named him "Tirpitz." He became a great pet, waxed very fat, was kept alive and remained in *Glasgow* for nearly a year, travelling many thousands of miles. When in 1916 the *Glasgow's* crew was changed, it was decided to send "Tirpitz" home. There now came considerable difficulties in getting him landed, and the regulations against swine fever seemed irresistible until Captain Luce was able to present a certificate proving that "Tirpitz" had not been in contact with other swine since leaving the *Dresden*. So a special Order in Council was passed making the port at which the pig landed a "place within the meaning of the act," and the porker thus came to the Navy's

gunnery establishment at Whale Island, Portsmouth. But then followed a shortage in the nation's food supplies, so it was decided to put him up for auction in February, 1918, and thus "Tirpitz" passed out of history.

During all those months of cruising monotony, often it was a sense of humour which alone kept everybody happy and optimistic. Only at the rarest occasions, and in some neutral port where by international law a belligerent had to leave within twenty-four hours, could the men be conceded a little liberty and forget their steel home for a while. Captain Luce reminded them that any man who overstayed his leave would find himself interned for the war's duration. Not one man intentionally remained over long, therefore, at these foreign ports. It did happen that a sailor accidentally was ten minutes late on running down to the quay, where he had the chagrin of seeing the liberty boat already on her way back to the *Glasgow*. He managed to attract the coxswain's attention, and in great relief at having evaded internment so narrowly was received on board amid the enthusiastic amusement of his shipmates.

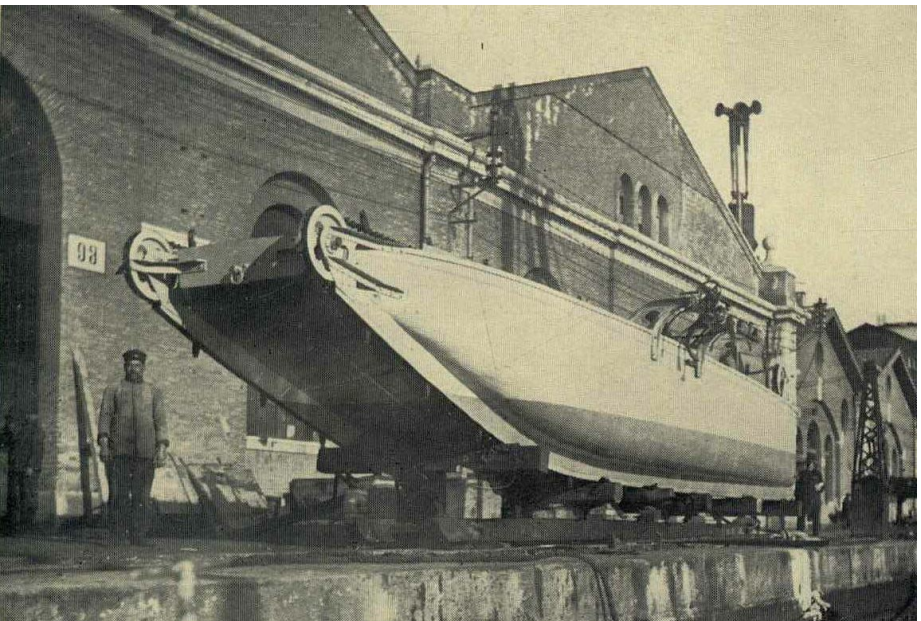
The war has long since ended, but the naval character remains unaltered; and those who spent the most impressive years of their lives in *Dresden* or *Glasgow* are not likely to forget quickly. Recently a German seaman, Hugo Webber, who was one of *Dresden's* survivors from her sinking, has gone right back to Juan Fernandez, and I have before me the photographs of his tents and camp life, where he is living alone as a modern Robinson Crusoe, and on the very island of the original Crusoe of Defoe's novel. There stands a rough and simple monument to his lost shipmates, with a *Dresden's* lifebuoy, a ship's cable, and anchor. There is something in the temperament of this solitary sailor, his leaving civilisation to look out always over the waters where lies his old ship, which one cannot help sympathising with and admiring. For the seaman's conservatism is irrespective of all national barriers.

Fitting, too, is the sequel as applied to the *Glasgow*. Captain Luce is now an Admiral and retired. The coxswain who was shut up with him in the ship's conning-tower during her memorable actions, whose hands turned the steering wheel, is also retired. He now steers another wheel, but still remains alongside his former commanding officer: for he happens to be Admiral Luce's chauffeur. Could anything be more appropriate, or more expressive of the great sea brotherhood?



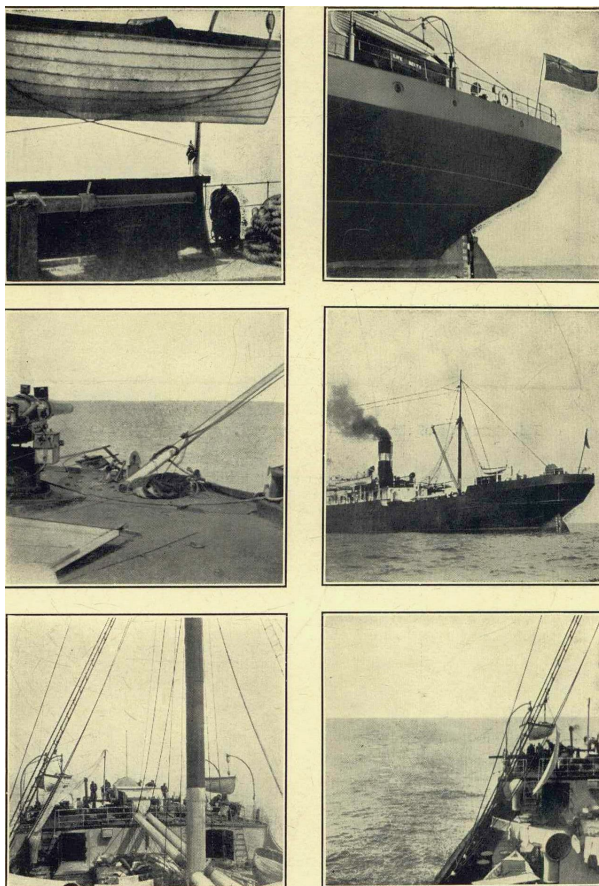
AN ITALIAN M.A.S.

This shows one of the successful motor craft with her torpedo on the starboard side.



THE FAMOUS "GRILLO"

A unique photograph of the ingenious marine "tank" which so bravely defied the Austrian boom defences.



THE MYSTERY SHIP *BARALONG*

TOP (*left to right*): Method of concealing gun on poop by means of an imitation lifebelt-locker; the same as seen from a submarine.

MIDDLE (*left to right*): After gun cleared for action and ensign staff lowered; the *Baralong* as an innocent tramp, steaming towards U-27.

BOTTOM (*left to right*): The *Baralong*'s decks; ditto with starboard poop gun cleared for action.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPROACH TO BATTLE

IT is a notable truth in the history of ships and men that some seem to have been predestined for high adventure, whilst the careers of others remain throughout singularly quiet and uneventful. In a previous volume^[18] I was permitted to show the strange and exciting part which H.M.S. *Kent* played in hunting the German cruiser *Dresden* during many weeks after the latter had escaped from the Battle of the Falklands as the sole surviving enemy unit, only to be discovered at the lonely island of Juan Fernandez where *Kent* was present at the death.

But that series of episodes with *Dresden* formed only one section of the extraordinary achievements which the British cruiser performed. The Falklands battle provided her with an opportunity such as rarely comes in a century to a single-ship, and posterity will ever admire the manner by which this tremendous chance was used to bring about a brilliant success. It is because the following narrative is so illustrative of seamanlike grit and perseverance that it ought to be the inspiration for drooping hearts at a time when human hope is apt to waver. Here was not a modern crack ship manned by the most highly trained naval ratings, but an oldish cruiser that was anything but war-ready when hostilities with Germany began. The whole secret of her ultimate success lay in two considerations: her commanding officer, with a gift for organisation and prevision, and a crew possessed of character that required only intensive training. Thus, first-class leadership and excellent personnel with moderate mechanical appliances, again proved the time-honoured lesson handed down to us from the days of hemp and sail.

At the declaration of war H.M.S. *Kent* was in dockyard hands at Portsmouth undergoing an extensive refit. Most of her boilers were on shore being retubed, her engines were all in pieces, and she looked as if it would be months before she could be ready for sea. Some critics who, in passing through the dockyard, noticed her chaotic condition, scarcely troubled to associate her with the European upheaval that had just begun. Surely before this eleven-year-old armoured cruiser should come out of Portsmouth it would be Christmas, and the short sharp campaign would be over? In the meantime it were more intriguing to observe how certain other men-of-war rapidly completed their needs and steamed off to play their respective duties at sea.

But from the hour when hostilities became imminent, orders were sent by the Admiralty for *Kent* to be got ready as quickly as possible. The result was that dockyard "maties" now toiled night and day at the enormous task. Weeks of fierce

activity sped by, and at last—exactly two months later—the job was done so that on the morning of October 3 Captain J. D. Allen, R.N., was able to commission her. Then came a busy time for all her people while stores and ammunition were being put aboard and the engine-room staff were getting machinery and boilers in a condition for carrying out steam trials.

Those of us who happened to be in Portsmouth harbour about this time cannot forget the energetic coming and going, the bustling running to and fro ashore; the frequent departures of all sorts of units—torpedo craft, armed yachts in their new grey paint, mine-sweeping trawlers, submarines, and others. In all this smart eagerness to get things done there was something infectious, and the late summer that year with its unusual amount of fine sunny days helped to maintain enthusiasm at its high point. Then, just as September was ending, had come that heavy blow when the three cruisers *Aboukir*, *Cressy*, and *Hogue* had all been sunk in one morning with the loss of nearly fifteen hundred lives.

This disaster at the hands of one submarine still further accentuated the manning problem. Already, long before the Auxiliary Patrol with its requirements for supplying crews to smaller units had become fully organised, a difficult situation was created for the regular Navy. Thus it was that *Kent* could be assigned only two-fifths crew from active service men, though it turned out that there were not enough to make up even that proportion; Royal Fleet Reservists being drafted in lieu, together with some coastguards and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. The other three-fifths comprised ratings from the R.N.V.R. and Royal Naval Reserve, many of whom were Scotch fishermen from the north. It was a thoroughly representative British crowd including 13 Smiths, 10 Browns, 11 McDonalds, 11 Macleods, and 9 Mackays. As Captain Allen anticipated that this would be a lengthy cruise, he took precautions to see that there were plenty of articles to assist recreation and amusement. Before sailing he therefore purchased a big drum and some fifes to equip a band. As so many Scotsmen were aboard, inquiries were made among them as to how many could play the bagpipes: but the surprising result was that not one man could do that one thing which every Englishmen fears to attempt. The difficulty was overcome by the discovery that in the Portsmouth Naval Barracks was a certain R.N.R. seaman who had previously been a piper. Captain Allen got him drafted to the ship, a telephone message was then sent to the Army and Navy Stores, London, to send down some bagpipes, and these arrived on board *Kent* just before she sailed. Gramophones, plenty of records, concertinas, fishing lines, a lantern and screen for lecturing purposes, three kittens, and a few other items made up the list. But the Association of Men of Kent and Kentish Men sent supplies of books, pipes,

cigarettes, and warm clothing. Altogether the *Kent* had the wherewithal for being a happy ship, and a happy ship is usually an efficient ship.

The wisdom of a commanding officer thinking weeks ahead for the comfort and cheeriness of his men cannot be praised too much, and especially when so large a proportion were to leave their cottage homes for the first time on a lengthy voyage. If a crew is compelled to spend months cooped up with no relief to their own society, and the monotonous steel walls or the ceaseless waves as their sole outlook, life becomes weary and drab, a spirit of discontent is encouraged, and the will to win soon weakens. On the other hand a seaman is not hard to distract by the simplest of pleasures, provided there is variety enough for appeal to his senses of hearing and sight. It is unvaried routine, without music or humour, which breaks the heart of him, and especially when he has been compelled to leave his fishing boat, his nets, his wife and family at a sudden summons.

Sunday having come round on the day after commissioning, and the ship's chaplain not having yet joined, Captain Allen held a short "stand up" service on the upper deck, and afterwards addressed the ship's company. The period from October 6-10 was occupied in carrying out steam trials and anchor trials, but the full speed trial—and subsequent events were to show how vitally important this must be—was not altogether satisfactory: it was accordingly necessary for *Kent* to go back into Portsmouth for forty-eight hours and make good a defective main steam pipe. Throughout this time, whilst news came in of the Naval Division's retreat from Antwerp, and the rival military forces on the Continent were engaged in a race to secure the Channel ports, and big events were ripening in different parts of the globe, every officer and man in *Kent* wondered whither their ship was bound. Was it to the coast of Portugal? Or Bermuda? Or the south-east coast of South America? At length came orders for proceeding to the latter, calling at St. Vincent (Cape de Verde Islands) on the way, where *Kent* should coal.

So at 8 a.m. on October 12, being in all respects ready for sea, the cruiser slipped from Portsmouth jetty, swung ship in Spithead for final adjustment of compasses, then went through the swept channel round the east end of the Wight and set a course westward down Channel, with guns' crews ready to open fire at any moment if a German submarine showed itself. Nevertheless it has to be admitted that *Kent's* crew had not yet had any opportunity for shaking down, nor of firing the guns, nor of doing any target practice. That very night at 11.30 p.m. came the first narrow shave when a French destroyer cut right across *Kent's* bows. It was only by the cruiser putting helm hard aport that a collision was avoided with a bare few yards to spare.

Next day saw *Kent* well clear of the English Channel, beyond probability of meeting with an enemy craft; yet every night at each of her fourteen 6-inch guns there would be three men awake and alert, with six more men sleeping in the casemates close to the guns. Besides these there were crews at the four 12-pounders and the four searchlights prepared for immediate action. Many of the ship's company had not been afloat for years, so the Bay of Biscay took toll of the seasick when bad weather came on. The 6-inch gun ports of the main deck were far from watertight, and the sea flooded the mess deck where hands were trying to sleep when off watch. Certainly with hatches battened down, lack of ventilation, seasickness, smell, and sea water swishing about, conditions must have made many a man wonder why he had joined the Navy in preference to the Army.

But then came the fine southern weather which restored everyone's spirits just as it did in those sixteenth-century ships when our Elizabethan ancestors, bound for the Azores or the West Indies, once left the Bay well astern. On the morning of October 16 *Kent* passed Madeira, and in the evening it was possible to drop a target and do some firing from the starboard 6-inch guns. On the following day this practice was renewed, and 9.30 a.m. of October 19 saw *Kent* arriving at St. Vincent, saluting the Portuguese flag with 21 guns. The 2400 miles from Portsmouth had been accomplished at an average of 15 knots. At this anchorage were lying the Portuguese man-of-war *San Gabriel* but also eight German merchant ships interned.

Here began the first trying experience for even the most willing Reserve volunteers. *Kent* had to coal, a collier came alongside, and there was a nasty swell which caused the ships to surge and roll, making it difficult to swing the coal on to the deck. Moreover, it was very hot, and most of the stokers were Reserve men unaccustomed to trimming coal in the bunkers. Still, 1233 tons were dumped on board between 12.30 p.m. and 2.40 a.m. At 4 p.m. *Kent* sailed again, but this time with two transports, *Dover Castle* and *Garth Castle*, full of troops bound from the Cape of Good Hope for England. They were picked up outside and convoyed to a rendezvous 80 miles east of Madeira, where they were handed over to H.M.S. *Vindictive* on the afternoon of October 23.

Kent was now free once again to proceed, and to put in some more gunnery practice, but on the next day received orders to remain for the present off the Canaries and keep a look-out lest any of the numerous German liners should break their internment to rush forth in aid of German men-of-war. But, after a visit to Las Palmas, *Kent* was ordered by a telegram from the Admiralty to proceed "with all despatch" to the Bissagos Islands, (which are Portuguese possessions lying between Cape Verde and Sierra Leone), as it was reported that the German raiding cruiser

Karlsruhe had been sighted. Being short of fuel, Captain Allen first put in at Dakar, coaled, left after dark, found nothing in sight at the Bissagos, but next day met H.M.S. *Highflyer*, who (it will be remembered) had won fame two months previously by sinking the German raider *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* further up the West African coast.

The next few days having been spent in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, and with no more news of *Karlsruhe*, there came another Admiralty telegram instructing *Kent* to steam across the Atlantic to those Abrolhos Rocks of the east Brazilian coast. And from now onwards the decisive part that the British cruiser was presently to play became already laid down, though no one could have foreseen precisely how events were to follow. It was November 4, and on November 1 had occurred the heavy defeat of Admiral Cradock's squadron at the hands of Admiral von Spee off Coronel. *Kent* was delayed a few hours, as one of the ship's feed-pumps had been taken to pieces and she was waiting for 100 tons of fresh water to be brought off from the shore at Sierra Leone; but an hour after midnight she was under way and soon worked up to 17 knots for the voyage of 2200 miles through lovely weather. The further away that the African coast was left sweltering astern, the more tolerable were conditions for the crew. The days sped by, sing-songs on the upper deck were arranged with the Chaplain at the piano, and so the evenings passed till daylight of November 11 found the ship arriving at the Abrolhos, where two British colliers were in waiting for her.

Again it meant coaling in an exposed anchorage, with the snapping of hawsers and the loss of fenders, but before midnight she was off once more, and this time towards Montevideo. Matters were becoming of increasing interest, and concentrating towards some as yet indefinable crisis. Von Spee's squadron had been last heard of near the Chilean shore, and might quite reasonably be now somewhere to the south-east of South America. Anything might happen at any hour. On November 14 came the first opportunity for firing a few projectiles with full charges from all *Kent's* 6-inch guns. A target was dropped, and after the first rounds it was knocked to pieces at 5500 yards. The men were so pleased that they started cheering, and the enthusiasm swept like a wave of encouragement through all those reservists. "The guns' crews," recorded Captain (now Admiral) Allen, "were very steady and self-possessed, and the arrangements for controlling the firing very satisfactory. We were also very pleased to find that the projectiles from the two 6-inch guns in the twin gun turrets fell very well together. In fact in every way it was a good day's work, and I think we all felt that we were really quite ready now to take on the enemy's ships."

But on the evening of November 14 came the following wireless message from the South Atlantic:

“You are to return to Abrolhos Rocks at slow speed. The Admiral is on board *Defence*.”

Not without a sense of disappointment did *Kent* turn round in obedience, and steamed slowly towards the assigned rendezvous. On the way she stopped and boarded several steamers, of which all turned out to be British, and one fortunately was the Pacific Steam Navigation liner *Ortega*, which happened to have mails on board for *Kent*, so great cheerfulness came with the surprise. In addition, the *Ortega* was good enough to supply the cruiser with 700 lbs. of fresh meat, besides potatoes, oranges, and apples. From November 17 to 28 came that quiet interlude which often precedes a great happening. Here at Abrolhos Rocks were the colliers as well as the two armed merchant cruisers *Edinburgh Castle*, *Orama*, together with the armoured cruisers *Defence* (flying the flag of the Rear-Admiral commanding the Fifth Cruiser Squadron), *Carnarvon*, *Cornwall*, and the armed merchant cruiser *Otranto*. But now came the great news that Vice-Admiral Sturdee with the two battle-cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* was coming out from England: a concentration was shortly to take place in response to von Spee's operations.

During these days of waiting *Kent* had further opportunities for training her crew at gunnery and torpedo practice. So inexperienced were many of the ship's company in the arts of war, that numbers of them now saw a torpedo fired for the first time. And this was one of the vessels which hoped soon to meet von Spee's squadron that contained some of the crack gunners in the German Navy! Of *Kent*'s twelve naval officers above the rank of Midshipman belonging to combatant rank no fewer than seven were from the Royal Naval Reserve; and we have seen how great was the percentage from fishermen and other Reserve ratings in the lower deck. Any statistician would have proved to his own satisfaction that such a raw amateur company of sea warriors would have little chance against a German ship of equal armament, and against men who had lived and trained together for months instead of weeks. Still, one can prove most things by a display of figures—except the limitless possibilities of human endeavour, actuated by such deep emotions as proceed from patriotism or a personal pride. And now off the Abrolhos in late November ex-fishermen were making quite good gunnery at 8000 yards.

Daily these lonely wave-smitten rocks became more attractive. For next arrived H.M.S. *Glasgow*, scarred but very much alive. She had taken part in the terrible Coronel battle only three weeks previously, been hit five times, but escaped when her sisters had foundered. After effecting repairs in Rio de Janeiro, she had come up

to join this important concentration, and there were wonderful yarns to be spread through the squadron concerning the efficiency of German gunners. On that same afternoon came yet another lithe cruiser, H.M.S. *Bristol*, which in the first few hours of the war had actually chased, sighted, and at 7000 yards had opened fire on the German cruiser *Karlsruhe*.

On November 26 came the last touch to make this cruiser gathering off the Abrolhos majestic, as well as amazing in its display of sea power. Here, away from the world in marine solitude, was amassed a floating population equivalent to that of a town and valued in millions of pounds sterling, yet disciplined and united for one common end. "At daylight," says Admiral Allen, "we sighted the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* approaching the anchorage. There was no mistaking the tripod masts, those same tripod masts which later on caused so much surprise and consternation to the Germans at the Falkland Islands." So here was assembled a fleet of fourteen vessels: *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, *Carnarvon*, *Kent*, *Cornwall*, *Bristol*, *Glasgow*—all regular active service ships of the Royal Navy—the armed merchant cruiser *Orama* and the six colliers.

Busy hours followed in drawing stores from the newly arrived flagship, and in coaling, yet with that big sea that was running it was no pleasant proceeding. On November 28 the squadron^[19] weighed and began the 2200 mile voyage south to the Falklands. *Bristol* was sent off with orders to communicate with Rio de Janeiro, and join the squadron later; but the rest of the ships were now steaming in line-abreast down the Atlantic, each being twelve miles distant from her sister by day, and eight miles apart by night. By this means a vast ocean channel was being swept and combed to prevent any of the enemy slipping through. For, be it remembered, not merely von Spee's squadron but individual raiders were very much in the minds of all concerned. Actually the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* on November 21 had captured the French barque *Anne de Bretagne* well away from the Brazilian coast, and Admiral Sturdee's squadron, believing that she was now somewhere between themselves and the Falklands, were maintaining a very careful look out. But in truth the raider was never sighted by this naval force and remained free to carry on her work of destruction.

Thus for nine days the British battle-cruisers and cruisers steamed south, cutting with their fine bows the heavy ocean swell, favoured with beautiful weather nearly all the way. As for *Kent*, no opportunity was lost of further practice in range taking, control of fire, and generally working up to a proficiency essential for that great action which officers and men alike instinctively knew must soon come. In every ship there was a feeling of suspense and exhilaration, but a passionate desire to avenge

the terrible disaster of Coronel. The arrival of the two battle-cruisers with their formidable appearance, and their splendid performance of having steamed out from England at a mean speed of over 18 knots for fifteen days, created a marvellous sense of pride and confidence. If they had on the voyage lost a good deal of their paint, at any rate they suggested tremendous power and capability. The mere fact that they had brought out fresh stores, and a mail only three weeks old, provided additional joy to all hands.

Carnarvon was able to tow a target for *Kent's* gunners, who fired 90 rounds of 6-inch ammunition with such improved standard that the Rear-Admiral (A. P. Stoddart) in *Carnarvon* made the congratulatory signal: "Your shooting was very good." This was both encouraging to the fishermen and reservists, as well as pleasing to Captain Allen: for there would be no further target practice possible before meeting the enemy in real grim contest. There was nothing monotonous in this Atlantic advance: it was like to that of a mighty army seeking battle. And action might be expected at any moment, but every mile made it more imminent. Thus, for instance, at 8 p.m. on the first of December a wireless signal was intercepted from a merchant steamer saying she was in danger of being captured, and the squadron altered course for two hours, but then to their keen disappointment saw nothing. So the original course and speed were resumed, and it was found that after all the merchantman was signalling only her position: she was in no danger. Wireless, as I have shown in *The Sea-Raiders*, during naval operations of the Great War was both a convenience and a great danger. If it was the means by which the German cruiser *Dresden* was located and what led to her sinking, it was also a peril to British vessels. The value of history is, that by collating facts we can the more clearly see the relation between cause and effect. It nevertheless surprised many of us, when concentrating our study on the raiding campaign, that wireless could be responsible for so much. Indeed, shortly after the above publication appeared, I received a letter from a distinguished British Admiral who just before the war was one of the greatest experts and pioneers in all naval wireless. He, too, was amazed at these deduced results. "Having been a wireless telegraphy officer" (he modestly described himself), "I was horrified at the reckless way in which our ships used wireless. And I know how much information the Germans got about the movements of our ships. In August 1914 we were not prepared as we should have been in Wireless Telegraphy."

But in this South Atlantic squadron under Admiral Sturdee, as in Admiral Jellicoe's Grand Fleet whenever the latter made its periodical sweeps down the North Sea, matters were very different. In both cases wireless was forbidden, except it were absolutely necessary. The Sturdee squadron on its way to the

Falklands was spread out only to the limits of visual signalling made by searchlight. And it was this preservation of secrecy which was in a few days to bring about a dramatic surprise that is one of the greatest factors in all warfare. Conversely, the value of being able to pick up information as to the movements of enemy units was beyond all estimation. News reached the British squadron for example on December 3 that the German tender *Patagonia* had left Montevideo during the night with stores for German warships; so the inference, amid all this factual uncertainty, was that von Spee could not be far away.

On December 2 *Bristol* rejoined, took station on the starboard beam of *Kent*, and in the act of so doing enabled the latter to practise “rate of change” and fire control. So clear was the weather next day that from *Kent*’s bridge the masts of every ship could be descried, though the farthest was some twenty miles away across the heaving sea. I remember, early on in the war, being told by a British naval officer that, when some German officers had been taken prisoners and brought aboard one of our somewhat older ships, the prisoners soon afterwards smiled significantly and critically. Looking at the layers of paint, everywhere, they exclaimed:

“If ever you are shelled by our ships how you *will* burn!”

Now *Kent* was an old ship with layer and layer of paint, and on this third of December, the weather being so fine and there was nothing of importance for people to do, Captain Allen very wisely set the men chipping and scraping off the old paint, so that before going into the inevitable action she would at least have a better chance of surviving. So keen was everyone that even the officers chipped and scraped the paint from the after turret. “The *Kent*,” writes Admiral Allen, “being an old ship, had been painted again and again; and, consequently, in many places there were layers of paint—very inflammable. To reduce the chance of fire in action caused by the enemy’s shell, it was very important to scrape off and throw overboard as much paint as possible.”

And now at last the long voyage that had begun at Portsmouth was ending, and the day of days was approaching. On the afternoon of December 3 the mighty cavalcade was still further strengthened by the arrival of the armed merchant cruiser *Macedonia*,^[20] which took station between *Kent* and *Bristol*. The days were getting longer but colder; the “roaring forties” brought a cold bite in the air and added an additional zest to work. “We exercised General Quarters in the forenoon. We exercised everything we could think of—fires in action, damages to the ship, casualties, arrangements for dealing with wounded men, etc. We were all beginning to get rather tired of this continual rehearsing for action, and yet we realised how necessary it was. We felt that we were now really ready for a fight, and as a matter

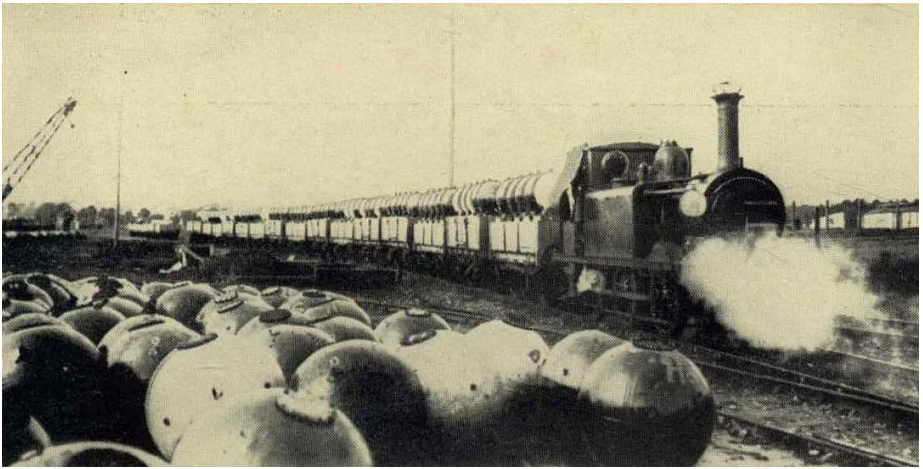
of fact, this was the last time we exercised General Quarters before we went into action." Thus, in exactly two months, had the newly commissioned *Kent* with a crew chiefly of raw inexperienced material been converted into a first-class fighting machine. One sees here the supreme value of having a reserve of sea-minded men on which to draw in a time of national emergency, but simultaneously must be stressed the importance of having at hand a sufficient nucleus of officers, petty officers and men able to impress the training and experience of years on willing learners.

Two days before making land the weather changed. It became thick, with fine rain and mist, so that not one ship was visible to another. These conditions and the proximity of the Falklands made it increasingly possible that von Spee's squadron might be encountered at any moment. If an enemy ship were seen now, delay would be fatal: fire would have to be opened on sight. For this reason guns were all kept manned, and there was a general tense feeling that something was about to happen. During a brief period this bubbling excitement passed, and at 10.30 a.m. on December 7 the whole squadron steamed through the bitter atmosphere into Port William, Falkland Islands. Engines came to rest; there was a rattle-clank of heavy cables leaping into the chill waters, as soon as the ships had been piloted in through the line of mines that had been hastily improvised from empty oil-drums; and over there was H.M.S. *Canopus* moored within Stanley Harbour, ready to fire her guns over the land at any approaching enemy vessels.

It was not a place of beauty to which these sea-stained ships had come; but one of dark moorland bereft of trees, windswept, uninviting, with the angry cries of penguin filling the air, and sunshine too frequently an utter stranger. It reminded the fishermen of their own country when they saw flocks of hardy sheep grazing amid scenery at its best similar to the bleakest parts of Scotland. Stanley Harbour is a natural port reached by a narrow entrance out of Port William. Only *Glasgow* and *Bristol* brought up inside Stanley, westward of *Canopus*, the other units of the squadron anchoring in Port William, and immediately boats were lowered for the crews to begin scraping off the weed which had already begun to grow on hulls from the waterline downwards. Wire scrubbers and sharp scrapers attached to broom handles obviously could not reach down more than a few feet, but it must be recollected that each vessel had been steaming for nine consecutive days and was therefore so empty of fuel that she stood unusually high out of the water. The opportunity was to be utilised now or not at all; and there was no telling how soon every fraction of a knot gained through partial cleaning of surface would become of incalculable benefit.

There was still no news of the enemy; yet note how carefully every precaution had been taken during these preliminary days to have the squadron always in the highest possible fighting and steaming excellence! No trusting to luck! No relying on a vague optimism that, after all this Atlantic voyaging, it would be permissible to hope for the best and meanwhile take things quietly! On the contrary, Admiral Sturdee wasted not an hour. Whilst crews were scrubbing outside ships, and engine-room staffs were making minor adjustments to machinery within, every Captain was summoned aboard the flagship *Invincible* to receive from the Admiral instructions as to future movements. Where was von Spee? He had been unheard of since last seen off the Chilean coast. Would he bring his squadron through the Magellan Straits? Or outside the Horn?

In order not to miss them, it was open to Admiral Sturdee to divide the British squadron by sending some cruisers through the Straits, and both battle-cruisers round the Horn to rendezvous at the Pacific side. He now gave orders for all ships to fill up with coal at once, and the squadron would leave on December 9 so as to reach the Pacific before the Germans entered the Atlantic. But the difficulty was that only three colliers had reached the Falklands and the others were still on their way from the Abrolhos escorted by the *Orama*. It was quite obvious that fuelling would have to be done by turns, so *Glasgow*, *Bristol*, and *Carnarvon* were instructed to coal first, and the two battle-cruisers second. This meant that *Cornwall*, *Kent*, and the armed merchant cruiser *Macedonia* must take their turn when the others had completed. Outside Port William was *Macedonia*, acting as guardship with steam up ready for any emergency, but she was to be relieved next day (December 8) by *Kent*, who would maintain a look out to seaward till permitted to come in and do her coaling.



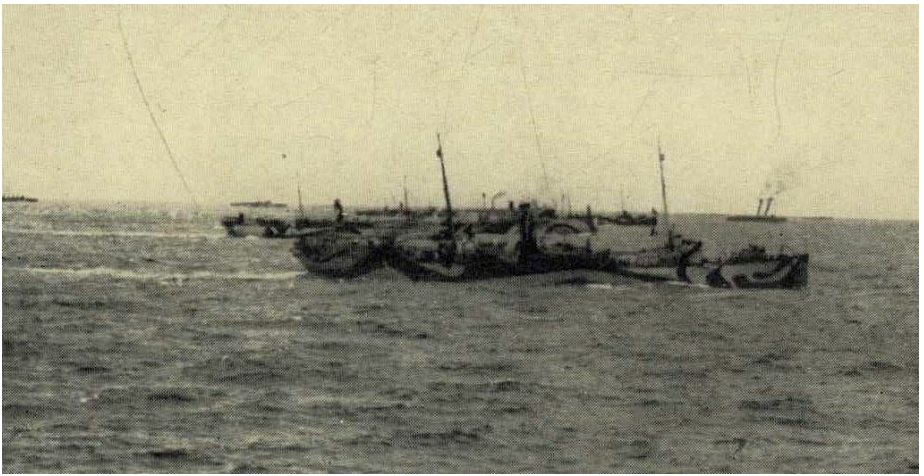
BOUND FOR THE BARRAGE

Trainload of mines on the way to the quay at Inverness.



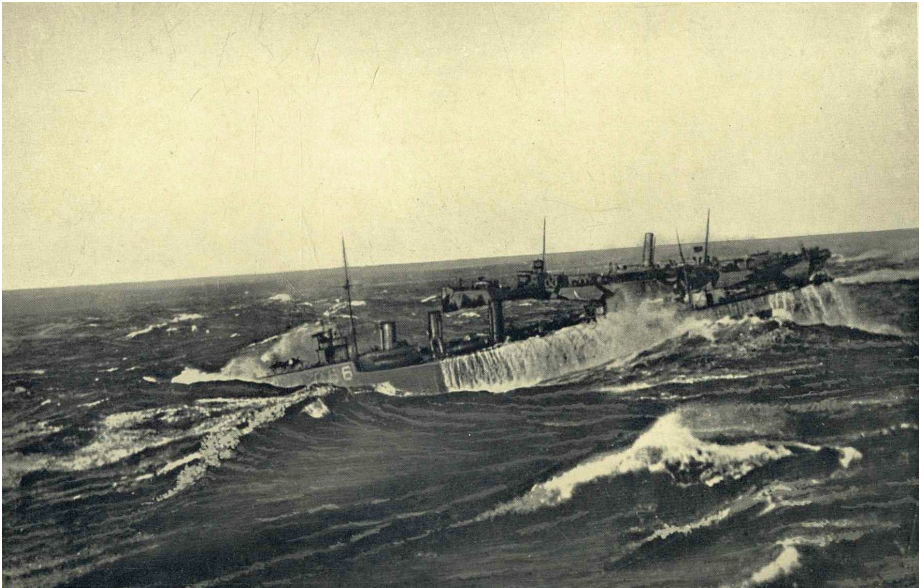
MINELAYING SQUADRON IN THE NORTH SEA

This shows the United States minelayers *Roanoke*, *Housatonic*, *Quinnibang* and *Baltimore* (right column), *Canonicus*, *Canandaiga*, *Aroostook*, and *Saranac* (left column); on September 20, 1918, on their way to the Northern Barrage.



IN MINELAYING FORMATION

The squadron, dazzle-painted, are in the act of laying their mines.



MINELAYING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

This shows one of the Northern Barrage minelayers in heavy North Sea weather. The British destroyer escort is corkscrewing into a wave.

CHAPTER V

DUEL TO DEATH

THE position of affairs, then, as daylight spread over the harbour on this ever memorable eighth of December was that *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, and *Bristol*^[21] were beginning to coal, *Carnarvon* and *Glasgow* had just finished, *Cornwall* had one engine down at six hours' notice, *Kent* was under orders to have steam up at 8 a.m. ready to proceed, and *Macedonia* was still outside.

Over the harbour peacefulness came the sound of the colliers' winches, the voices of men busy with shovels; the sight of little puffs of white smoke from the donkey-engines, and presently of rapid signalling. A few minutes before 8 a.m., as wardroom officers were sitting down to breakfast, came the thrilling signal through *Canopus* to *Invincible*: "Enemy in sight."

At 8.10 a.m. *Kent* received a signal from *Invincible* to weigh immediately, this being followed shortly afterwards by another message that two enemy cruisers had been sighted behind the town steering northwards. "No time was lost," writes *Kent's* commanding officer, "hands were immediately piped to up anchor, and at twenty minutes to nine, just half an hour after the signal was received, the *Kent* was under way and steaming down the harbour past the flagship. A general signal had been made for all ships to raise steam for full speed. The flagship signalled to the *Kent* to proceed to the entrance of the harbour and wait there for further orders. From aloft we could now see over the land two cruisers approaching the harbour; one had four funnels and the other three funnels. We discovered later on that they were the German cruisers *Gneisenau* and *Nürnberg*. Meanwhile all our ships were busy getting clear of the colliers, raising steam and preparing for action. In the *Kent* we had prepared for action coming down the harbour, throwing overboard all spare wood, wetting the decks and clearing away the guns. We hoisted three ensigns and a Union Jack, including the silk ensign and Union Jack which had been presented to the *Kent* by the ladies of the county of Kent, and which we had promised to hoist if ever we went into action.

"The *Gneisenau* and *Nürnberg* came steadily on towards the harbour until they were only 14,000 yards from the *Kent*. We could take their range with our range-finder. Suddenly we heard the *Canopus* open fire on them with her 12-inch guns across the land, and we saw the shell strike the water a few hundred yards short of the German ships. This must have surprised them, as *Canopus* was hidden behind the land. About this time also they must have caught sight of the tripod masts of the

Invincible and *Inflexible*, as they immediately turned round and made off. We could now see the smoke of three more cruisers coming up from the southward: these were the *Scharnhorst*, *Dresden*, and *Leipzig*.

“The *Glasgow* was now coming down the harbour, and soon afterwards the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* came out, followed by the *Cornwall* and *Carnarvon*. . . . The Admiral now signalled to the *Kent* to proceed and observe the enemy’s movements, keeping out of range. Off we went full speed ahead in the direction of the enemy’s ships, which were now clearly in sight to the south-east, hull down. Presently the *Glasgow* came along full speed and passed us, then out came the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* sending up great columns of black smoke, then the *Carnarvon* and *Cornwall*. It was a magnificent sight. It was a glorious day just like a fine spring day in England, a smooth sea, a bright sun, a light breeze from the north-west.

“Right ahead of us we could see the masts, funnels, and smoke of the five German cruisers, all in line-abreast and steaming straight away from us. At 10.20 a.m. the signal was made for a general chase, and off we all went as hard as we could go. It was now only a question of who could steam the fastest. The *Invincible* and *Inflexible* were increasing speed every minute, and soon passed the *Kent*. . . . They were now steaming 25 knots and were rapidly gaining on the enemy.”

Officers of the *Canopus*, who were observing from the shore station, had noticed through the telescope of their theodolite that the men aboard *Gneisenau* were already fallen in on deck dressed for landing, (the intention of von Spee being to capture the wireless station and seize Port Stanley), but the shells from *Canopus* had soon sent the Germans to their action stations. An officer in the *Cornwall* relates that German survivors afterwards testified to the surprise and horror felt at seeing the two British battle-cruisers, and “tried not to believe it.”^[22]

The dramatic suddenness with which the enemy had made his appearance, the hurried interruption of naval routine to get at the Germans, such minor incidents as the chance ramming by the departing *Inflexible* of a sailing pinnace belonging to *Cornwall* near the line of mines, and the inspiring spectacle of each ship displaying several new White Ensigns (now stiff as a board when engines began to reach their highest revolutions)—these were some of the mixed impressions which no one ever forgot. The ding-dong chase went on towards the south-east, with the battle-cruisers well ahead. There was no longer any necessity to keep *Kent*’s men at their action stations, but as soon as they were allowed to fall out they crowded on to the upper deck and forecastle, whence they gained a splendid view of one of the greatest battles in naval history.

For the present, then, whilst the two battle-cruisers with *Glasgow* were well ahead, whilst also *Kent*, *Cornwall* and *Carnarvon* were coming along at 22 knots some distance astern, the last three ships' companies were largely mere spectators. Just before one o'clock Admiral Sturdee signalled the order to engage, and now the three County class cruisers, still skurrying along, were to see big things. Reserve officers so recently come from peaceable passenger and cargo ships, fishermen and hands from little coasters, now found themselves the privileged crowd at a unique match. The fun was just beginning.

"At 12.55," states *Kent's* Captain, "the *Inflexible* opened fire from her fore turret at the right hand ship of the enemy, a light cruiser.^[23] A few minutes later the *Invincible* opened fire at the same ship. As the first shots were fired, the *Kent's* men cheered and clapped. They were as happy and cheerful as any men could be, and you might have thought they were watching a football match instead of going into action. The first shots fell short, as the nearest ship of the enemy was still out of range, but at 1.20 p.m. a 12-inch shell fell close alongside the rear ship and the three light cruisers the *Nürnberg*, *Leipzig*, and *Dresden* turned away to starboard to the south-west. Seeing this, the *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Cornwall* turned to starboard, too, in chase of them."

The battle, therefore, became divided into two sections. Whilst the *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* turned to port, forming single line ahead and opening fire, the two British battle-cruisers likewise turned to port and a furious engagement ensued. "As a result of these movements, the *Kent* was now steaming across the wake of the big ships, and about four miles away, so we had a splendid view of them without any risk of being hit. It was a wonderful sight, and the German ships were firing salvo after salvo with marvellous rapidity and control. Flash after flash travelled down their sides from head to stern, all their 6-inch and 8-inch guns firing every salvo. We could not see our own battle-cruisers so well, on account of their smoke, but it was evident they were keeping up a rapid fire. We could see their shell bursting all round and on board the German ships."

But before long the contestants in this first part got so far away from the County class cruisers that nothing of them could be seen except smoke—and then not even that. Now the second part of the battle gradually took tactical shape: it was a case of lighter cruisers settling matters by themselves, with engines versus engines all the time. That is to say *Glasgow*, *Kent*, and *Cornwall* were chasing *Nürnberg*, *Leipzig*, and *Dresden* at a speed already exceeding 23 knots. It was apparent that *Dresden* was the fastest of the enemy trio, *Leipzig* the slowest, and that they were approximately in line abreast. At 3 p.m. *Glasgow* exchanged shots with *Leipzig* at

about 12,000 yards and a few minutes later the latter with her port guns opened fire on *Kent*; but the range was too long and the shells fell short. *Kent* replied by firing her fore turret at maximum range (11,000 yards), but these shots fell short likewise. It was obvious that the range would have to be closed before hits could be expected. Still *Leipzig* kept on firing, her best efforts dropping within a few hundred yards of the *Kent*'s bow.

The next phase showed *Leipzig* steering more to starboard, and *Nürnberg* more to port, so it was time for *Kent* and her sisters to decide which should tackle which. As *Cornwall* and *Glasgow* were both to starboard, *Leipzig* was left to them, whilst *Kent* now steered for *Nürnberg*. We are viewing the Battle of the Falklands from the bridge of *Kent*, in order to see the culmination of all those efforts which had been going on during two months of training at sea. Had the mercantile mariners and fishermen learned from their active-service shipmates so well as to be steady and efficient in this the crisis of *Kent*'s career? Were they up to the standard of the Germans who had conquered at Coronel? Let us now confine our attention to *Kent* and *Nürnberg* solely, and in so doing we could wish for no more accurate and detailed information than the diary of Captain J. D. Allen, written at a time when every incident was still vividly in the mind. Here is the real stuff out of which history is fashioned, and as the years roll by this thrilling chase with its climax will be remembered in a way that is special and peculiar.

For, in no other naval engagement of the Great War was there such satisfying and decisive victory for British forces as at the Falklands. It more than made up for the decisive defeat off Coronel, and the Grand Fleet was never able in the North Sea to provide a repetition of the South Atlantic success. But that which appeals to human imagination, and rouses our emotions as if by a mere tale that is told, can be found in the simple narrative of a single-ship action away from the eyes of other vessels, yet destined to be settled in one of the loneliest bits of the Seven Seas. The days of the old frigate actions never witnessed a more stirring chase and overwhelmingly decisive sequel than are to be found in the *Kent-Nürnberg* episode. It was to be a duel till death: that was quite clear from about 4 p.m. One, if not both, of those ships was to perish before the short day was to end. For us moderns this powerful situation of suspense, this clashing of wills in a vast ocean, becomes additionally fascinating because it embraces the advantages of the mechanical age. The engineers and stokers, unable to catch a glimpse of the enemy, are just as much concerned in the contest as the men on deck behind the guns. Speed is so evenly matched by speed, that the final decision must be left to some extra personal effort which is greater than even the very steel and steam. The following comparative table

indicates that, in respect of tonnage and armament, *Kent* was unquestionably the superior. But the difference in the two ships' respective speed was so slight that it must be a gamble as to whether the British cruiser could overcome those intervening miles before it was too late.

SHIP	DATE WHEN COM- PLETED	DIS- PLACE- MENT	DE- SIGNED SPEED	BEST KNOWN SPEED	GUNS
		tons	knots	knots	
<i>Kent</i>	1903	9800	23	24.1	Fourteen 6-inch.
<i>Nürnberg</i>	1908	3350	23.5	23.7	Ten 4.1-inch.

On paper there was thus not more than half a knot difference in the rivals' speeds, so that if *Nürnberg* were already over five sea miles ahead, the task of ever catching her appeared pretty hopeless. Moreover, the British cruiser's machinery was five years older. Nevertheless, the race had to be run all the same.

"It was nearly four o'clock, and the *Nürnberg* was still some distance ahead. Should we be able to catch her before it was dark? Orders were sent to the engine-room to make a supreme effort to increase speed, and splendidly the engineer officers and stokers responded. There was little we could do on deck, so we assisted the stokers by smashing up all the wood we could find, spare spars, ladders, lockers, hen-coops, targets, etc., into suitable-sized pieces, and passed them down to the boiler-rooms to put on the fires. We were going along at a tremendous speed now—25 knots—and there could be no doubt that we were steadily gaining on the enemy. At 5 p.m. the *Nürnberg* opened fire with her after guns. It was a great relief when we saw the flash of her guns, for then indeed we knew that we were gaining, and we all felt quite confident that if only we could get within range of her we should soon sink her."

That was the spirit which was animating everyone in the *Kent*, yet the race against nightfall was becoming more serious. It will be remembered that *Kent* had not been conceded an opportunity for coaling at the Falklands, but had come all those 2200 miles and nine days' steaming from the Abrolhos, and in addition had to-day been running at high speed ever since soon after 8 a.m. Her rate of coal consumption at full speed was twenty-five tons an hour, yet here she was doing nearly a knot faster than her previous best known speed. It was now quite certain the fuel problem would immediately be alarming: for her maximum bunker capacity was 1600 tons. That had all been filled right up as far back as November 27, and very fortunately ten extra tons had been taken aboard. It would be a nice sort of

predicament if, at the end of this chase, *Kent* should find herself somewhere between Cape Horn and the Antarctic with not enough fuel for her to reach the Falklands, but heavy gales of wind to buffet her—and *Nürnberg* having eluded her in thick weather or darkness.

Such were the possibilities of the fresh situation that was now developing. In the meanwhile this unprecedented 25-knot gait was causing *Kent* to set up such a vibration that it was impossible to make use of the range-finder. Another discovery was even more discomfiting, and proved again the fallibility of paper figures. The *Nürnberg's* 4.1-inch guns were outranging the British 6-inch! There could be no doubt as to that: for whilst German shells were now falling over *Kent*, the latter's shots fell short, even with the guns at extreme elevation.

"It was exasperating to know that we must submit to being fired at without being able to hit back until we could get near enough for our guns to reach her. But, never mind," reasoned Captain Allen, "it was only a question of time, as we were steadily gaining on her, and the *Kent* could easily put up with a few hits at such a long range without being any the worse. It only made us feel more determined than ever to sink her. . . . We had several shots through our rigging and funnels, and one on the upper deck aft, but no serious damage had been done yet, and nothing to reduce our speed. It was now raining, fine rain and mist, and the light was getting bad. We altered course slightly to port, and opened fire with the fore turret and the two foremost starboard casemates. Owing to the bad light and the rain it was very hard to see the fall of our shot, but as far as we could see they were going very close to her."

Actually *Kent* had just done better than she could realise. The time was 5.9 p.m. and, thanks to that increased speed of 25 knots, she had gained over a mile. Whereas previously the enemy had been able to hit her at 13,000 yards, without the British 6-inch guns obtaining that range, *Kent* at her extreme range of 11,000 yards now scored two useful hits. For this fact was eventually learned from survivors, and that one shell entered *Nürnberg's* after steering compartment, killing every man in this below waterline flat except one. Therefore at the precise stage when anxieties of light and fuel were reaching their peak, there had begun that wonderful turn in the trend of events which in the realm of drama is called the dénouement. The tangle was being untied, the good fortune was passing over from Germans to British. There could be no doubt of this during the ensuing minutes, for *Kent's* engine-room staff were succeeding like wizards. Thus was proved at a most critical hour the worth of those weeks at Portsmouth when machinery and boilers had been given such a thorough overhaul; instead of permitting any scamping of the work and getting to sea

in nominal preparedness, the authorities had insisted on the job being complete.

Not otherwise could the strain have been kept up at the end of a long voyage to the extremity of South America. Contrariwise, *Nürnberg's* boilers were unequal to this exceptional and prolonged pressure, with the result that about 5.35 p.m. two of them burst (as also was presently to be related by German survivors), and the enemy's speed fell to 19 knots. "The range," says Captain Allen, "was now closing fast and at last, at 5.45, much to our relief the *Nürnberg* turned to port, so that she could fire at us with all her port guns. She had evidently given up all hope of escape, and now meant to fight. This was just what we wanted. We could get closer to her now, and get to a decisive range."

The last phase began. The problems of speed and oncoming darkness had suddenly disappeared, the contest was no longer a chase but a grim short-range duel of such fierceness that cannot by the printed word be more than hinted. We have to visualise the emotions of rival crews well aware that only one of those two ships would be presently afloat; to remember that *Kent's* people felt themselves charged with the responsibility of avenging the Coronel loss; we have likewise to imagine the whole day's pursuit and suspense now ending with the longed-for chance of a smashing settlement. Some relief to all this pent-up excitement was necessary: neither machinery nor men could keep up the tension much longer. But we must hear, too, the thundrous cannonade, the thuds and crashing of shells and splinters; feel the horrible concussions as the guns discharged their fodder. It was now a restricted marine world where every sensation was ugly, jolting to the nerves, jarring to the senses, in an atmosphere wild and fearful. Amid this dread din, the bursting of steel and the anxiety to loose off projectiles at record speed, was *Kent's* character as a happy, efficient, and well-disciplined ship put to the great test. All those hours of monotonous routine, instruction, and rehearsing the same thing again and again, were now to show that everything had been worth while. The three-fifths reserve men were pulling with the two-fifths regulars, as one body on one rope.

What a glorious life's chance was this to make history! For those who had left behind in England some pleasant coastguard cottage, with its neat garden and whitewashed pebble walk; or those who had come from towns stereotyped with the trams, the streets, and cinemas of modern civilisation; or those others who had never been far from their nets and fishing community; the evening of December 8th was the opportunity of a hundred lifetimes. "As the *Nürnberg* turned, she started firing all her port guns. The *Kent* turned to port, too, but not quite so much, so as to get still closer, and opened fire with the starboard guns as soon as they would bear. Both ships were now firing away as fast as they could, and getting closer and closer. The

Kent was steaming much faster than the *Nürnberg* now. . . . It was now six o'clock. The range was down to 4000 yards. Both ships were using independent firing, and firing as fast as the guns could be loaded and fired. The *Kent* was firing lyddite shell. We could see our shell bursting all over the *Nürnberg*, and we could see that she was on fire. There was a tremendous noise, guns firing and shell bursting, with a continuous crash of broken glass, splinters flying, things falling down, etc.

"It was hard to understand how the *Nürnberg* could survive it so long. At times she was completely obscured by smoke, and we thought she must have sunk; but as soon as the smoke cleared away, there she was, looking much the same as ever and still firing her guns. She now turned away from us, as if unable to face such a heavy fire. Her foretopmast was shot away, her funnels riddled with holes, her speed reduced, and only two of her port guns were firing. At 6.10 she turned towards us, steaming very slowly, and we crossed her bow, raking her with all our starboard guns as she came end on. Two of our 6-inch shells burst together on her forecastle, destroying her forecastle guns.

"After crossing her bow, we turned to port till we were nearly on parallel courses again, firing at her with all the port guns. This was a great joy to the crews of our port broadside guns, as up till now they had not had a chance to fire. It was the port guns' turn now, and well they availed themselves of the chance, simply raining shell on the *Nürnberg*. At last, at 6.36, the *Nürnberg* ceased firing and immediately we ceased firing too. There was the *Nürnberg* about 5000 yards away, stopped, and burning gloriously.

"We steamed slowly towards her, taking care to keep well before her beam, so that she could not hit us with a torpedo. As we got nearer to her we could see that her colours were still flying, and she shewed no sign of sinking. We had to sink her: there could be no doubt about that, so at 6.45 we opened fire again. After five minutes, during which time she was repeatedly struck, she hauled down her colours. We immediately ceased firing. We could see now that she was sinking. Orders were given to get the boats ready for lowering, but when the men went to lower the boats they found them riddled with holes. The carpenters then collected all the necessary materials, and set to work to patch the holes in the two boats which were least damaged—the second cutter and the galley.

"The men had now left their action stations and were all on the upper deck watching the *Nürnberg*. Ropes' ends, heaving lines, lifebuoys and lifebelts were got ready to save life. We could now see some of the men leaving the *Nürnberg*, jumping into the sea and swimming towards the *Kent*. At 7.26 she heeled right over on her starboard side, lay there for a few seconds, then slowly turned over and

quietly disappeared under the water. Just before she turned over we saw a group of men on her quarterdeck waving a German ensign attached to a staff. As soon as she had gone, we steamed slowly ahead towards the spot where she had gone down, so as to try and pick up as many men as we could from the ship while the boats were being patched. The sea was covered with bits of wreckage, oars, hammocks, chairs, etc., and a considerable number of men holding on to them or swimming in the sea. It was a ghastly sight. There was so little that we could do.”

Most of the Germans were so exhausted that they could not even hold on to the end of a proffered rope: and everywhere in the water *Nürnberg's* survivors were frantically striving to reach *Kent's* sides. It had been as fair a fight as ever any judicial mind could desire, and *Kent* was entitled to her victory by all the rules of the game. But now guns were silent, enmity belonged to the past, national honour had been satisfied, and it was opportune to remember the brotherhood of the sea. Wrecked mariners must be plucked out of those bitterly cold waters.

“Our sailors were shouting to them, trying to encourage them, telling them to hang on, etc. Directly our two boats were sufficiently patched up to float, they were lowered and pulled about, picking up men in the water. Only twelve men were picked up altogether, and out of these only seven survived.

“A north-west wind had sprung up during the afternoon, the surface of the sea was rough, and the water very cold. The two boats we lowered had only been patched up very hurriedly, and were leaking badly. In fact, when they returned to the ship they were full of water, and on the point of sinking: we just hoisted them up in time.” All those dozen German seamen had been picked up not by the boats, but by *Kent's* people who went down over the ship's side with ropes, and personally secured the ends round the unfortunates' bodies still struggling against Atlantic destiny. Captain Allen spent an hour and a half cruising about the area searching for other survivors until it was now dark. All the German ship's company, except that mere handful, had perished, but only after a courageous determined duel in which their gunnery had been distinguished.

Thus, by a complete reversal in the fortune of war, had strangely come to *Kent* the duty of avenging *Monmouth's* death. Now *Monmouth* was in all respects of design, size, speed, armament, date of building, and so forth, the very sister of *Kent*. Less than six weeks ago in the action off Coronel *Monmouth* had been maimed by German guns, but was still afloat listing heavily and nearly defenceless, when through the darkness arrived *Nürnberg* who at point-blank range poured shell after shell until the British cruiser capsized and went down, with colours flying, to the bottom of the Pacific. In that case, however, not one life was rescued and not a German boat

lowered, owing to the heavy sea that was running. If, then, we brush aside from our eyes the brutalities of warfare and the hot passions of enmity, there is something appropriate that one County class cruiser at the close of a hot chase should have avenged another's disaster. Not less pleasing was the privilege of snatching out of the sea even a small percentage from sharing their brothers' fate.

But now that nothing more could be done, *Kent* hoisted in her boats and began steaming back toward the Falklands. So protracted had been the pursuit that Port William was most of 200 miles away. Ordinarily that distance would not have mattered, but two serious considerations pressed themselves to the foreground of importance now that *Nürnberg* was gone. Undoubtedly as regards speed it had been an aid to *Kent*, in pursuing, that the British cruiser was light rather than recently bunkered. But here came the anti-climax: only 200 tons of coal remained in the ship. How could she possibly get back to port? Send a wireless asking Admiral Sturdee for assistance? But *Kent* had no idea as to how the main action of the battle had resulted, nor whether the Commander-in-Chief were still afloat. Then at least the *Canopus* or the land station would pick up the message? That, also, was unfortunately out of the question.

For one of the *Nürnberg's* shells had gone through the head of *Kent's* foretopmast and the heel of the foret'gallantmast, thus bringing down the whole of the latter with the aerial though not as far as the deck: luckily it remained suspended by the rigging. Even this could have been repaired and re-erected, but another enemy shell had wrecked the wireless office and smashed up the transmitting instruments. *Kent* was thus condemned to be as dumb as one of Nelson's ships. Darkness was gathering, the north-west wind was rising ominously in this region, notorious for having the world's worst weather. An ugly swell was stirring itself and sporting with flotsam that once was *Nürnberg*. Then, as Commander E. L. Wharton of the *Kent* has related, "Out of the mist loomed a great four-masted barque under full canvas. A great ghost-ship she seemed. Slowly, majestically, she sailed by and vanished in the night." Curiously, this was the same sailing vessel which earlier in the day had glided on to the scene of the battle-cruisers in action with *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*. It was at a subsequent date learned that the barque had been so long on her voyage that she was ignorant of war having been declared.^[24] Thus by a flick of fate did one of the last representatives of the sailing era happen to be present at two phases of the most decisive British naval victory in modern times.

And whilst Captain Allen was taking the *Kent* northwards to her base, through the inky waters and the complaining wind, leaving behind an arena of death, there was an opportunity to take stock of his own vessel's condition. We have said nothing

of the responsible isolation and nervous strain, the resolute calm cloaking all inward excitement, that pertain to a cruiser's Captain during all those big tense hours now seemingly so long since banished. But with a little imagination we can go back, place ourselves on the *Kent's* forebridge and keep watch alongside. We can feel our pulse quicken as the engines increase their number of revolutions, and slightly relax our knees to lessen the sensitiveness to vibration; but even then the crude flashes of guns below and around, the jolt which every explosion gives to our jaws and ears, have become nerve-shattering after the first few minutes.

There is so much for a commanding officer to keep in proper balance at one and the same time. His ship is a fighting machine—yet a ship all the while. Even during all that thrilling chase the navigation must never be neglected: at any moment a pencilled mark on the chart must indicate the present position. His handling of the vessel, too, must be such as to bring the maximum amount of gun power concentrating on the rival, and here enters the value of superior speed as an aid to seamanship, enabling him to get athwart the enemy at selected range, and rake him with a whole broadside, whilst the *Nürnberg* could reply only with forecastle guns. Officers placed so far forward and aloft on *Kent's* bridge, so intently concerned with their own immediate jobs, could not be expected to know all that was happening in other sections of the ship.

But, at last, with the day's chief duty done, Captain Allen was free to be informed concerning some remarkable happenings.

“Now did most of us hear for the first time of our own casualties. In a large ship engaged in an action most of the men are fully absorbed by their own particular duties, and know little of what is going on in other parts of the ship until the action is over. We ascertained that we had lost four men killed, and twelve men wounded. Ten of the casualties occurred in A3 casemate, caused by a shell which apparently struck the gunport and burst just outside the casemate. The flash from the bursting shell must have ignited one or more charges inside the casemate, as there was a flash of flame which went down the hoist into the ammunition passage below.^[25] Fortunately the man stationed at the bottom of the ammunition hoist, Sergeant Charles Mayes, R.M.L.I., had the courage and presence of mind to remove the charge, which was there, and flood the compartment with water which prevented the fire from spreading. Had it not been for this prompt action, the flames might have reached the magazine and the ship been blown up. This Sergeant was subsequently awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.^[26]

“Two of the men in the casemate were instantly killed, and the other eight all terribly burnt. Of these eight men two subsequently died on board, and two died

afterwards in hospital. When the fire occurred in the casemate, some of the least injured opened the casemate door and ran out along the mess deck, their clothes in flames. The door being opened, the flames inside the casemate came out through the door and were instantly observed by the carpenter and the Stokers' fire brigade. These men at once took fire hoses to the casemate, and sent for further assistance. Stoker Petty Officer George S. Brewer, who was in charge of the Stokers' fire brigade in that part of the ship, was standing in the open doorway of the casemate, holding a hose and playing the water on the fire inside the casemate, when there was another flash of flame inside the casemate (presumably another charge igniting) and he was blown backwards, getting badly burnt on his face, arms and hands. This Petty Officer was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal."

Now, immediately that news of this fire was known down below, Commander A. E. F. Bedford, together with the Chief Boatswain's Mate, some men from the repair party and electrical party, hurried to the casemate and helped to put out the conflagration. But it happened that just opposite the casemate door was the men's bag rack on the mess deck. The Commander and his assistants had now the job of pulling out burning bags, turning on them the hoses, and thus before long that fire was extinguished. One mentions such episodes as expressive of the diverse duties in a man-of-war organised against every emergency. All those wearisome rehearsals during the eight weeks had been justified.

But by its decentralisation of authority through officers, warrant officers, petty officers and leading hands, the Navy has the means for encouraging initiative as well as direction. The Carpenter, Mr. W. H. Venning, had been one of the first to see the casemate fire and did the right thing at the right instant. Running along the mess deck to secure a hose and then leave it playing on the casemate, he hurried off to get more help, and on return pluckily went himself inside the casemate with the hose. Well did he deserve the Distinguished Service Cross which was afterwards awarded. He had helped to save the ship from destruction, but now the fire main on the upper deck from which that hose was led became useless: it was shot away by a second shell. Not to be beaten by this cutting off of water supply, the Stokers' party smartly connected up with other mains, and so the great danger was diverted.

German shells in that engagement struck *Kent* no fewer than thirty-eight times, yet happily there were no serious injuries to her; merely a few holes above the waterline, though boats and funnels had been well riddled. The biggest hole was made by a shell which entered Commander Bedford's cabin and left an aperture measuring 30 inches by 22 inches. That silk white ensign, with which the ship had been endowed by the ladies of Kent, was in shreds; but it had a pleasing sequel.

Captain Allen, after collecting the fragments, sent them to those ladies who pieced them together and the historic flag was then hung up in Canterbury Cathedral, a second new silk ensign being subsequently sent to the cruiser by the original donors.

Now the non-arrival of *Kent* at the Falklands, and the absence of any tidings concerning her whereabouts, created anxiety. Who knew but that *Nürnberg* had sunk her? Still, after many an uncertain hour, everything ended happily. “We got back to the Falkland Islands,” says Captain Allen, “the next afternoon, December 9th, and as we approached the harbour we met the *Macedonia* coming out to look for the *Kent*. We immediately signalled to her to make the following signal by wireless telegraphy to the Admiral:

“Sunk *Nürnberg*. Regret to report 4 men killed and 12 wounded. Picked up 7 survivors. Wireless telegraphy apparatus is damaged.”

The victorious, scarred cruiser, having delivered her message, steamed up harbour and anchored in Port William. It was then for the first time she learned how memorable had been the previous day. *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sunk by the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*; *Leipzig* by the *Cornwall* and *Glasgow*; two of von Spee’s colliers by *Bristol* and *Macedonia*; and only *Dresden* of the entire German squadron escaped. “What a coup!” exclaimed *Kent*’s commanding officer; but his own ship had barely enough coal to get home. Suppose that during the morning watch of December 9 she had encountered *Dresden*? *Kent* simply could not have afforded to quicken pace beyond the economical, whereas the *Dresden* could have taken a desperate gamble, dictated the range, and shelled her enemy as if firing at a stationary target. For months the loss of *Kent* would have remained one of the Great War mysteries.

Captain Allen’s first act on arrival was to go aboard *Canopus* and make arrangements for his wounded to be sent ashore to the local hospital. That evening a collier came alongside and the work of fuelling went on till 10.30 p.m., by which time all hands were so fatigued with the last two days’ events that coaling was suspended until five the following morning. It continued till 6.40 p.m., so a third day had passed with precious little respite for officers or men. If any had joined the Navy influenced by the attractive posters of “going afloat and seeing the world in comfort,” he must have registered surprise. But figures at the end of that day proved what a narrow shave had separated *Kent* from an awful predicament. We have seen on a previous page that her nominal maximum bunker capacity was 1600 tons, and that at the Abrolhos she had somehow managed to take even ten tons more. But so thoroughly

empty had she strolled into Port William on December 9, that she actually took on board 1611 tons! Rightly, indeed, did the official Admiralty despatch eventually announce to the world that it was "owing to the excellent and strenuous efforts of the engine-room department the *Kent* was able to get within range of the *Nürnberg* at 5 p.m.," and splendidly had her Engineer-Commander G. E. Andrew, R.N., and Captain Allen himself earned each the decoration of Companion of the Bath that was subsequently awarded.

But in the meanwhile there were immediate duties to be performed: some pleasant, some sad. On December 11, came into port Admiral Sturdee with *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, who after the battle had been making a sweep in the Cape Horn area, believing that *Nürnberg* as well as *Dresden* had escaped. All Captains now repaired aboard the flagship for what must have been an impressive reunion. In the afternoon took place on shore the funerals of six men belonging to *Kent* and one from *Glasgow*. Very reverent and impressive was the service at the cathedral in the presence of the Governor of the Falkland Islands, Admiral Sturdee, all the Captains, together with a large number of officers and men from every ship in the harbour. Then the *Invincible's* band played the solemn march as the slow tread-tramp-tread of men in blue processed to the final resting-place. Marines from the *Kent* fired the salute over their gallant former shipmates, the combined buglers of the fleet blew the shrill and moving "Last Post" across the bleak air, and then *Kent's* Captain went off to the hospital to visit his wounded men, finding them wonderfully brave and cheerful. The seven *Nürnberg* survivors were put aboard *Canopus*: they had gruesome stories to tell of the slaughter which *Kent's* guns had created.

Next day, whilst *Kent* was busy repairing her injuries, drawing stores, as well as provisions and ammunition, congratulatory messages on "the brilliant victory," arrived for the squadron from His Majesty the King and the Admiralty. On Sunday, December 13, came a welcome day of rest, and a Thanksgiving Service was held aboard *Kent*. On Monday, thanks to the efforts of the ship's crew, especially the carpenters and shipwrights, but most ably assisted by artificers with others from *Canopus*, all the repairs were completed, including the wireless apparatus. In lieu of a damaged cutter, *Kent* obtained a merchant service lifeboat from the *Macedonia*. At 10 a.m. on Tuesday, in company with the armed merchant cruiser *Orama* and the collier *Trevanion*, *Kent* weighed and began steaming out, bound through the Magellan Straits into the Pacific searching for the missing *Dresden*. Little did these two British cruisers then realise how long and strenuous was the hunt to be, and that it was not till exactly three months later were they both to be present at the second historic occasion—the morning of March 14—when *Dresden* was sunk at Juan

Fernandez. How *Kent* repeated her own previous exploit of working up to tremendous speed on March 8, when *Dresden* was temporarily sighted in the Pacific and pursued, has been told by me elsewhere.

There was a small but significant episode as *Kent* came steaming out of the Falklands harbour this December 15. Having arrived abreast of *Invincible*, *Kent*'s people gave the flagship three rousing cheers, which were as heartily returned. There was a flutter of bunting, and then the battle-cruiser's semaphore began its staccato activity: the Commander-in-Chief was signalling *Kent* the following farewell message:

"I wish the Pacific Squadron the best of luck in their search for the enemy and hope they will speedily succeed in sweeping the enemy off their area of the ocean. I thank the Captain, officers, and men for their loyal assistance in carrying out my wishes."

And now it was the cruiser's turn to semaphore:

"Thank you very much for your kind message. The Captain, officers, and men of the *Kent* are very proud to have served under your flag on such a memorable occasion, and wish you good luck and continued success."

Port William was left astern, the sandy peninsula by Cape Pembroke lighthouse faded away; *Kent* began dipping her sharp bows into the south Atlantic swell. She was off on a second cruiser hunt.

There were busy days and nights ahead for *Kent* even when *Dresden* had at last been sunk. For weeks afterwards the British cruiser was patrolling vigilantly up and down the western shores of South and Central America on the look out for German tenders and raiders, providing also for merchantmen a confidence that had been at times violently shaken through the exploits of the enemy along the Pacific. Romantic bays and islands teeming with fish and fowl, were now visited but always there was the need for preparedness and the expectation of sudden development. Ever since October 1914, there had always been steam up, every night had guns and searchlights been kept manned: there had been no such thing as relaxation. By mid-April 1915, *Kent*'s engines and boilers after all this continuous steaming needed overhaul as badly as her officers and men required a spell of rest.

So the time came when she steamed north past the United States' western shores and on May 25 entered the Canadian harbour of Esquimaux, British

Columbia. It was a wonderful experience after eight months to lie peacefully to a buoy, in a protected harbour amid beautiful scenery, and to know that it would take the dockyard six weeks to make the necessary refit. How essential it was to maintain a warship in the highest efficient condition had been too well proved in the deaths of *Dresden* and *Nürnberg*. The former had actually started from West Indies on July 30, 1914, bound for Germany and a refit; but a wireless message stopped all that. Thus, although she luckily escaped from the Falklands battle and then hid herself during three months, her machinery was already in such a serious condition, the ship herself needed so complete an overhaul, that she could not have held on much longer in any case. Similarly with *Nürnberg*, which had been unquestionably overworked. If one is to believe the statement of a German surviving officer, she had not been refitted for three years.

Certainly it is beyond doubt that *Nürnberg* had recently cruised many thousands of miles across the Pacific. On July 21, she was summoned from San Francisco and joined up with von Spee at the Caroline Islands on August 6. Thence she had been sent north-east to Honolulu. She had hopped over the ocean to the south-east and arrived at Easter Island with von Spee, she had taken part in the Coronel battle, and next cruised down the South American coast. Thus, from at least July to December, *Nürnberg* was driven pretty hard, till finally *Kent* drove her to death. It is worth while calling attention to all this prolonged steaming on the part of the British and German cruisers, and the lack of relief, the difficulties of carrying on usefully in neutral waters. In the North Sea both the Grand Fleet and the High Sea Fleet did comparatively little steaming, spent most of their time in port, with ample opportunities for refitting, coaling, and giving leave to crews. The conditions in the south Atlantic and Pacific were just the reverse of this. When von Spee's squadron was sunk, many of her people had not been ashore for months: when *Dresden* went down, her crew were in an even worse condition of staleness.

As for *Kent*, most of her ship's company never set foot on land between October 11 at Portsmouth and May 25 at Esquimaux, though certainly some had been ashore at Port Stanley for a brief spell. No words are necessary to say how appreciated were the entertainments, feasts, picnics, motor drives, athletic matches, and kindly reception which the Canadians extended to war-worn veterans. On July 9, refitted and refreshed, *Kent* again set forth on the high seas, but leaving behind in hospital Engineer-Lieutenant Victor Foreman. This officer had retired before the war, but came back at the time of danger. On him (next to Engineer-Commander Andrew) had fallen the immense duty of getting record speeds and persistent reliability out of *Kent's* machinery. Assisted by one active service artificer-engineer,

and three warrant-engineers from the Royal Naval Reserve, Lieutenant Foreman had done wonders for his chief. It was sad that he had to be left behind seriously ill, but sadder still that some time afterwards he died.

CHAPTER VI

THE ADVENTURES OF *DWARF*

THOSE students of naval affairs, who were accustomed to think only in terms of capital ships and cruisers, were destined to receive a great shock when the progress of war demanded the employment of even the smallest craft that on paper seemed to have but the least fighting value.

Now one of these was H.M.S. *Dwarf*, an unprotected gunboat of 710 tons only. Except that she mounted one 4-inch gun right forward and another of that calibre aft, in addition to her four 12-pounders, she was really comparable to some rich man's yacht, and the gaff on her mainmast intensified her peaceable appearance. Only the bows and stern, as well as the forebridge, made you realise that after all she was a man-of-war. Built as far back as 1899, her speed was about 13 knots at the best, and the large number of prominent ventilators at once indicated that she was for service in the tropics. Her duty before the Great War was to show the White Ensign off the West African coast, and her light draught enabled her to cross bars into moderately shallow rivers denied to bigger ships. But it was not advisable to anchor in deep water under ordinary circumstances, for she had no steam capstan and the time-honoured sailing-ship method of weighing had to be adopted.

At the end of July 1914, the *Dwarf* had just finished her refit at Gibraltar, and was on her way back to the West African station. On July 28 she had reached Las Palmas when she received the precautionary telegram that the European situation was serious. She therefore took in an extra ten tons of coal on the upper deck in readiness for what might happen. Her captain, Commander F. E. K. Strong, R.N., on his way down the coast, was busy making the *Dwarf* more warlike and prepared to meet the enemy. Awnings were furled, boats turned in and covered, stanchions unbent and sent down, wire hawsers stored below, deck plates got ready for ventilators and uptakes, fore-yard got down, fighting stays put on mainmast, topmasts got ready for housing, searchlight put on the bridge by day, all gear requiring to be thrown overboard before battle being marked and set aside.

With all these preparations went on exercising general quarters, testing watertight doors, trying alternative steering positions, gunnery practice, and so on. It might be days or weeks before all the monotonous drill was to prove its value, but then (as indeed was actually to happen) might come a sudden moment when the enemy would appear and the whole fighting organisation would be thoroughly tested within a few minutes. Steaming with darkened ship, no navigation lights, men at night

defence stations, it was pretty tough on the stokers sweltering with little air to breathe. At Dakar the *Dwarf* received orders which sent her to Sierra Leone, and whilst on the way thither came the wireless announcing a state of war with Germany. There were warnings of German cruisers, also of such German colliers as the *Walhalla*, which had left Teneriffe on August 2 in haste, with coal cargo and provisions much in excess of her own requirements. To-day we know that this steamer went out to the Azores area, where she coaled the raider *Kronprinz Wilhelm*.

But days went by, all sorts of telegrams sparked out and in, the crew were still throwing overboard or burning all woodwork such as punt, spars, chests, hen-coops, cabin doors, lockers; whilst officers were even packing up clothes to be dumped over the side if advisable. Rolling heavily to the Atlantic swell so that the starboard 12-pounders were being washed down, she reached Sierra Leone uneventfully on August 7. But new developments were now soon to follow. Much further to the eastward, and only just above the equatorial line, was the German colony of the Cameroons, which it was now proposed by the authorities in Whitehall to blockade. There were to be combined operations from the sea by the British and French, the main objective being to destroy the wireless station and naval base at Duala, and compel this German colony into surrender.

It was on August 21 that the cruiser H.M.S. *Cumberland* (Captain C. T. M. Fuller, R.N.) arrived at Sierra Leone, and Commander Strong went aboard. These two units were to escort a transport, *Akabo*, carrying two companies of soldiers for Togoland. Captain Fuller decided to take the *Dwarf* in tow, the line was passed to the *Cumberland's* stern whilst the latter was still at anchor, and late on August 23 they got under way. Four days later, whilst still on passage, came the news that the Germans had surrendered Togoland unconditionally, but a short stop was made at Lome, where it was learned that at Duala the Germans had sunk several steamers to block up the channel and had probably laid a minefield.

The *Dwarf* next called at Lagos where she had some gun-shields made for her 12-pounders and found the Nigerian Government's yacht *Ivy*, already painted navy grey, fitted with wireless and prepared for the impending Cameroons operations. Some charts of the Cameroons river were obtained, some khaki uniforms for the *Dwarf's* marines, and the *Dwarf* was off again on September 1. Finally on the third day the island of Fernando Po, with the Cameroon Mountains came into view, and at this island the gunboat joined the *Cumberland*. Preparations were now hurried forward under Captain Fuller as senior naval officer, and the very nature of this Cameroon campaign, with its low-lying estuary and winding creeks, its maze of

rivers, its shoals and mangrove swamps, indicated that this was the sphere where small vessels of light draught alone could do the work.

Thus, especially, was the *Dwarf* destined to bear a principal share in a flotilla that was to include the Nigerian steam yacht *Ivy* (armed with one 12-pounder and two 6-pounders), a steam lifeboat, despatch vessels, tugs and motor-launches from Nigeria; and presently by the *Herzogin Elizabeth*, a Government steam yacht captured from the enemy. Dredgers, motor craft, and lighters taken from the Germans, were before long to swell this improvised navy, so that though Commander Strong's ship might be a *Dwarf* in comparison with the usual man-of-war, she became somewhat of a giant among these river pygmies.

Outside, and to the north-west of the Cameroon estuary, lay Amba Bay with the port of Victoria and Amba Island to seaward. The *Dwarf's* first duty was to land on the latter in a search for any traces of observation mines; but the place was quite uninhabited. On this same September 4, she anchored off Victoria and presented an ultimatum, removing all telephone transmitting apparatus. But, after Victoria had been bombarded, the landing party had to be withdrawn at the approach of German troops. Now, lying off Victoria pier were four lighters, which Captain Fuller required for use in his forthcoming operations against Duala.

Commander Strong was instructed to capture the lot on the night of September 6, and this led to an incident which reminds one of the old-fashioned cutting-out expeditions. Twenty picked men armed with revolvers, and wearing rubber-soled shoes for quietness, were placed aboard the steam tug *Walrus* and steam launch *Vampire* after the fall of darkness. At 9.45 p.m. the *Dwarf* led the way and stopped off Amba Island to give them their instructions. It was a very black night, with much rain and mist: ideal conditions for this kind of work. In his private diary which Captain Strong has been kind enough to place at my disposal, he sums up the affair thus:

"Midnight, anchored inside Victoria harbour. Sent cutter manned and armed with Lieutenant Jones, and surfboat with Lieutenant Carlton ahead of *Vampire*. *Vampire* to proceed over the bar to tow lighters over, and *Walrus* to wait just outside, to bring them out to me. Cutter to lay close to pier ready to fire, and surfboat to work grass-line to pull out lighters."

Such was the plan: and the scheme was carried through with such silent celerity, mooring chains slipped and lighters taken in tow as far as the rendezvous, that everything worked with the neatest precision. By 2.30 a.m. they were heading back home across the open sea, one couple of lighters astern of the *Dwarf* and the other pair secured to the *Walrus*. The only difficulty was in the swell which comes rolling

along the Atlantic and beats itself into surf against the African coast. More than once did the *Walrus* part her hawsers, but by 5.45 a.m. all craft were alongside the *Cumberland*, the whole operation being completed within eight hours, and there were no casualties. There was, in fact, no sort of attack from the enemy.

Exactly a month later Commander Strong was to hear the interesting German version, and the diary again gives a succinct account:

“Met Hughes of the *Ivy*, who tells me he has been to Victoria, which is now evacuated. He had heard there that, on the night we cut out the lighters, the Germans had 200 troops entrenched on the beach. They had removed part of the pier, and had also wire entanglements. They did not fire, as they thought we were going to land, and they were waiting to cut the party up. Their surprise in the morning was great when they found the lighters all gone, and they were highly indignant at the loss of the water lighter. They actually had the cheek to ask for it to be sent back. They also consider we had no right to destroy the provision store at Bota, which they said was a ‘private one!’ And are very angry with me, as they think I had not told Captain Fuller this. General Dobell [in command of the Cameroons Expeditionary Force] remarked on hearing this: ‘These gentlemen seem to forget we are at war.’”

Now, in order to protect the approaches leading from the estuary mouth up to Duala, the enemy had sunk as early as August 8 a number of their steamers across the fairway, and removed the fairway buoy. But within an hour and a half of reaching the *Cumberland* at Fernando Po, the *Dwarf* was off again with the lighters and moored them just within the Cameroon estuary where the fairway buoy had once existed. The channel was then swept by the flotilla of small craft for mines, and made safe for the *Cumberland* to come up. Marines were landed who destroyed the signal station at Suellaba Point—the starboard extremity of the estuary, three German signallers being taken prisoners. Just beyond, in Manoka Bay, *Dwarf* noticed a largish steamer, so reported her to *Cumberland*.

This was the S.S. *Kamerun*, 3700 tons, of the Hamburg-Amerika line. The Germans had placed her at the harbour entrance to act as a signalling link with the Duala wireless station; but, on the approach of Captain Fuller’s forces, the German crew deserted *Kamerun* after putting her ashore. She was found to be in perfect condition, so a British crew took her over and a week later steamed her off as a valuable prize. It was the sight of *Dwarf* which had caused the terrified Germans to abandon their ship and duty.

As the enemy looked down their river, they could now see the mixed assemblage of *Cumberland*, *Walrus*, *Vampire*, *Ivy*, *Dwarf*, and small transport craft. When the S.Y. *Herzogin Elizabeth* steamed down to have a look late in the

afternoon, she was received with half a dozen shells at 6500 yards from the *Dwarf*'s 4-inch guns, one bursting under the enemy's forebridge. She replied thrice ineffectively, but then decided to retire, seemed to be in flames, and began firing coloured lights. Early next morning she was again seen, apparently engaged sinking more steamers across the fairway, but retreated when the *Dwarf* advanced. The latter anchored for the night just below the wrecks, to prevent any more being sunk. Guns were kept manned, an anxious vigil was passed, as it was very dark, but nothing more happened till early the following morning when once more the *Herzogin Elizabeth* had to turn back just when a warm welcome was ready.

Mine-sweeping operations were suddenly interrupted by a battery of shore guns at 3000 yards range. Commander Strong ordered the sweeping vessels to take cover, and opened fire from every one of his ships' guns which would bear, put his helm hard over and retired out of range. But for fifteen minutes shells were falling all round *Dwarf*, one hitting just below the forebridge, severely wounding the quartermaster at the wheel, so that he afterwards died; and four others were wounded slightly. *Dwarf* at the moment of impact was in a narrow channel, but in spite of the shallow water she was steered out into safety.

Now at a later date there was discovered the private diary of Lieutenant Nothnagel, the manuscript translation of which lies before me. This German officer's entries indicate two facts very clearly: that the Duala authorities were now in great trepidation, and that special efforts were being made to wipe the *Dwarf* out of existence. She was their special object of hatred, and they were resolved to make some contrivance which would put an end to this watch on the sunken barrier. A homemade torpedo or mobile mine was therefore being completed of an original design. "To-night," records Nothnagel's diary on September 11, "a launch with a mine built in under her keel is to be let loose upon her. The engineer who will have to remain on board almost till the last, will be as good as lost; but none the less three brave men have volunteered for the fatal journey."

The deed had, however, to be postponed, so next day the diarist continues. "The night was bright moonlight, and the torpedoes could not get near enough. At eight o'clock the *Dwarf* steamed away. According to a telegram, her steersman died in the night: probably a wounded man from yesterday. Here the hope is universal that she is unfitted for further fighting. . . . Sunday. I was just dressing when Schmidt informed me that the English were again approaching with the *Dwarf*, which is therefore still alive. So I again get into uniform and go to breakfast armed. Shortly before lunch again news of an alarm; *Dwarf* and another ship said to be already on this side of the barrier, but it proves incorrect."

Now on the night of September 14-15 the Germans at length launched their attack on the *Dwarf* in a manner that is most interesting and ingenious. The basic idea was essentially the same as that of torpedo-boats assaulting a big ship under cover of darkness. But the colony possessed no torpedo-boats, no torpedoes, and no gear for dropping or launching these missiles. They accordingly selected three of their steam launches or motor-boats, designed a torpedo arrangement which consisted of two ordinary gas cylinders each five feet long and filled with dynamite, which were attached together with detonators to the launch's bows below the waterline. No gear was needed, all that was required consisted of a strong nerve to steer the boat straight for its target, and the explosion would do the rest. The idea for these "torpedo-boats," as the enemy called them, emanated from Duala's assistant harbourmaster; but it is regrettable one has to state the unpleasant truth that the device was manufactured by a German missionary, whose sense of honour was so distorted that he volunteered to ram the *Dwarf* by daylight under cover of the white flag! The Commandant at Duala declined to allow such treachery.

It was thus necessary for the torpedo-boats to spring their attack by night, whilst *Dwarf* maintained her watch at the sunken barrier. The gunboat was, however, always too wide awake for them. Nothnagel writes: "*Dwarf* working at the barrier. The torpedo-boats cannot get near enough; are always observed too soon and fired upon." So, too, Commander Strong has the following entry for the night of September 14:

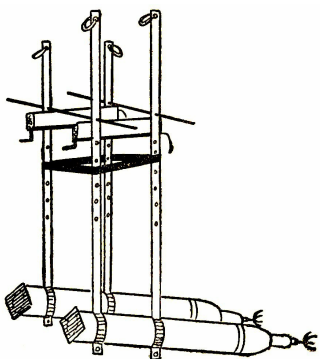
"11 p.m. A motor-boat came from behind the wrecks and dashed past the ship quite close, and too fast to be fired on. Twenty minutes later another steamboat approached us. Fired four rounds at her, and she disappeared. Shortly after this a boat appeared right ahead, trying to deceive us by flashing a light. Made the challenge to her, which she failed to answer; so fired on her and she disappeared."

The hours passed, and evidently the enemy relied upon that relaxation of vigilance which in less smart vessels often happens just before dawn—the period when most collisions at sea occur. So at 5 a.m. (September 15) came his next attack. The men in the *Dwarf* sighted a launch on the starboard bow, and opened fire on her. Then quietness once more. But as the first signs of dawn lit up the scene of the nocturnal excitement, all hands were surprised to see this launch a little distance off, yet aground and abandoned. Lying close to *Dwarf* was the *Vigilant*, so the latter was sent to make a capture, and presently brought the launch back. The next unexpected incident happened at 6.30 a.m., when a white man was observed aboard one of the wrecked ships at the barrier waving his arms and shouting. The surf-boat was sent to fetch him, and found him a strange creature with nothing on but

a pair of trousers and an expression of terror. This was the culprit of the dawn. He had lacked nerve enough for such a job of torpedoing a warship, and in saving his own skin spoiled a clever proposition. But let Nothnagel's brief entry explain:

"The first torpedo attack on the *Dwarf* unfortunately failed. The man in charge lost his head, and jumped out with the rudder wrongly lashed. In consequence, the boat ran round in circles with the torpedo set, and endangered the other boat which had to retreat; and in the meantime the torpedoman was drowned. The torpedo exploded uselessly in the mangroves."

So what might have been a highly gallant act ended in the most ludicrous fiasco, though Duala had yet to know that their man instead of being drowned was lucky to be rescued by his enemies. When first the *Vigilant* brought the launch off the mud, she could not make out what the four long iron legs with a platform affixed to the bows signified. Then she reported something cylindrical underneath. It was only when she came alongside, and the device was hoisted off with *Dwarf's* steam-cutter's fall, that the torpedoes, complete with pistols, were revealed. The *Cumberland's* torpedo-lieutenant was sent for, and after the infernal machine was inspected it was towed away and sunk in the sea. The accompanying sketch, made by Captain Strong, for the first time discloses the primitive arrangement which so narrowly failed to function.



THE GERMAN INFERNAL MACHINE

This is the colonial contrivance which the enemy's motor-boats carried at the bows in the attempts to torpedo H.M.S.

Dwarf. The device consisted of two cylinders filled with dynamite.

So far, then, the gunboat was still alive. But, just as she was a source of annoyance to the enemy, so the Germans possessed a vessel called the *Nachtigal*, which was a nuisance to the smallest of our flotilla working among the muddy creeks. She was named after Dr. Gustav Nachtigal, who in 1884 had been sent by Bismarck to consolidate German interests in this part of the world. The *Nachtigal* was one of the colonial steamers which had been armed with a couple of guns and sent through this maze of inland waters to surprise and harry the steam launches of Captain Fuller. This she could quite easily do, for she was of about 300 tons and carried a crew of thirty-seven under a German captain.

The various picket-boats, launches, and so on, usually armed with Maxim guns, were chasing through rivers into creeks and backwaters after German small craft in

much the same manner as a ferret goes after rabbits: but the danger was that they never knew what was lurking round the next corner. During the night of September 14, the *Vigilant* (just mentioned) and one of the picket-boats had come out of Mboka Creek into Mikanye Creek and thus suddenly sighted an enemy launch, which took to its heels. The picket-boat went in pursuit, but she in turn emerged upon the *Nachtigal* which was in the act of getting under way. The chase was therefore turned about, and the two British ferrets found themselves being hunted by a big German rabbit.

They made their escape, but the time had come when *Nachtigal* must be wiped off the map, and the orders to this effect reached the *Dwarf* on the same day that she had been examining the infernal machine. To-morrow forenoon she must proceed through the western creeks to Tiko, search out the *Nachtigal* and bring her to action. The intervening night at the sunken barrier passed quietly, though the *Vigilant* and a steam launch were patrolling all the while on the look out for more "torpedo-boats," whilst the *Cumberland's* picket-boat lay alongside ready to shove off at the first alarm and chase.

So on September 16, when the *Ivy* came to relieve *Dwarf* at the barrier, the latter was able to get under way at 10.30 a.m. With a native pilot on board she proceeded across Mokushu Bay, having ahead a steam launch which towed a grapnel that should give warning of German mines, and was also valuable for signalling the depth of water. It was to be a somewhat tricky work along a route whose general trend was to the north-west. But these interior waterways, with their twists and turns, their windings and wanderings in every direction of the compass, afforded a round-about connection with Duala. Consequently anything might happen, from a steamer ambush to a trap of sunken mines; from a hot rifle fire to another infernal machine.

It was impossible to say exactly where the *Nachtigal* might be among all this water maze, but the Bimbia River, at the head of which is Tiko, seemed a likely locality: yet there were so many backwaters and by-passes that nothing could be certain except that the enemy would know them all intimately and make the best thereof. But let Captain Strong tell us the story himself:

"Pilot said there was not water enough for us to go straight up to Tiko, and took us round the creeks to the left towards Bimbia. Kept the hands at the guns all the time, and the watertight doors closed for fear of mines. At 3.20 p.m., arrived off Klipper Point, from where the open sea towards Victoria could be seen. There is a cocoa farm belonging to the Woermann Company on Klipper Point, and we could see some white men and native soldiers bringing rifles out of the houses and putting

jumping overboard, and we sent the steam launch to rescue them. By the light of the searchlight and the fire we were able to see the enemy to be the *Nachtigal*, armed with two guns. She soon drifted clear of the bank, and I thought at first she might come foul of us, and set us on fire; but she drifted upstream, and half an hour later we saw two large explosions from her over the trees.

“Made ship fast to the trees, starboard side, and laid out kedge anchor on port quarter. We were aground on starboard side forward. Got out collision mat. Found damage to be one room holed and completely flooded, two magazines leaking slightly, and some water on the mess-deck, ship’s side smashed in, and boat-deck cut into. Remarkably little, considering, and I think it can be temporarily repaired. Our steam launch picked up four white men, which included the Captain, first officer, and eight natives. All the Germans were wounded, and some of the natives. Had them tended by the *Dwarf*’s surgeon, and put them all on the quarterdeck with two sentries over them. A cat came on board from somewhere, and quite dry!

“Kept the searchlight on the bend of the river all night in case of another attack. Thousands of mosquitoes came on board out of the bush. A bad night altogether. At daylight heard shouting from the bush, and rescued two more natives. Got ship off easily by the kedge anchor, listed ship to starboard as much as possible by turning out boats and filling them with water and moving weights. Made white prisoners comfortable, and put them on parole. Put the Captain in my cabin, and gave him a rig-out. He was wounded in the head, and a fine looking man. Told him he was a brave man.

“8 a.m. Started towards Tiko to look out for the wreck of the *Nachtigal*, but met the *Cumberland*’s picket-boat, who reported not having seen anything, so turned and proceeded back to base. Arrived off *Cumberland* at 1.30 p.m. *Cumberland* made signal ‘Well done *Dwarf*.’ Sent German prisoners to *Cumberland*. Engineer-Commander and Carpenter came aboard. Anchored. Divers examining damage. Employing black prisoners on the pumps. Divers working outside.”

Such, then, is the bare account of how the *Nachtigal*, in attacking, went to her doom through the perfect organisation and vigilance which awaited her. This enemy ship had come somewhere to the eastward of Bimbria River, had learned that the *Dwarf* was steaming towards Tiko, and so concealed herself in a small river with the intention of ramming Captain Strong’s vessel next morning. Whilst steaming up Bimbria River through the darkness, she did not know that the *Dwarf* was so close at hand, and the dramatic illumination of *Dwarf*’s searchlight bursting upon the Germans caused the latter to have no alternative but the most desperate. The

Nachtigal whacked up to full speed, and made straight for her objective. The whole incident happened so quickly, that one scarcely realises the smartness of *Dwarf* in slipping her cable, starting engines and concentrating a terrible fire. The shock of collision was enormous, causing the two ships to separate, and the British gunboat had been cut as with a knife from the upper-deck to a point six feet below the waterline. Whilst the four Germans and the natives were picked up, all the remainder of the thirty-seven (including ten Germans) perished. It had been for the enemy a hell of an experience but, whilst this was one of those rare modern occasions when both contestants fired at point-blank range, it was also that when there was equal gallantry on both sides.

The *Nachtigal*, when afterwards discovered, was so submerged that little more was showing than masts, funnel, and ventilators. The accompanying sketch gives a composite picture of the sunken enemy, and indicates the gash which she made in her rival. Two guns were mounted in the *Nachtigal*, of which the foremost, together with its crew, was blown clean into the water by *Dwarf's* shells. It is interesting to remember that there survives a relic of this occasion; for the 5 c.m. Krupp gun, made at Essen in 1894, was afterwards salvaged, and is now in the Imperial War Museum, London. By the courtesy of the Museum authorities *Nachtigal's* weapon has been specially photographed, and will be seen on another page.

Fortunately there was not a single casualty aboard *Dwarf*, and within a week the *Cumberland's* people had so effectively placed an iron patch inside that she was again ready for service and firing at the Duala batteries. Finally on September 27, the *Dwarf* had the felicity to be present at the fall of Duala. There was a big explosion, the German wireless mast collapsed, white flags were showing everywhere, the German ensign hauled down, and the Union Jack went up. Two signals were semaphored and summed up the situation:

“H.M.S. *Dwarf* has the honour to congratulate Captain Fuller on the fall of Duala.”

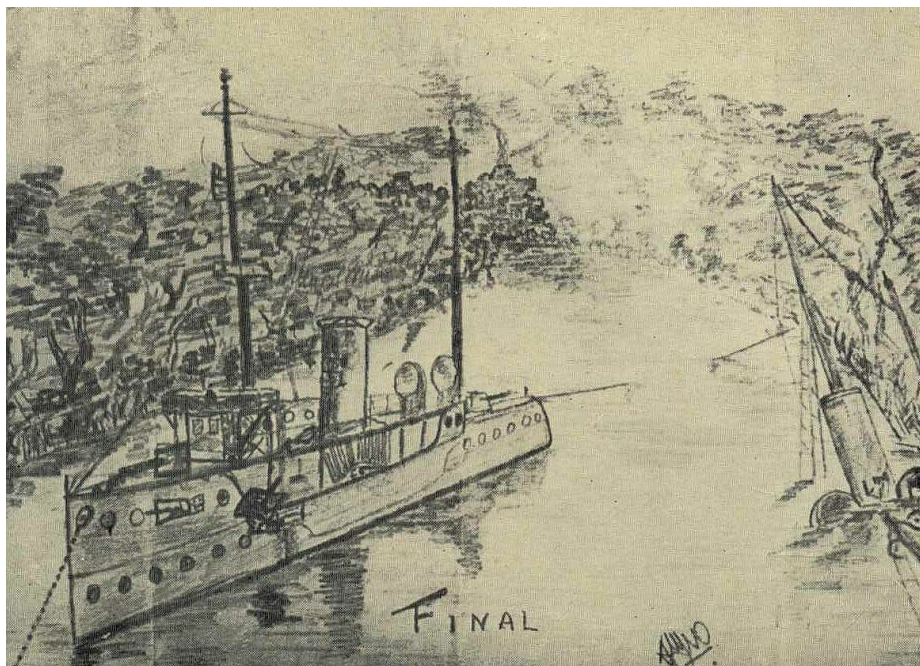
Then a pause, and Captain Fuller sent his reply:

“I congratulate the Captain, officers, and men of H.M.S. *Dwarf* on the part they played in the fall of Duala.”

Thus the *Dwarf* and the pygmies of such assorted sizes and species had within a few strenuous weeks performed invaluable work. It remains only to conclude with a

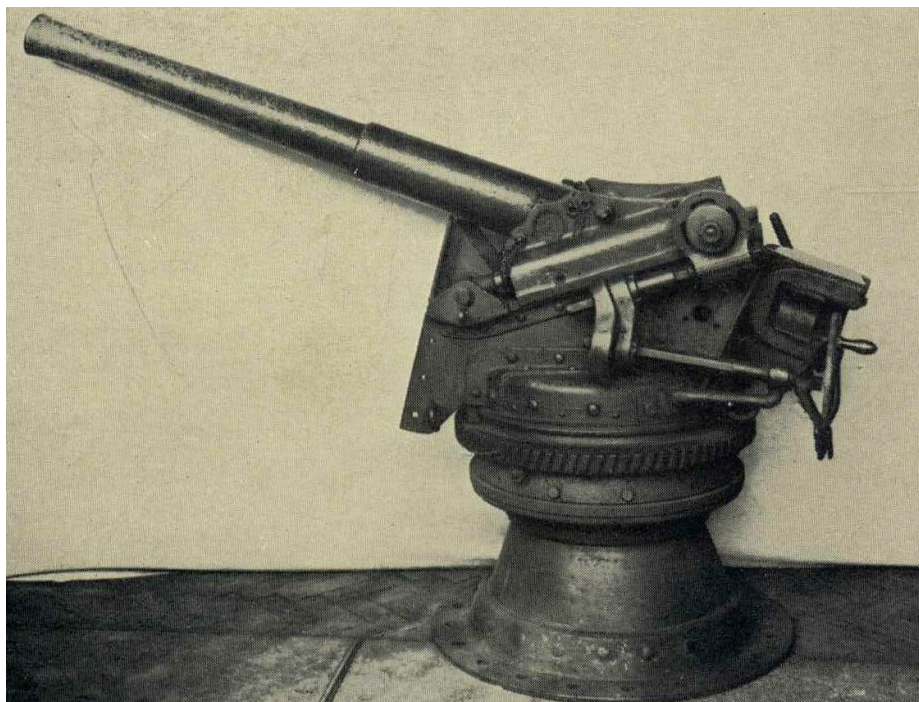
last glance at Nothnagel's mournful diary which comes to a sudden stop after September 26. Concerning the *Dwarf-Nachtigal* incident he was apparently quickly and accurately informed, and the Duala wireless station was the medium of intercepting both good and bad messages. Thus under September 16, Nothnagel wrote:

“In the evening just after 9 p.m. distant gunfire, and news from Victoria that the *Dwarf* is engaged with the *Nachtigal*, 2 kilometres from Tiko. At 10 p.m. message from the *Dwarf*—‘Have been rammed by a steamer and have put my ship aground.’ Unfortunately he completed the news later as follows: ‘Only one compartment full, ship is in order, hope to come off at daylight.’ The *Nachtigal* seems to be lost, and the ramming adopted as a last resource. The *Dwarf* is again afloat. . . . The news of the loss of life yesterday is unhappily correct. The *Nachtigal* also is lost. Deck hands are reported prisoners, engine-room staff killed by the boiler exploding.”



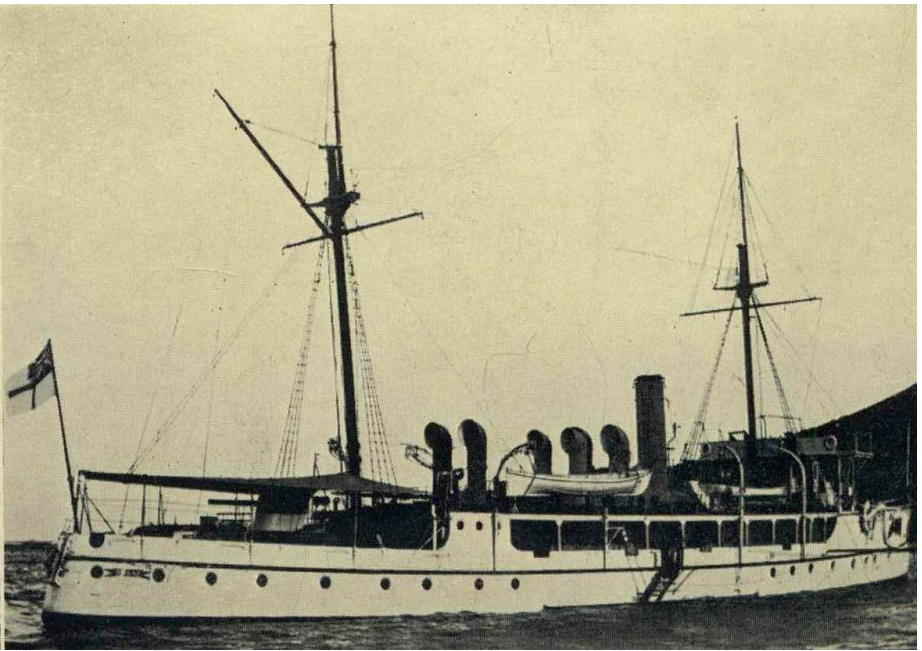
THE FINAL SCENE

This sketch, made at the time, shows H.M.S. *Dwarf* with a gash on her port-side where the *Nachtigal* rammed her. The wreck of the *Nachtigal* is shown in the same African river alongside.

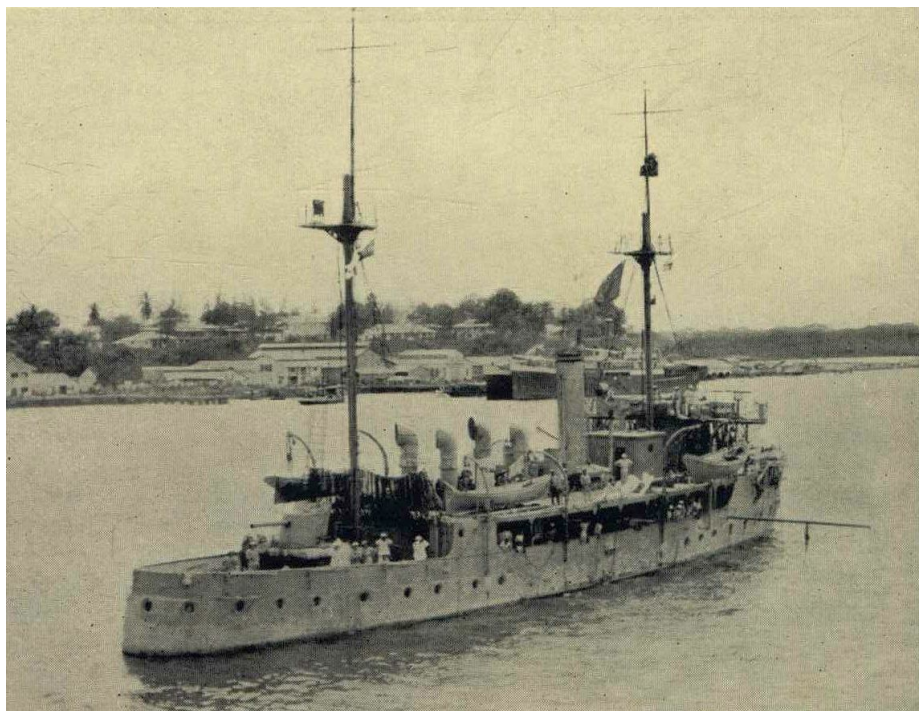


THE *NACHTIGAL*'S GUN

This was a 5 c.m. Krupp gun, and was one of two mounted in the steamer.



H.M.S. *DWARF*
As she appeared in peace-time.



H.M.S. *DWARF*

As she appeared in war-time off Duala, Cameroon, 1915.

CHAPTER VII

THE DECOY STEAMER

IT takes all sorts of ships to make up a navy; just as most character types can find their own particular vocation not in one species of seafaring, but under different and distinct categories. There is one glory of the battleship which is the final expression of permanent power afloat, and there is another glory of small ships. Not necessarily is the former's flag-lieutenant, or her gunnery officer, likely to make an ideal dashing destroyer captain; and the converse is equally true.

The Great War at sea, whilst strengthening and proving many preconceived opinions in regard to strategy and tactics, certainly did surprise the conventional-minded by the successful employment of various odd craft on special stunts. Before hostilities broke out there was a tendency to despise the value of small craft: after the armistice an exaggerated regard was in certain quarters bestowed on what may be termed "special occasion" vessels. But now there is a just appreciation that up to a limited point there is ample work to be done by units working independently of the Fleet, and these single ships may be anything from small motor-boats armed with torpedoes or mines, to a slovenly-looking tramp steamer with single propeller.

During the last decade three monographs have appeared revealing to the public the activities of what were known officially as Q-ships and are popularly referred to as mystery ships. In each of two books the writer related his experiences as lived aboard his own ship. The third volume happens to have been written by me and dealt with the disguised vessels and their operations as a whole, but since that time more data have become available which must needs be set down whilst some of the principal officers are alive. And in this present chapter I am able to give for the first time the true and complete facts of the *Baralong* incident, which created such a sensation in Europe and America that the story will never be forgotten. At the time when I wrote *Q-Ships and their Story*, it was not possible (owing to various reasons, apart from the question of space) to say more about the *Baralong* affair than could be contained within three paragraphs. There has never been published to the world a full and authentic account, and it is well that at last the exaggerations, the false statements and half-truths, should be corrected.

As will presently be observed, certain journalists in the United States whilst their nation was still neutral, obtained some of the detached details and twisted them violently. So, likewise, the German Press inspired by the war passion of that time, gave to their readers a most biased and deficient account. Under the censorship of

British news little enough was permitted to be made known, but in the following pages I am indebted to Lieutenant-Commander G. C. Steele, V.C., R.N., for having been persuaded to let us see this thrilling episode through his own eyes. No officer had better occasion for knowing what happened, and how, and why.

By way of introduction it will not be out of place to remind the reader that the sudden success of U 9 in sinking the three *Cressys* on September 22, 1914, followed by the attacks on naval and merchant ships during the ensuing weeks, surprised experts both in England and Germany. The effect on those who had thought of sea warfare chiefly in terms of "Dreadnoughts" was startling. Here was a new problem requiring new methods for remedy. When two of the Great Eastern Railway steamers on the Harwich to Hook of Holland route had separately been held up by German submarines, and on each occasion the German commanding officer shouted instructions through a megaphone, it was time to do a little original thinking.

But the principles of naval warfare are singularly conservative, and keep expressing themselves again at later ages even if in a slightly modified form. The obvious reply to the new menace was to have a concealed armament fitted in one of these Harwich steamers so that on molestation a quick end might be made of U-boat, commanding officer and megaphone complete. History is said to repeat itself: more accurately stated it does not reproduce, but carries on in continuity. Even without realising that they are doing just what their forefathers have done, men find themselves carrying on a tradition, going back to well-tried ideas and arriving at the same conclusions.

The first tense weeks of a terrible European war were not conducive to a quiet investigation of the past. It was a time for action rather than meditation. But the clear inference from the Harwich molestations was exactly in line with the use of mystery ships during the seventeenth century. The element of feigned innocence was to be employed for covering up a real ability to fight. Thus it logically followed that the most likely area for effecting a surprise on the enemy's submarines would be along that North Sea track towards Holland, whilst the best kind of vessel would be one of these self-same steamers with no external obvious alteration. One other point emanated: those officers in charge of these submarine traps must be perfectly informed as to the capabilities and limitations of a submarine. When war broke out no country had an extensive submarine service, but it was rather an extremely technical preserve which was still in the hands of pioneer officers who were learning more every day, yet even now had not fully visualised the capabilities of under-water craft.

At the head of the British submarine section was the Commodore (S), and about Christmas-time, 1914, a number of his small submersibles were still stationed at Harwich. Conferences between the Marine Superintendent at Harwich of the Great Eastern Railway, and the Commodore of submarines, resulted in a highly important undertaking. Lying in the harbour was the G.E.R. Co.'s Hook of Holland S.S. *Vienna*, which had been taken over by the Royal Navy as an overflow depot-ship for submarine officers. But she still retained her original paint-work and peace-time appearance. Thousands of German passengers, naval people as well as civilians, had travelled in her until a few weeks ago; so that her twin funnels, black hull and light upperworks were very familiar to our enemies. It was now resolved to commission her as a decoy, and she began that duty towards the end of January 1915.

Lieutenant-Commander Godfrey Herbert, R.N., one of the submarine pioneers who knew everything about under-water craft that had so far been discovered, was appointed to take command. A brave, brilliant, and charming personality, with a fund of rich humour, vast technical and practical submarine knowledge, this was one of those singularly happy selections for which to rejoice. He had just emerged from the jaws of death, and in another chapter we shall see this officer cheating fate again in the most amazing manner. On November 3, it may be recollected, the Germans with their battle-cruisers had come across the North Sea and bombarded Gorleston. Lying up that narrow waterway were some of our submarines, including D 5, who immediately motored out to attack the enemy. But the enemy speedily retired after laying a snare of mines. On to one of these mines D 5 struck, with the result that she foundered with the loss of nearly all her crew. Thanks to the pluck of two fishing drifters, a few survivors were picked up, and among them was Commander Herbert. As second-in-command and gunnery officer to *Vienna* was chosen Sub-Lieutenant G. C. Steele, R.N.R., whose name we have already mentioned. As we shall follow his exploits till we see him winning the Victoria Cross in one of the most gallant feats that ever merited recognition afloat or ashore, it is convenient to show yet again how much tradition means in the continuity of seafaring.

Here was a keen young man of twenty-two, inheritor of service instincts from both sides of his family. The son of Captain H. W. Steele, R.N., he was grandson on his maternal side of a General in the Royal Marine Light Infantry. Born in that glorious county of Devon which has produced more distinguished naval officers, mariners, and explorers than any other part of the country can boast of, Steele was not originally destined for the Royal Navy. Educated aboard H.M.S. *Worcester*, that has been responsible for two generations of young officers who have done an immense work in upholding the high standard of the Merchant Navy, linking it up

with the old respect which belonged to the Honourable Company's East Indiamen, Steele in due time joined the P. & O. service.

But he also became a Midshipman in the Royal Naval Reserve, so that when war broke out he had already undergone training and was one of the first R.N.R. officers to be appointed for duty in submarines. The first period of hostilities saw him having a strenuous period in D 8, but the time had now come when this submarine badly required a long refit, and it was thus that he was able to satisfy his ardour by using his experience in *Vienna*. As is so frequently and normally the case, the pluckiest men are found the most modest and attractive, with an open frankness that hides a great courage. Herbert and Steele both shared exactly these same attributes. And in a world so full of misfits it is delightful to find the two essential officers selected in accordance with perfect ideals.

The rest of *Vienna's* personnel consisted of her original officers (exclusive of her peace-time Master) and crew, who were taken on for the new job, but supplementaries were sent consisting of eight Royal Navy ratings under Petty Officer Dickinson. He, too, was no ordinary being, for in addition to a fine strictly service career he had been south to the Antarctic in one of Captain Scott's expeditions. Twelve hand-picked Marines, all N.C.O.'s, and everyone a marksman, completed the *Vienna's* crew. The ship was fitted with two 12-pounder guns and loopholes were made in screens for the marksmen's rifles. Altogether she was quite an achievement in those early days when the data for mystery decoys did not exist, and no one remembered that the Navy had ever employed the notion previously. With all secrecy the project was set going, and *Vienna* (alias *Antwerp*) was sent into the North Sea.

She was to show herself conspicuously along the usual G.E.R. steamers' track, but was forbidden to enter any of the Continental ports. During the dark hours she was either to heave-to, or else cruise about the allotted lane at slow speed; but when daylight came she was to steam at 15 knots as if she were on her way back to Harwich. The idea was excellent, but in practice it did not succeed. For many days it was given the fullest trial, and it brought about no positive results merely because (as we to-day realise) the Germans had begun to transfer their U-boat operations to the West of England. There existed still a mere handful of enemy submarines, their commanding officers were still experimenting, and the crews were surprising themselves by their length of endurance.

Nominally there were twenty-seven U-boats available at the beginning of war, but only a very small percentage were ever actually on their stations operating offensively. Even at the height of the U-boat campaign 12 per cent was (according to

German post-war admissions) the proportion of craft definitely “at the front.” By January 1915 even the most optimistic authorities within Germany were amazed not only that the boats had passed without difficulty through the Dover Straits, but had been able to reach the Irish Sea. Thus for a while the centre of activity had shifted away from the North Sea to that strategically more important area of the western approaches.

It was impossible to appreciate at the time what exactly was happening; nor could we anticipate that as early as February 18, 1915, the German Submarine Blockade should be inaugurated (though now we are aware from German sources how foolishly premature was this decision at a time when there existed too few craft to enforce it). But, looking back on events, one perceives that our own mistake with regard to *Vienna* was that she was delayed through a desire for thoroughness in efficiency, whereas she ought to have been hurried forth after only a few hours for essential adaptation. As Commander Steele informs me, “she might have been successful had she been completed six weeks earlier than she was. As it happened, peace-time ideas seemed to pervade many departments, and the mistake was made of giving this ship a long refit in Chatham Dockyard. No doubt some minor alterations may have been necessary, but if she was able to steam to Chatham, she should have been made to steam to Holland six weeks earlier—“run to death,” if necessary. The guns (which were all that were essential) took 48 hours only to mount. The delay allowed information of her existence to leak through to Germany: happily information was also received back again of German plans to capture her, so the enemy was forestalled by taking the ship off the run. The *Vienna* was put on any other route except the North Sea. Efforts were made to disguise her but, being a railway steamer, these were difficult.”

It is to be remarked that in its earlier stages the decoy-ship experiment was not officially regarded with enthusiasm, but rather as an isolated stunt. No one could foresee that later it would grow into a big organisation, with its systematised tactics and able to create one of the most brilliant chapters in the chronicles of naval daring. But *Antwerp* was the mother of all the Q-ship fleet which was later to flourish. Herbert and Steele, with their combined knowledge of submarine and merchant ship practice, were gathering more and more information which had to be acquired before attainment was possible. The scientific investigator reaches his discovery only after repeatedly trying one test after another, and many failures, till at last he finds the infallible formula.

Exactly so was the experimenting with this pioneer *Vienna* and her officers. They started with a blank sheet and no data on which to work. They were (to change the

metaphor again) like men fishing in waters with gear untried, where no fish might exist. So *Vienna*, at a time when there was no such thing as an Anti-Submarine section at the Admiralty, spent a couple months on a roving commission in the slender hope that she might fall in with a U-boat; and, whilst these two keen officers taxed their imaginations, placed themselves in the minds of the German commanding officers and reasoned "What should *we* do in U-boats?" yet all this steaming about was depressingly fruitless.

But the sinkings which were going on at the western approach to the English Channel indicated a certain definiteness in policy, and a unity of purpose proceeding from one mind. This was a just cause for beckoning *Vienna* to try her luck in that neighbourhood, yet, as we consider the matter critically to-day, bearing in mind the intelligence which could not fail to slip out of Harwich through neutral shipping to the Continent, it was scarcely the most astute wisdom to send a Hook of Holland steamer to show herself off the Cornish coast. Any German naval officer, furnished with common sense and the smallest amount of secret information, would certainly look with caution and avoid molesting the familiar two-funnel typical Great Eastern steamer at a spot hundreds of miles from East Anglia. Still, this was the best reply we could think of at the time when we had everything to learn.

Since first *Vienna* began her experimentalism the situation had been obscured by the variety and changeableness of the enemy's attacks; and merchant shipping had during this period been sunk at such distant localities as off Morecambe, Liverpool, Havre, the Isle of Man, Eastbourne, Ilfracombe, Dungeness, Scarborough; but now was inaugurated a new phase off the Scillies when the British S.S. *Florazan* was torpedoed without warning on March 11. Next day occurred two more sinkings when the 2988-ton S.S. *Headlands* was chased and torpedoed eight miles south of the Scillies, and the 4645-ton S.S. *Indian City* was torpedoed ten miles south thereof, both ships being British likewise.

At this stage *Vienna*, having arrived in the west country, steams on to the scene. The time is 3 p.m. on March 12, and the position twelve miles north of the Bishop Rock lighthouse. As the Harwich decoy came along, she was able to witness the strange sight of the Ellerman liner *Andalusian* (2349 tons) stopped, the crew abandoning her, and a submarine standing by preparatory to sinking her. The *Headlands* could still be seen not far off, burning away to destruction. There was also a French schooner within this sea picture.

In order to visualise the submarine, we may think of her as 210 feet long, and 20½ feet in beam, with a straight stem, and a narrow vertical superstructure amidships at the conning-tower. Such a craft carried eight torpedoes, normally

cruised on the surface at 10 knots, but could accelerate to 14 knots. She was able when submerged to keep up a speed of 9½ knots for an hour, and she was none other than U 29, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Weddigen, who at that date was the most distinguished of all the German submarine officers. Indeed, his countrymen regarded him in much the same manner as our own ancestors thought of Nelson; for Weddigen in the previous September had performed that incredible act of torpedoing the three British cruisers *Aboukir*, *Cressy*, and *Hogue* within sixty-five minutes, and then had returned home after using up all his torpedoes. The sensation in Germany, created by this unquestionably brilliant incident (more than any other achievement), gave an encouragement and inspiration to U-boat warfare which were never lost till the end of war. Weddigen at the time was in command of U 9, a small boat only 184 feet long with a surface speed of 13 knots and a maximum submerged speed of 9 knots. He was given a better craft, and junior officers who were sent to serve under him and learn intensively, before being appointed to command new U-boats that were being hurriedly constructed, deemed themselves extremely privileged.

The rival personalities were of course unknown to each other, yet it is interesting to remind ourselves that Herbert and Weddigen between them represented the two greatest experts in submarine matters of the two rival navies. It seemed as if the former was now, after these unproductive weeks, to have his great opportunity. Proceeding with all caution and skill, *Vienna* began her most difficult task of enticement. Since four steamers had been attacked, doubtless the enemy would not hesitate to treat *Vienna* in the same manner, but that was exactly the hope which was keeping Herbert and Steele in buoyant enthusiasm this spring afternoon.

After speaking the French schooner, and learning that she had on board the officers as well as crew from *Andalusian*, the *Vienna* set forth to close the submarine, but only after removing the survivors. The *Andalusian's* captain, says Commander Steele, "made the interesting report that during two hours the submarine had not dived; that the latter's artificers were busy making some engine-room repairs in the submarine, and that she seemed unable to dive. Acting on this information, the *Vienna* went to action stations, and closed the submarine at full speed—18 knots. The German was then lying close to the *Andalusian* and had opened the steamer's sea-cocks in order to sink her. The *Vienna* approached within three miles, when the submarine was seen slowly to submerge and, to our great disappointment, dived before it was possible to fire a shot. Our guns would not train much before the beam, and a great deal closer range would have been necessary to ensure success. This was before the days of depth charges."

All that now could be done was to wireless for help to salve the sinking *Andalusian*, but this was of no avail, and the liner foundered. The *Vienna* at the very moment of her crisis had been prevented from fulfilling her task, and one cannot doubt that so astute a captain as Weddigen knew the approaching *Vienna* for what she was. Still, there remain two additional facts to be mentioned before this first decoy episode closes. The second officer of U 29 had the temerity to give one of the *Andalusian* survivors a letter to post, which never reached its intended destination but was duly handed over to the British naval authorities. A week later—March 18—U 29 was off the north-east coast of Scotland. It was one of those days when the atmosphere is very clear, and early that morning the Grand Fleet had been exercising in the North Sea, but at noon were zigzagging back homewards part bound for Scapa Flow and the rest for Cromarty Firth. The Fourth Battle Squadron had barely parted company in proceeding to Cromarty, when at 12.18 p.m. H.M.S. *Marlborough*, which was Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Burney's flagship in the First Battle Squadron and leading ship in the port wing, signalled that a torpedo had passed just astern of the *Neptune*, which was the rear unit of the column.

At this time the Fleet were steaming at 15 knots, but this speed was now accelerated to 17 knots, and they immediately turned together to starboard away from the submarine. The minutes ticked by and at 12.30 the Fourth Battle Squadron was crossing under the rear of the rest of the battle fleet, when Lieutenant-Commander Piercy, who happened just then to be officer-of-the-watch in H.M.S. *Dreadnought* of the above squadron, sighted two or three feet of periscope one point on the port bow zigzagging to the southward. The *Dreadnought's* captain lost no time, altered course for the submarine, went full speed, rammed her fair and square, sending her to perdition, though not before the letter and numerals U 29 had been plainly perceived. The cruiser H.M.S. *Blanche*, after the big ships had passed on, was over the spot, but no survivors were seen: nothing except oil, bubbles, and a piece of clothing.

So perished Otto Weddigen with all his men, and the terrible impact of the 17,900-ton *Dreadnought's* forefoot against the submarine can be likened only to the heavy tread of an infuriated elephant on a stinging mosquito. Not for a long while did the German Navy know the reason why U 29 never returned to port, but it was one of our late enemy's most bitter griefs that such a brave and brilliant officer as Weddigen should have gone down. It was at the request of Admiral Jellicoe himself that this submarine's fate was kept secret, but in the meantime German disappointment in the absence of definite information developed into accusations of treachery yet entirely unfounded. The terrible manner of that crew's death, encased

in their helpless riven steel casket, scarcely bears contemplation, and is another argument for illustrating the futility of warfare.

We can hardly, however, forget that Weddigen caused appalling losses to our own country. We now know that not only had he, when in command of U 9, sunk the three *Cressy* cruisers and the four merchant steamers already mentioned; but also H.M.S. *Hawke* (another cruiser) on October 15 whilst the latter was with the rest of the old Tenth Cruiser Squadron maintaining the blockade patrol off the north-east of Scotland. Less than fifty lives were saved. But even before the war he was very much of a “star turn” in his service. For, during the German Naval manoeuvres of 1913 he “torpedoed,” and theoretically sank, no fewer than three battleships.

Before his death he received the highest possible honours that the Kaiser could confer, and was the first naval officer during hostilities to be awarded the *Pour le Mérite* order which corresponds nearest to our Victoria Cross. How was it that so able an expert in the newest and best type of U-boat allowed himself to be destroyed? There are two distinct theories, and the correct answer probably embraces both. One suggestion is that the calm sea with a big swell and no rough water made him so easy to be spotted that he could afford to raise his periscope only for the briefest of spells: consequently in his determination to repeat the *Cressys* and *Hawke* incidents, he was too busy to take in a full realisation of the surrounding peril. The other theory is that he was suddenly flustered by the alarm of seeing the Fourth Battle Squadron going one way and the other giants zigzagging in other directions. The sight of these monsters with the white bone in their teeth, leaving a churned disturbance in their wake, was enough to confuse any mentality; and whilst the commander’s vision was restricted by the periscope to watching one battleship, another (through most perfect discipline, alertness, and admirable handling) was able to deal the avenging knock-out so long overdue.

In the meantime *Vienna* was nearing the end of her experimental career as a temporary man-of-war. She seemed destined to be an unlucky vessel, and anyhow she was taken round the corner into Milford Haven, where she was paid off at the beginning of April. But fortunately neither the sound notion of a decoy, nor her crew, was dismissed. There were still very few authorities who really enthused about the likely results of employing a mystery ship, but it needed certainly considerable faith to permit a second effort. A strange commentary indeed presented itself when an undisguised “Dreadnought” had been able to do that which a trap-ship had failed to perform; and it seemed ridiculous that the same submarine should run away from a railway steamer whilst showing no haste in the presence of the Grand Fleet!

CHAPTER VIII

THE GALLANT *BARALONG*

AFTER the failure of *Vienna* the naval officers, ratings, and guns were all transferred to the S.S. *Baralong* of the Ellerman & Bucknall Line. This 4192-tons steamer built in 1901 was far more suitable because less distinctive: she was typical of a large tramp class rather than one of the few special railway species. Any seafarer might pass dozens of *Baralongs* on almost any trade or coastal route without thinking any more about her origin or purpose. She was just an ordinary vessel with one funnel, a couple of masts, poop, fo'c'sle, and bridge, externally. But she had a good strong hull, especially around the poop, where no further strengthening was needed for her special purpose.

She had the useful speed of 12 knots, and the only peculiarity of this cargo vessel was that she possessed an elliptical funnel, which was a most unusual thing for a merchant ship. At Portsmouth she was given a third 12-pounder gun, and the dockyard people also filled her holds with large water-tight casks, so that if she were torpedoed there would still be considerable buoyancy. This principle at a later stage of the war, when Q-ships were numerous, became established by the packing of cork into considerable quantities; but the *Baralong* was again showing the methods for others to follow. The addition of this new gun had been proved essential by the Scillies episode: it was now possible to have two guns bearing on a broadside, and one of them able to train well before the beam.

Mounted on the poop, the after gun was disguised by a wooden cover which represented a sheep pen: each of the other guns, situated on the poop respectively to starboard and port, had a brown painted cover that imitated one of those familiar lockers which contain lifebelts. Special arrangements had been made to have the gun-mountings cut particularly low; and the poop-rail was hinged in order to allow the guns to be cleared for action at an instant's notice. The covers were fashioned to collapse readily, the outboard sections falling overboard whilst the inboard lay flat on deck.

As in the case of the *Vienna*, the steamer retained her peace-time officers and crew, but inclusive of her Master. The latter continued to do the navigating work and to be in charge of his own men, whilst Lieutenant-Commander Herbert and Sub-Lieutenant Steele (his First Lieutenant and Gunnery Officer) were in command of *Baralong* *qua* man-of-war. We thus see the continuity of nautical history manifested yet again. Here was an exact revival of the well established custom aboard

Elizabethan and Stuart ships where “the Captaines charge is to commaund all, and tell the Maister to what port he will go, or to what height [i.e. latitude]. In a fight he is to give direction for the managing thereof, and the Maister is to see to the cunning of the ship. . . . The Maister and his Mate is to direct the course, commaund all the saylors, for steering, trimming, and sayling the ship . . . The Lieutenant is to associate with the Captaine, and in his absence to execute his place. He is to see the Marshall and Corporall doe their duties . . . and in a fight the Forecastle is his place.” Actually the only basic difference between Elizabethan sailing ships and this Georgian mystery ship was that steam was used instead of sail, the bridge took the place of the poop, and the Lieutenant was on the poop.

Those picked marksmen N.C.O.’s who had been aboard the *Vienna*, could no longer be spared, but there arrived ten privates of Marines under a Sergeant and Corporal. The whole transfer, reorganisation, and fitting out were completed in very quick time, so that May of this same 1915 saw *Baralong* already cruising as a decoy. But, Commander Steele remarks, “she was soon to learn what a very small thing a submarine is, and what a very large place an ocean is. Bad luck dogged her track, ships were torpedoed all round her; and though she used every effort to intercept enemy submarines, two months passed without coming in contact with one. During this time the seas were strewn with wreckage, lifeboat crews were rescued, and the aftermath of many tragedies witnessed. The *Lusitania*’s wireless call for help was picked up when we were cruising off Jersey, and the *Baralong* hastened to the spot,^[27] arriving many hours too late.”

May, June, and July were indeed depressing and alarming months now that the enemy had intensified his submarine efficiency and widened his areas. The waters of the British Isles during that period had been violated by sinkings off the western approaches, the coasts of Scotland and Ireland, in the Irish Sea, English Channel, North Sea. The loss of the *Lusitania*, because of her immense 30,396 tons and the considerable expense of life, had first astounded and then angered the whole nation. But there were many steamers of four and five thousand tons, whose aggregate meant a serious loss in money, though not many of the crews perished. There was certainly every cause for indignation when the 15,000-tons White Star liner *Arabic* was torpedoed without warning fifty miles south and west of the Old Head of Kinsale on August 19, yet this was nothing to the *Lusitania* affair. From the former forty-four persons died: from the latter 1198.

It is necessary to stress this fact because the callousness of the U-boat, which destroyed in one act so many hundreds of both sexes travelling from America aboard the Cunarder, was to have a notable result before long. “This unspeakable

outrage,” says Commander Steele, “inflamed the minds of the *Baralong’s* crew: it was just the culminating point of a long series of minor violations of war, and inhuman practices. Small colliers torpedoed in a gale of wind, without any attempt at rescue; a sailing ship under full sail; destitute lifeboats left hundred of miles from land—all these had been witnessed by the *Baralong’s* people. It just required the sight of those silent figures of drowned children from the *Lusitania*, as they were laid out on the front at Queenstown in a temporary mortuary to rouse the deepest hatred in the *Baralong’s* crew, composed as they were of a mixed collection—naval, mercantile, and marine ratings—who had never so hated before. A meeting was held, in which the Captain of a second small decoy ship was present; and it was agreed to avenge the *Lusitania* by giving no quarter to German submarine crews.”

Such, then, was the spirit which was to last throughout the ensuing months and was particularly ardent by the middle of August 1915. All this while the *Baralong* was eagerly steaming about seeking, hoping, for the one great occasion. The maximum amount of sea time was being put in, and she called at a port but rarely: only to get provisions and coal. Without being attached to any particular base, she went roving about between the south-west of England and the south of Ireland, that wide mouth through which the North Atlantic ships must pass to and from such ports as Liverpool, Avonmouth, or up to Southampton and London. Already both Herbert and Steele had in the preceding weeks steamed many thousands of miles, and there is nothing more difficult for keen, alert minds than to endure months of monotony with unbroken lack of luck. Here were a band of brothers, anxious to avenge the innocent, yet caged up in a steel home like lions under strong annoyance.

But all of a sudden everything changed, the prospect was altered. Let *Baralong’s* First Lieutenant relate the memorable story:

“On the morning of August 19, 1915, a message of distress was picked up from the S.S. *Arabic* saying she was torpedoed in a certain position, about 80 miles south of Queenstown, and asking for immediate assistance. She sent out another message a few minutes later, and this ended abruptly unfinished. The position given lay about twenty to twenty-five miles from the *Baralong*, which immediately proceeded there at full speed. It was a fine, clear day, and ships could be sighted many miles away.

“The time passed, and the *Baralong* had practically arrived at the position given by the *Arabic*; but nothing was sighted, and the gravest anxiety was felt that this large White Star liner had shared an even more complete fate than the *Lusitania*. Ships were heard still calling her by wireless, and no replies came to them. The greatest depression hung over the *Baralong*: we felt once more we had arrived too late, and with disastrous results. The ship steamed dead slow through the position given by the

Arabic, unable to decide what course to adopt next.

“Presently a report came from the look out. ‘Smoke right ahead!’ Once more all was hope and eagerness. The ship rang up ‘Full Speed,’ and steamed in that direction.

“As we approached, it could be seen that the smoke was really steam escaping. The ship was showing by this ‘white feather’ that she was stopped there in the middle of the ocean—a sure indication that she was being held up. The *Baralong* men went to their action stations, and breathlessly awaited events. A few minutes more showed up the ship as being a large ‘western ocean’ steamer, and also that a low, grey object lay about a cable’s distance away from her.

“The *Baralong* was flying the American flag, and carrying large painted boards over the sides, with American colours.^[28] Her wireless was concealed, and the few scattered seamen and stewards about her deck gave her a peaceful appearance. She approached the scene slowly, half a dozen shots rang out from the submarine, and a couple of shell splashes fell short of the *Baralong*. But the shots were not aimed at her: the submarine was shelling the other ship—the S.S. *Nicosian*. The latter was now abandoned, and about eight of her lifeboats, with survivors, were paddling slowly away from her. A distress signal fluttered loosely from her signal halyards.

“On seeing the *Baralong* approaching the scene, the submarine proceeded to meet us. All hands in the U-boat were below, she was running on the surface though on her electric motors and in diving trim, ready for any emergency. She was carrying out the closest scrutiny of us the stranger, and the German Captain’s head with his shoulders were just visible as he peered through his glasses. Meanwhile the *Baralong*’s men lay flat on their stomachs along the poop, not daring to move a limb, the Marines taking cover behind the gunwale of the after well-deck, rifles in hand.

“The submarine was well within range; but to have fired now would have been risky, as she was prepared for instant alarm. We hoisted a signal that we would pick up the lifeboats’ crews, and then steamed slowly towards these. The German Captain was now thoroughly satisfied that the stranger was a bona fide American. He turned about, trimmed light, got his guns’ crew on deck, and proceeded to shell the *Nicosian*.

“Commander Herbert slowly manœuvred his ship so as to place the *Nicosian* between himself and the submarine. He very effectively accomplished that, and at this critical instant he ordered, ‘Clear away the guns!’ Like magic the peaceful ship became a scene of orderly activity, men springing up from nowhere. The rails were slipped, the outboard gun-covers fell over the side, the ensign staff carrying the American colours fell over the stern, at the same time taking with it the stern gun-

cover and hinged after poop-rail, thus clearing that gun. The White Ensign was run up on special halyards at the poop. Every Marine had his rifle to his shoulder, peering through the after gunwale.

“But the submarine never slackened its caution. Finding that it could no longer see the *Baralong*, it steamed past the *Nicosian* with the object of keeping us in view. The *Baralong*, having completed all preparations during the thirty seconds that she was hidden from view, was now all ready for the enemy. We saw the bow of the submarine slowly approach to view, and next the conning tower showed itself. It was a tense moment. But now the submarine was greeted by a fusillade of rifle shots and gun fire.

“The Germans had their gun manned, and it fired one shot which fell short of the *Baralong*, whereupon the gunlayer flopped over the submarine’s side into the water hit by one of our rifle bullets. Almost simultaneously a shell struck the submarine at the base of her gun, sending fragments of plating in all directions, and causing her gun’s crew to abandon the position. They were seen making a rush for the conning tower, but, whilst so doing, another shell hit the conning tower, again sending splinters everywhere.”

Now there happened one brief interlude aboard the *Baralong* which represented a deliberate act of cool courage. One of the first rounds placed in the port 12-pounder missed fire. According to the regulations in the British Navy the following precautions were laid down: “In the case of a missfire, either electrical or percussion, the mechanism for opening the breech of the gun is not to be moved until thirty minutes have elapsed since the missfire was reported.” Thirty minutes! And here was an engagement when thirty seconds were decisive!

There are some occasions in a naval officer’s life (as Nelson, and others since his period, have demonstrated) when it is both legitimate and praiseworthy to ignore instructions. This first action between a decoy ship under the most special circumstances was indubitably such an opportunity. But it demanded both moral and physical courage. In a vessel which is armed with only three guns and one of them hesitates in the face of the enemy, the situation is too acute for consideration and reasoning. Steele, being the *Baralong*’s gunnery officer, accepted instantly the full weight of a big responsibility and, with that same quick-minded courage which in another chapter we shall again notice, preferred the risk of being blown to pieces rather than the chance of weakening the ship’s fire. Standing his men to one side, he flung open the breech without waiting, extracted the shell and flung it into the sea. Fortunately no harm, was done, and that which normally might have been criminal and a cause for being court-martialled, became an act of heroism. From that time

onward the three guns continued their uninterrupted fire.

"Shell after shell hit the submarine. Lyddite, common and practice shot were used—the last mentioned being employed to ensure holing the U-boat's inner skin. The submarine listed heavily to starboard, exposing more of her deck surface, which was riddled with shot. And then she sank. The whole action, from the order 'Clear away!' had lasted only one minute. Thirty-four shots had been fired, and the first hit had been scored by the third shot.

"During this time the lifeboats of *Nicosian* had been pulling towards the ship, and had approached quite close, though the men in them were stunned with the rapid sequence of events. But as soon as the submarine had disappeared, they realised what had happened and, frantic with joy, waved their oars in the air and cheered. It was a glorious moment. The cheering rippled from boat to boat; the day was fine, with only a moderate breeze blowing. Now the submarine had sunk just a few yards off from the *Nicosian*, and that steamer had a rope ladder hanging down her side, up which many of the U-boat's crew had swarmed. Herbert gave orders for the Germans' retreat to be cut off, and for the ladder to be shot away. A shot rang out, and the ladder fell in half."

But the second phase of the contest now developed. If the U-boat had gone for ever, there still remained the *Nicosian*, by which the Germans seemingly had a fair chance to turn defeat into victory. She had been emptied of all hands by the submarine's threat, but already taken possession of by people from the submarine. A gun was noticeable at the stern, and the enemy survivors would doubtless turn this on to the *Baralong*, so that both ships would shell each other till they sank. This would never do. It was not known till afterwards that the gun was a mere dummy; for at that date not enough guns for defensively armed British merchantmen existed for all. Dominating every officer and man aboard the decoy, as they fought and sweated this August afternoon so near to the spot where the sea had three months ago been crimsoned with the blood of *Lusitania's* victims, was a passionate desire for exacting full and complete retribution. "It was," as Commander Steele remarks, "the first act of revenge for the sunken *Arabic*," already barely on the ocean's floor. Commander Herbert was minded to give those Germans in the *Nicosian* a taste of their own treatment, and let them feel something of the suffering which non-combatants in both the Cunarder and the White Star liner had experienced.

Baralong was about to shell the *Nicosian* along the waterline and let her fill. Orders were accordingly given to that effect, and Steele heard them.

But for a second time that day he did not blindly obey. Steele was a Master Mariner by profession, and a naval officer by force of circumstances. Until a year

ago his whole career had been that of preserving, rather than destroying, steamships. His training as a cadet in the *Worcester*, and his service with the P. & O. Company, had been animated by the principle of safety for steamers at sea; and it was hard for any R.N.R. officer to see a vessel so stricken as the *Nicosian* without wanting to save her. Few sailor-minded men take any pleasure in sinking a fine ship, and even among some of the most ruthless German naval officers there were plenty whose decent feelings made them hesitate to obey the orders of their superiors.

None the less, whilst it grieved Steele "to sink such a fine ship, if there was a possibility of saving her," Herbert was perfectly justified and rightly inclined to destroy that which was now an enemy prize. Steele hesitated. "The ship," as he sorrowfully saw, "was certainly damaged by the submarine's shell fire, her upperworks were badly knocked about, and there was a gaping hole in the fore part near the waterline, through which the sea rushed in and out. And she was slightly down by the bow in consequence of this. . . . The order to sink her was repeated. A shot rang out, but careful aim was taken to fire at the same hole that the Germans had made, and not to flood a further compartment."

Steele then asked permission to shoot away the *Nicosian's* gun, and also to put off the duty of sinking the ship. Things were happening with such cinema-like celerity that by this time the *Nicosian's* survivors had got back on board their vessel, and among them was her Captain. He, going straight on to his bridge, shouted to Herbert that the *Nicosian* carried 250 mules, and was full of munitions from the United States. Thereupon Commander Herbert immediately gave the order to cease fire, and to use every endeavour for saving the ship. The Captain further announced that the gun was a dummy, but that in the chartroom were a dozen rifles and several hundred rounds of ammunition. At this stage Steele joined Herbert on *Baralong's* bridge, and it was then that the latter was able to tell the former he had seen many of the enemy scramble aboard the mule ship before the ladder had been shot away. The instructions now were to recapture her and save her at all costs, for it was expected that the Germans would either resist with the chartroom rifles, or set the ship on fire, or else scuttle her. "I intend to run my ship alongside, and send over a boarding party," was the decoy Captain's grave decision, and Steele promptly asked permission to lead this party.

His Captain had to decline the plucky offer.

"You will have to look after your own guns, and defend them should the Germans attempt to rush them," said Herbert. "For I propose bringing *Baralong's* quarter alongside the *Nicosian*."

So Steele hurried off to organise the boarding party of Marines who were to

make the big adventure under their Sergeant Collins. With admirable seamanlike skill, and in spite of the heavy Atlantic swell, Commander Herbert brought his vessel so close that Sergeant Collins' party watched their chance, waited till a high wave brought the two ships together, and then jumped. There followed a series of incidents which are so remarkable that we must set them down in detail, here and now, by one who watched them "going over the top" in the same gallant manner that their brothers were braving in France. Every one of us knows the glorious traditions of the Marines throughout their history; but here was just the job for sea-soldiers, yet with a background that was remarkable. Who would ever have associated these smart fellows with the duty of ferrets in a mule steamer?

The *Baralong's* people watched the drama from the front row, as the dozen men with their rifles began their task. "They spread out," says Steele, "took occasional cover and, seeing here or there some German figure crouching behind hatches, winches, or anything else, opened fire. The Germans scattered and fled. The captain of the submarine locked himself in a deck cabin; the Corporal pursuing him battered down the door with the butt of his rifle. But the captain escaped through the port and slid down to fall into the sea, whereupon the Corporal shot him through the head whilst the fugitive was swimming off. Our boarding party, with cries of '*Lusitania!*' shot four remaining Germans at fairly long range. The ship was unlit down below, and it was not possible to ascertain whether these men were armed or not at the time, for they were discovered in dark passages and the engine-room. Anyhow they were pirates, and were treated as such. Only two hours before they had sunk an unarmed, outward bound steamer, forty-four women, children and men being drowned. They had taken no part in rescue work, but had steamed callously among the survivors, and only by most splendid seamanship was the *Arabic's*^[29] death roll so small."

The reader has already noticed the impatience of gallant youth, and it was utterly impossible for the twenty-two-year grandson of a General of Marines to remain a spectator any longer. So, having convinced himself that the enemy had no intention of rushing the *Baralong's* guns, young Steele leapt on to the *Nicosian* and joined the boarding party. He was able also to perform the valuable service of securing the stern of each steamer together. The whole story moves, indeed, so quickly and there is such downright healthy vigour in all this unusual melodrama, that one has to keep reminding oneself this is neither a chapter in a boy's book of fiction, nor is it fifteen minutes out of a flicking film.

When the crisis had passed, and all this fierce excitement became so quiet, so that the only stirring was the heavy lurch of tethered hulls, the time had come for

restoring some orderliness to the *Nicosian*. She was in a parlous condition. "Mules had stampeded, some with broken limbs were falling about after being badly shelled by the Germans. The upper deck was a pathetic spectacle, and a stench pervaded everywhere. The remainder of her crew returned and she was got ready for being taken in tow by the *Baralong*. There was also a large number of American muleteers, and the veterinary surgeon expressed the keenest admiration of *Baralong's* action. He methodically put the wounded mules out of pain, and under his instructions the others were got into order again. The *Nicosian* was towed all night, and escorted to Lundy Island, where her engineers made good some defects, and she then proceeded under her own steam." She thus made her way towards Avonmouth.

The net result was that U 27 and her commanding officer, Lieutenant-Commander Wegener, together with her crew, had been wiped out. It had been done by a combination of cleverness, daring, and genuine seamanship. All the monotony and drill of weary weeks had not been wasted: they were rather the essential preliminaries which enabled every second of time to be used in the most profitable manner when opportunity came. Herbert had been able to make his tramp steamer a perfect man-of-war; and Steele, as gunnery officer, had maintained his department at the height of efficiency, with the result that the shooting scarcely could have been better, the range being 600 yards.

Now the matter did not end with the salving of *Nicosian*, her mules and munitions destined for our armies in France. Unfortunately among the muleteers were some of the worst kind of scallywags, who are useless to themselves as they are worthless to their own nation, yet dangerous to other people. Nominally they were United States citizens, but no decent American nowadays would be proud to own them. "Though they were loud in their acclamation," writes Commander Steele with just indignation, "of their rescue by the *Baralong*, and made a deputation to her captain, who asked them for no other return than to maintain silence about the action; yet on their return to America they fell easy victims to the dollars of the anti-British press, who invented the most astounding tales of the action supported by affidavits of the muleteers."

"The Germans made great capital out of the so-called *Baralong* 'atrocities,' and in reply to a counter charge of sinking the *Arabic* published a lying report from the submarine's Captain, whom they did not know to have been killed two hours later. Actually there was nothing more in the *Baralong* case than in those incidents which were occurring every day in France: it was merely an affair of a 'mopping up party,' which accounted for five of the enemy." It is all very well for some people of the

lawyer type to argue that these five might have been made prisoners instead of being shot out of hand; but that sort of attitude in the middle of an engagement, with all its tense excitement and uncertainty, and after the greatest provocation, is impossible. The crew of U 27 were regarded by *Baralong* in much the same way as the Chinese pirates (mentioned in the final chapter of this volume) were esteemed by the officers of the S.S. *Hai Ching*, and treated accordingly. The German Captain, fresh from his own atrocities, had no right to expect other than the reception which was accorded. "The Corporal who shot him," Commander Steele tells me, "was a steady old soldier of many years splendid service. His simple explanation of his act was that he treated all Germans as vermin; that even before the Great War, he had seen instances of their brutality in China."

The result of the muleteers' ingratitude for having been snatched from death was there came across the Atlantic into Germany such a series of highly-coloured accounts that our enemy lost all sense of justice and threatened reprisals, whilst it was well known among many of us serving afloat off the south Irish coast that a reward had been offered for the capture of Commander Herbert. Even for years after the war feeling was so high that when in 1922 I published in my *Q-Ships* the briefest account of the *Baralong* episode, I purposely left out his name, mentioning that "I have made a certain omission. Those concerned will recognise this and understand: the rest will not notice." This was done after conversation with Commander Herbert who, after the Peace, retired from the Royal Navy into a different sphere.

But a year later another writer openly published to the world Commander Herbert's identity, so that now—when many of the international war passions have died down—I have not hesitated to state the name of *Baralong's* Captain throughout this chapter. This most gallant and able officer was given the hint that, to avoid what seemed probable, he should allow his name to appear in the casualty lists as dead. Those who knew him best realised that he would refuse. He relinquished (though only for a time) decoy ship work, took command of a new submarine, and with him went his loyal gunnery officer as first lieutenant. For, among the rewards which the Admiralty bestowed for the sinking of U 27 were several decorations, £1000 to be divided, and the mentions in despatches. Lieutenant-Commander Herbert received a D.S.O., Sub-Lieutenant Steele for his distinguished service was given the exceptional privilege of being transferred from the Royal Naval Reserve to the Royal Navy. There were, later in the war, several other similar transferences for Q-ship service, but Steele's was the first to break through the strict established rule. No better selection could have been made, and he continued to widen his

experience so that by the time all wars were past for the present he had served in almost every conceivable kind of vessel. Thus, having gone afloat in submarines, he served aboard the battleship *Royal Oak* in which he had the good fortune to be present at Jutland. In the autumn of 1917 he was, as a lieutenant, given command of H.M.S. P 63, one of those patrol boats specially built for anti-submarine work, and with him as second-in-command went Sub-Lieutenant Roland Hunter-Blair, R.N., whose name will be associated with Steele in a desperate adventure later. For a short period Lieutenant Steele was in command of H.M.S. *Cornflower*, but all these were but preliminaries to the great adventure of his life which won him the V.C. in the smallest of craft.

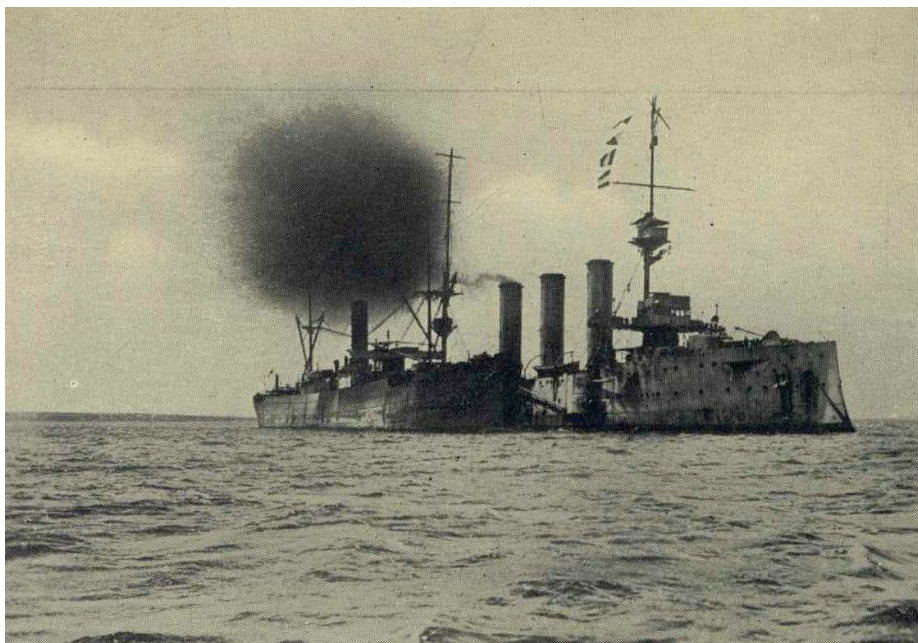
Commander Herbert, who received his promotion in 1917, was afterwards Captain of the Q-ship *Carrigan Head*, a steamer of 4201 tons, which was to have a lively encounter with a submarine who was so surprised that she dived into invisibility. But on another occasion, whilst in command of a decoy trawler he had the good fortune to destroy another U-boat. In truth the life of this officer, like that of Steele, is just one long category of adventures on the grand scale. He had been present in his submarine at the action of Heligoland, August 28, 1914, and he knew the waters of the Bight almost as well as any U-boat expert. Brave as the bravest, Herbert was always ready to do the big thing in face of death. Once, when his submarine got aground on the German coast within sight of the enemy patrols, he first made provision for the safety of his crew, and then carried out preparations for blowing up submarine together with himself; for, unlike certain U-boat captains, he expected no quarter should he fall into the enemy's hands.

Happily Herbert got his craft afloat again, and lived through many more exciting events until in January 1917 he passed through the most amazing thrill of all, as we shall see in Chapter IX. But the excellent arrangements which he had left in the *Baralong* were to be of no mere temporary value. On the contrary, they remained of immense utility. For only within a few weeks of his relinquishing command, the ship had another engagement with a submarine and destroyed U 41, once more incurring Germany's wrath.



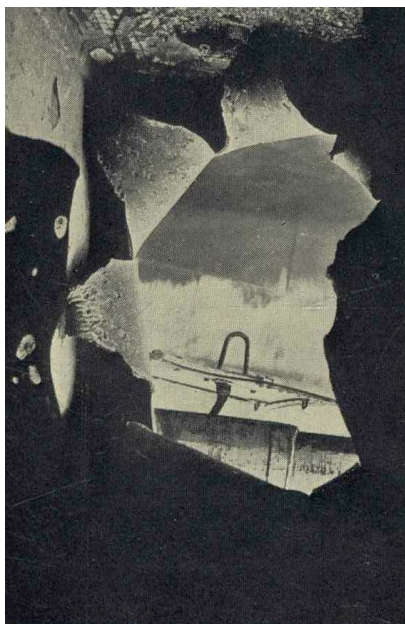
ROLLING DOWN TO THE HORN

Admiral von Spee's squadron during the last week of November steaming through heavy weather down the Chilean coast bound for the Falklands, as seen from the forebridge of *Dresden*. The ships reading from the horizon are: *Sharnhorst* (flagship), *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg* and *Dresden*.



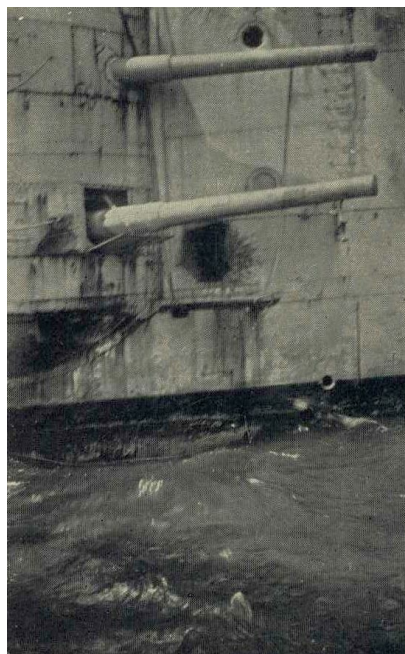
COALING AT PORT WILLIAM

H.M.S. *Kent* on December 10, 1914, back at the Falklands with a damaged top-gallant mast after sinking the *Nürnberg*.



FROM THE INSIDE

The hole made by the *Nürnberg*'s



THE PRICE OF VICTORY

shell as seen from inside the
Engine-room Artificers' bathroom
in the H.M.S. *Kent*.

CHAPTER

IX

THE DIVE TO

DEATH

A hole in the side of H.M.S. *Kent*
where a shell from the *Nürnberg*
penetrated. The shell entered the
Engine-room Artificers' bathroom
and made a hole 3½ feet square.
(See also [Frontispiece](#).)

ONE of the most thrilling naval incidents in the middle of the late war had relation to the war only indirectly. But the hero was that same Commander Godfrey Herbert, whom we have already seen as one of the pioneer captains both of submarines and Q-ships, and historically memorable by reason of the *Baralong* incident. If "adventures are to the adventurous," it would seem from the following that there is scarcely any limitation when a brave personality becomes so familiar with peril: the line separating death from life is already indistinct.

This story was at one time only whispered round, and afterwards more or less garbled versions were published: but it is the first occasion that the full and accurate account has been made known. Most of the facts are given in the actual words this officer used in relating to me, but that which I find most difficult to convey is the quiet modesty, that indefinable mingling of confidence and restraint which is characteristic in the bravest of the brave. In the hour of danger here is one whom nothing can halt: no obstacle seems so considerable as to remain between himself and attainment. The most loyal of friends, and the wittiest of good companions, here is the modern seaman of a mechanical age with the dashing undaunted gallantry of an Elizabethan, whose seafaring life has persistently slipped itself free from the clutches of mortality.

When the British Admiralty decided to build a number of submarines for Fleet work, rather than to operate as individuals, a surface speed of 24 knots was required, but this meant that steam turbines would have to be used, and thus the special "K"-class came into being. Before diving, steam had to be shut off, and the submarine ran on her Diesel engines. The latter were used also immediately after breaking surface, so as to get going quickly; but when submerged the usual electric dive was employed. Every "K" was therefore a most complicated vessel with the three systems: (a) geared turbines for steam drive, (b) Diesels and electric transmission, (c) electric battery drive.

Double-hulled, 338 feet long, 26½ feet at extreme beam, with a mean draught of 16 feet, these submarines were of a destroyer's size, that is to say displacing 1880 tons on the surface, but 2650 tons when submerged. In the latter condition their speed was only 9 knots, but they carried 200 tons of oil and besides their eight torpedo-tubes, were armed with one 4-inch gun as well as a 3-inch anti-aircraft gun.

Some even carried depth-charge throwers, and altogether the "K" class represented something very much out of the ordinary. In appearance, as will be seen from the accompanying photograph, the hull looked as if a naval architect had taken the body of a whale, added a couple of funnels and periscopes as well as a conning-tower, and then hoped for the best. The "K" was never a lucky class. Three of them one fatal night were run over and sunk by the Grand Fleet, with the loss of such expert professional knowledge that the sacrifice was difficult to assess. But our present inquiry is concerned with one whose numerical appellation might have forewarned the superstitious of some awful impending catastrophe.

This K 13 was built by a Clyde firm in the year 1916, and on Monday, January 29, 1917, she was taken up the Gare Loch from the Fairfield Yard, Govan, to carry out her trials before passing into the service. Her captain was Commander Godfrey Herbert, D.S.O., R.N., and he had under him a crew of seventy-three men. But on this special occasion Commander F. H. M. Goodhart, D.S.O., R.N. (another of the leading submarine authorities), came out on the experimental trip before taking over command of K 14. Now all went well in regard to the surface tests of K 13, and then she proceeded further up the loch to do her diving trials. Just about noon she dived to eighty feet in order to prove the watertightness of the hull; but after she had risen to the surface again a small leak was reported in the boiler-room. One of the chief drawbacks in this submarine class was the heat generated by having to use furnaces and steam. The engineer officer in K 13, because of the heat in the boiler-room, could not find exactly whence the leak was emanating, so he asked his captain to dive again after that room had been ventilated. This was done, and the vessel remained submerged for half an hour whilst the crew went to dinner.

At three the same afternoon diving stations were again ordered, the funnels lowered, the funnel doors fastened down, and the engine-room shut off. She had barely been submerged to twenty feet when the engineer officer sent a message to Commander Herbert requesting him to return to the surface, as the boiler-room was being flooded. No time was lost in an attempt to comply with so urgent an alarm, and a great rush of air from aft sufficiently indicated that an equally large inrush of water must be pouring in. Watertight doors were closed, but the depth gauge indicated she was at thirty-five feet, and she was still descending. Both motors were now stopped, every tank was being blown, but she refused to rise, and now the gauge showed thirty-eight feet. She was fast on the bottom, and it happened to be the time of half tide.

Water poured in through the voice pipes, the motor-room became flooded and the main fuses blew in quick succession. It became obvious that every compartment

abaft the torpedo-room was flooded, for Commander Herbert could get no answer to the telephone whilst he remained in the conning-tower. "I talked the situation over with Mr. Hillhouse, the naval architect who had accompanied us, but he was pessimistic as the bows were firmly held to the sea-bed. On further discussion, Commander Goodhart agreed with me that there was nothing which could be done until a diver should locate us; after which, even if air and food could be passed down to us, nothing would shift the vessel unless the after part were blown off from the fore portion."

"During the night we heard sounds as if people were trying to find K 13 by means of a grapnel, for the search party were now at work, and at about six the following morning we listened carefully to the tapping of a diver on the hull, but could make no sense on the supposition that he was using the Morse code. Later on I asked Commander Goodhart if he would try and reach the surface so as to assist the salvors in regard to the directions for supplying air and food. It was low water to-day at 12.30 p.m., so that would be the best time for the attempt. After a while Commander Goodhart agreed to do so through the conning-tower, whilst I was to close the door after him, and Lieutenant Singer was to drain the conning-tower, at a given signal, after Goodhart had gone clear."

So the forenoon of Tuesday was busily spent by the two commanders removing such obstacles as the compass, and connecting up a high-pressure valve to the whistle-pipe to act as a "blow." Herbert then charged the conning-tower with air to test for tightness, and then a small cylinder, eight inches by one and a half, was filled with instructions for the people on the surface to read. The gallant Goodhart then put this cylinder into his belt and accompanied Herbert into the conning-tower, his last words being: "Well, if I don't get up, the cylinder will." The water was now allowed to flood the tower and, as soon as it reached their waists, Herbert turned on the high-pressure air. Goodhart knocked off the conning-tower clips, the sea poured in through the opening, but he had taken a deep breath standing up in the dome, and then made his escape just at the moment when both officers were approaching exhaustion.

And then something else happened. Herbert raising his hands to feel for the lid, was suddenly (without realising) carried through the opening up and up, through the dome, and through the square hatch on the top of the wheelhouse. It was the escaping air at high pressure which was responsible, and the experience was akin to one tormented by a nightmare. But it was over in a flash, and the submarine's captain found himself shot up as if through a trap-door, and arriving in the most dramatic manner on to the surface of the sea between two craft, of whom one hauled him,

stunned, aboard.

It was a miraculous survival and the narrowest, closest separation from death's clammy claws which even this great adventurer had experienced. For any mortal being to make nearer contact with the unseen world, yet come back, could surely never be possible. Two items, humanly speaking, alone accounted for his freedom: one was the intense air pressure, and the other was his presence of mind in exercising his will firmly over his breathing whilst in transit. He had left death below, but on the way had struck his head badly against the steelwork, causing cuts and bruises. Less lucky was Goodhart, who, during his violent ascension, had knocked his head with such impetus that he reached the surface dead. So passed another brave soul, and brilliant mind, which could ill be spared.

But there was no time to waste if the other lives were to be rescued, and it was fortunate that as a result of praiseworthy organisation the salvage ship *Thrush* had been hurried to the scene and was right there on the spot. What to do now? Obviously to get air, if practicable, into K 13 before the men were all dead.

"As soon as possible," relates Commander Herbert, "I sent a diver down to remove the cap from the foremost ammunition hand-up, but also to connect up an air-lead. A 4-inch flexible steam-pipe was fitted, but it was not until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, the 31st, that I got into communication with those on board the submarine. By this time high-pressure air had been sent through the other connection, so I passed a diver's air-pipe down the 4-inch hose for breathing purposes. Later on we were able by the same means to pass various kinds of liquid food." The officers and crew of the *Thrush* were toiling desperately to raise the stricken submarine, and their plant was exactly suited for the effort of blowing the last drop of water from the forward part of the submarine back into the sea.

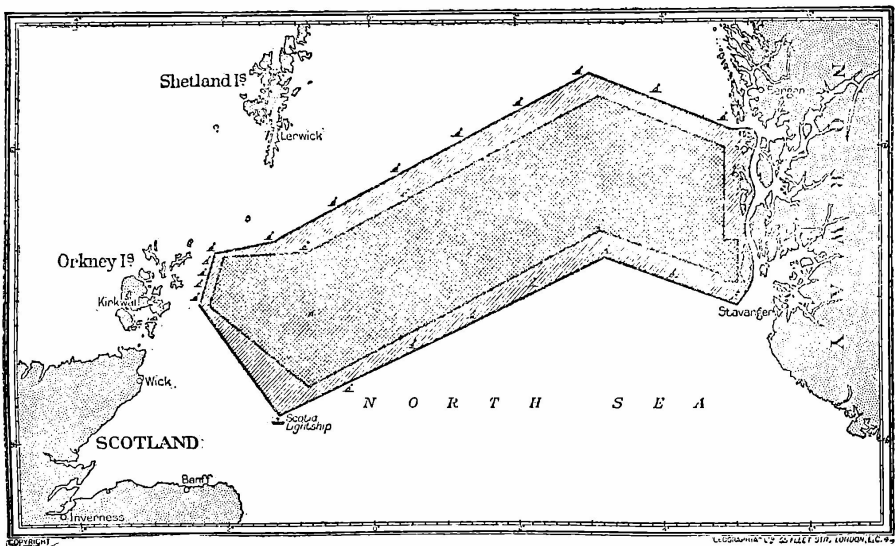
In command of the *Thrush* was the world's greatest salvage expert, the late Commodore F. W. Young, R.N.R., and how he got to this Scottish fjord in record time is in itself a story so exciting that it would need a flashing cinema to show first a high speed motor car dashing through the night across England. What with his long years of liberating sunken ships, and Commander Herbert's unique submarine knowledge, there was happily the ideal combination of talent for this most difficult job. But down below in K 13 matters were very serious, and Lieutenant Singer was in such a condition that he was thought to be dying. There still remained, however, Mr. Searle, the Admiralty overseer, and this civilian now took over command of the submarine.

Nearly two days did she remain a prisoner of the sea, but about noon of Wednesday she was released sufficiently forward so that by the united aid of the

Thrush, a steam trawler, and two hoppers, it was possible to raise the bows well up to the surface. There followed a period of fierce activity to get an important job done before the tide should again rise. By means of an oxy-acetylene flame a portion of the hull was cut out, and then the same thing was done further aft. Pumps were again requisitioned, and the glorious result was that, whilst over 40 of crew and passengers had perished, a large number were rescued alive through the hole in the hull. K 13 was brought back to Govan, her name was changed eventually to K 22, and Commander Herbert presently went to sea in yet another totally different kind of craft. This time it was an armed trawler off the south coast of Cornwall, and after some ingenious tactics involving the use of hydrophones, he was able to send the German submarine UC 66 to the bottom.

Now such was the difficulty in counteracting the U-boat menace, that during the last year of the war, special minefields were laid in those two passages through which the enemy's submarines must pass if bound west of the North Sea. One was the area from Folkestone to Cape Gris Nez, the other was a much vaster region stretching all the way from Scotland to Norway. These areas had to be planted with so many thousand mines that when Armistice arrived, the dual scheme was barely complete: yet the English Channel barrage definitely caused the destruction of thirteen enemy submarines, and the North Sea barrage was responsible for six. Had hostilities continued only a little longer these respective defiles would have become mere suicide seas in which our enemies, whether outward or homeward-bound, dived to their deaths.

Probably because of its geographical remoteness, the secrecy with which it was laid, and the manner in which the Armistice suddenly overtook the laying, the public have not generally appreciated the boldness of this North Sea barrage, whose creation was due in the greatest measure to our American allies. Certainly it was one of the biggest undertakings in the whole war. Those who view events from a distance and come fresh to a task not infrequently perceive a solution which other minds have left untried. The American Navy from the moment of joining with us in April 1917 had the unshaken belief that it was absolutely essential to make the line from the Orkneys to the neighbourhood of Bergen impassable. But this meant a distance of 240 miles and the mooring of about 77,000 mines!



THE NORTHERN BARRAGE

This immense minefield, extending from the Orkneys to Norway, consisted of 72,900 mines actually laid before Armistice arrived, and accounted for six German submarines. This barrage was one of the biggest undertakings of the whole war.

To the British Admiralty these figures, the great depth of the sea, the distance from our bases, and the necessity of having such an extensive minefield patrol, to say nothing of a minelaying fleet, appeared sufficient reason for rejecting the colossal scheme. But the Americans with their originality and well systematised organisation still stuck to their idea, devised a new kind of mine with antennæ so sensitive and extensive that if a submarine came within a hundred feet the electric current would cause a violent explosion and the enemy's destruction. In September 1917 it was after all decided at an Allied Conference to go ahead with the Northern barrage. The United States began to manufacture huge quantities of material, obtained a fleet of twenty-four steamers from the American Lakes to convey the manufactured mine-parts across to the west of Scotland, the assembling of the pieces being done over here. In the meanwhile the 240-mile area was divided into three sections B, A, and C. That part nearest to the Orkneys was a comparatively small rectangle and to be laid by the British. The middle section designated A was several times this enormous acreage and was to be laid by the Americans exclusively. Area C resembled Area B and was to be laid by the British, its position being off the Norwegian coast. Both British and American mines were to be used in B and C, for our resources were being heavily taxed with the Folkestone field; nor could we afford shipping as minelayers. Too many of our steamers were being sunk each month for any to be

spared.

The Lake steamers laden with their dangerous cargoes were wisely not allowed to be endangered by the North Sea U-boats: the Atlantic voyage was made as short as possible, and they landed the material at either of two bases. One was up the Firth of Clyde at the Kyle coast; the other was at the western end of the Caledonian Canal. This routing worked so well that only one of these steamers was lost by submarine, although about two vessels used to cross from America every week in one of the convoys.

Two other bases for the purpose of storing, assembling, and loading up the mines were chosen (*a*) at Inverness, the eastern end of the Caledonian Canal, and (*b*) at Invergordon, a little further to the north on Cromarty Firth. At these two stations, far away from the inquisitive, there were established busy American colonies with eleven hundred men at each, all working hard to provide 2000 mines every day. The accompanying photograph shows a railway train-load of the finished article on its way down to the quay at Inverness, all ready to be put aboard the minelaying fleet, who would then go off and spend a couple of days in the North Sea dumping mines and sinkers before returning for another lot.

The Admiralty informed mariners that from May 15 the areas A and B would be dangerous to shipping, a lightship and series of buoys being employed to define the barrage, the zone being marked pink on the charts. Rows of these terrible but essential mines were planted below each other till the sea for a depth of 250 feet was one wall of explosive, and it would have been quite impossible for the enemy to have submerged to this extent without being ruined by pressure. Each of these myriads of mines consisted of a sphere measuring three feet in diameter, containing 300 lbs. of T.N.T., the sensitive whisker or antenna being supported by a small float. Of the three rows, the uppermost was laid 45 feet deep, the second 160 feet, and the third 240 feet. A vessel drawing as much as a submarine running on the surface—at least 10 feet—would come in contact with the upper floats and start the explosion; and it is in this surface condition that the U-boat would normally travel. If, on the other hand, she elected to dive, then she would find the other two layers awaiting her; but, in order to guard against one mine starting off its neighbours, each sphere was laid not closer than 300 feet.

The operation of planting this barrage was not one for timid seamen. The least mistake in handling, or a small error in navigation, or, again, a torpedo from a German submarine as the mine-fleet steamed out from Moray Firth, would have instantly produced the worst kind of death. Perfect station-keeping when in the act of laying, and the precaution not to pass over the fouled course, had to be borne in

mind constantly. There was, too, the not inconsiderable peril from premature explosions, and it was conceivable also that when the enemy got to know of this barrage effort he would send out the High Sea Fleet to sink every steamer on the job. But this risk had been considered, the mine-vessels were always escorted by British destroyers all the way from Cromarty Firth, and there were battleships as well as battle-cruisers in readiness to afford further protection as required.

The United States had provided eight of these minelayers, and the reader will observe them in the next two photographs as they were on September 20, 1918. In the first illustration the eight are steaming line-ahead in two columns. On the right are the S.S. *Roanoke*, *Housatonic*, *Quinnibang*, and *Baltimore*. The left-hand column consists of the *Canonicus*, *Canandaiga*, *Aroostook*, and *Saranac*. The Fleet is on its way to the barrage. In the other picture they are seen in line-abreast, the formation convenient for dropping their cargo. The total capacity of these eight was 5500 mines, so that given a spell of fine weather it was soon possible to make good progress.

But the North Sea, especially in those higher latitudes, is notorious for its grey mists and days of heavy weather except for an occasional bright patch in the height of summer. To be rolling about with all this live cargo on board was no yachting picnic, and the possibility of being even a short distance out of one's reckoning with the barrage to leeward could not be a comforting thought. It is well established, as every amateur photographer who has taken his camera to sea fully realises, that the film always causes waves to be represented as much lower than in actuality. From the next picture, which shows an escorting destroyer taking a dive into a heavy sea, when the wind is so fierce as to blow the wave-tops into fine spray, one can appreciate some of the difficulties which the minelayer on her starboard quarter was accustomed to expect.

But the work went on; two U-boats were lucky to get through with serious damage in July though the area was but partially laid. When the Armistice on November 11 arrived, 16,300 British and 56,600 American mines had been planted; only another 6400 were needed for completing area A, and this would have been done within the next few days. This big North Sea task having been accomplished, it was further intended to run a similar mine barrage across the Gibraltar Straits in addition to another from Tunis towards Sicily. Indeed, what with these lines and the Otranto Straits barrage, the submarine campaign before many weeks would have been confined within limited areas in the Middle Sea as already it was in the North Sea. The patrols and convoy system would have done the rest, and gradually the danger to commerce would have passed.

CHAPTER X

THE GATE CRASHERS

FOR all practical purposes the Adriatic Sea is really a large-sized English Channel: what the former meant in regard to Italy and Austria-Hungary, the latter still means to Britain and France. This distance from Venice to Trieste was only a little more than sixty miles, of which nearly a third is within the partially sheltered Trieste Gulf. Thus one of Austria's big naval bases remained both a proximate threat to Italy and an invitation to be attacked. Similarly Austria's other naval base, Pola, to the southward of the Istrian peninsula, was about sixty miles from the point where Italy's coastline projects at the mouths of the Po.

Now the lower configuration of the Adriatic is such that he who controls the Otranto Straits can turn the Adriatic into a strategical lake; and in any case, the manœuvring space within all this water is so small that it is even less suited for battle-fleets and grand operations than is the shallow North Sea. Therefore, one can readily perceive that when Italy and Austria found themselves at enmity during the Great War, the naval development would probably be marked by a multiplicity of raids rather than one or two first-class battles; and these raids would be especially suitable for vessels of small size with great mobility. A sixty-mile run would enable every advantage to be taken of the dark hours.

When, also, we come to consider the respective national psychologies of the two rivals and remember the distinctive Italian characteristic of dash with an emotional appreciation of the most dramatic heroism, there are tremendous possibilities for personal risks of the most adventurous kind. This condition was even further accentuated by the fact that from Italy's nearest territory (Gargano Head) Austria's southernmost naval base Cattaro was only about double the distance of the Venice-Trieste run. But the Austrians had been geographically endowed with a fringe of islands off the Dalmatian coast in such a position that it was always possible for communication to be maintained between Pola and Cattaro by water, without risking the open sea. Theoretically, these Dalmatian channels were of immense strategical value to a Commander-in-Chief wishing with safety and secrecy to transfer his forces from north to south, or vice versa.

As a case in point, if he were planning a sudden raid on the Otranto Straits, it would be highly convenient to move down from Pola to Cattaro during a long dark night, and so be within six hours' steaming of the Straits. Indeed during the early stages of Austro-Italian hostilities it was firmly expected that the Austrian fleet would

break through and dash round Greece, fighting its way past the British Dardanelles forces to join hands with *Goeben* and *Breslau*. Had that been done, the German Admiral Souchon at Constantinople would have been a powerful menace, and have compelled our Mediterranean fleet to be strengthened at the expense of the Grand Fleet.

But Austria's naval character during the war was not marked by that love of risks, that determination to do or die. Moreover, even tempting Dalmatian channels, as we shall presently learn, were to be a veritable trap: they suggested those ideal smooth waters which small, delicate, yet deadly, mosquito craft delight to use. Whilst in some respects the Dalmatian "sea trench" (as we may regard it) was more protective than a long minefield, and there existed so many gaps for choice of entrance or exit, yet here was the very danger. For any Italian torpedo-carrying craft waiting at these narrows would be sure of good targets whensoever the enemy should come along.

Conversely, Italy's Adriatic coastline from the north to its heel at Cape Santa Maria di Leuca is most uninviting for small craft. With the exception of Venice and Brindisi, it has no natural harbours or anchorages, and few artificial shelters for shipping. Instead of deeply serrated shores on the other side, with its numberless islands, there is a blunt unyielding expanse of shore. It was, therefore, hardly likely to encourage the most adventurous Austrians, though there was one lukewarm effort which ended ridiculously in the arms of Italian policemen.

It is a notable historical fact that the first outstanding results in a war, as in a boxing match, remain the most powerful influences until the end. The German Navy never recovered from that initial Battle of the Bight, and the shock induced her sea forces to act with caution and self preservation rather than enterprise. But the losses which British naval and commercial shipping received during the earliest days of September 1914, owing to German submarines, had on Italy the effect of thinking less in terms of big battleships and cruisers than of minute craft capable of discharging torpedoes at close range. Of course it was as all too possible to have one's judgment distorted by ignoring the value of a fleet at the back of submarine strength: but the truth remains that Italy was profoundly influenced by this torpedo campaign in the Narrow Seas, and it so happened that the Adriatic would lend itself much more to the new method. As it turned out, and the following pages will prove, the Italians were justified in their attitude. But they were favoured by the defensive character of their enemies, who normally shut themselves up in port and thus virtually solicited a war of attrition.

Here, then, was the whole reason for the thrilling undertakings, which we shall

now follow with the zest that carries us away in a great hazard. Motor craft were employed by the Italian naval authorities from May 1916 for such various duties as reconnaissance, territorial surveillance, and escort service. As with Britain, private motor-launches were first employed of a small and unsuitable size until others were built. German submarines, ever since May 1915, began to come up through the Otranto Straits and use the Austrian bases for refuelling, refitting, and recreation. It was advisable to construct anti-submarine motor-boats which could patrol the coastal routes; but, whilst these were armed with each a 12-pounder gun and (in due time) depth charges, yet they were altogether too slow.

Later on in the year 1916 Italy began to expand this motor-boat idea with boldness and skill. Torpedoes were to take the place of guns, and the internal combustion engines were to be given the aid of auxiliary electric motors. It is true that the latter would provide a speed of only 4 knots supplied from a battery which would last about four hours. But the great advantage was that after making a passage under petrol, the boat could switch on to electric drive and so enter an Austrian port silently. This was an immense assistance, and the reader will not fail in another chapter to note that our own coastal motor-boats when raiding an enemy port suffered badly from noise and violent exhausts which advertised the raiders' presence alarmingly.

The latest type of Italian boat was about the size of our smaller C.M.B.'s. Built of wood, low-lying and difficult to spot even with searchlights, yet extremely handy, this class measured 42 feet long. They were, however, rather more shiplike than our C.M.B.'s, completely decked, and of 12 tons displacement. They were found to stand the weather quite as well as any Italian 100-ton torpedo-boat. All the cleverness and ingenuity of Italy's mechanical engineers contrived to create what unquestionably were ideal craft for the special purposes, (1) of harrying submarines, (2) of stealing into Austrian boom-defended bases and torpedoing capital ships. Just as our coastal motor-boats were known as C.M.B.'s, so these Adriatic craft were known as M.A.S. (Motor-Boats Anti-Submarine). But gallant adventurers found hidden in these three letters the inspiring impulse, "*Memento audere semper*," which may be rendered, "Remember to be daring always."

One 18-inch torpedo was placed each side of the boat, there were three machine guns, but the maximum speed of about 24 knots was considerably inferior to that of our C.M.B.'s. Where the M.A.S. gained in seaworthiness and silence they lost in rapidity. Still, a ship is always a compromise of conflicting requirements, and these 42-footers possessed the ability to cross the open sea before quietly approaching their targets. So successful did they show themselves that towards the

end of war Italy built about four hundred. For training the personnel she had schools, but the pilots were nearly all taken from her Mercantile Marine.

Organised into flotillas of fifty or sixty units under a senior naval officer, the M.A.S. were always sent to hunt in pairs, so as to be at their watch-keeping stations by nightfall, and remain on the several routes from Pola, Cattaro, Durazzo, or the islands, until just before dawn. One of the surprises of post-War German naval publications is the fearsome respect with which U-boat officers regarded British M.L.'s. Over and over again in histories and personal submarine memoirs this fact crops up; whereas it would be more accurate to say that any German submarine armed with a gun and resolved to remain on the surface trimmed fairly low, could have shelled the wooden M.L.'s to destruction in no time.

Much the same mistake was made by the Austrians who credited the M.A.S. with such fantastic powers of speed and achievement that, like the M.L.'s, they created a moral effect far greater than was justified. Finally the Austrians became so exasperated that they actually planned one raid across the Adriatic to put a stop to these annoying little insects. Sixty picked volunteers under an Austrian officer set forth from Pola bound for Ancona where this raiding party was to fall on the M.A.S. base and capture the flotilla. It was a neat notion, perfectly suitable for that sea, and involving only about a ninety-mile trip, such as from Dover to the Scheldt. The moral result of such an enterprise succeeding, and the arrival of Italian prisoners in Pola harbour, would have largely reversed the present sense of rotting inertia. Such a coup would, if successful, have sent a laugh round Europe and over the Atlantic.

The sixty warriors went aboard a motor schooner which a destroyer towed out to sea, and the Austrians did certainly land at a spot eleven miles north of Ancona; but, on marching into the latter, they were arrested by the police and sailors, the abandoned schooner being found on the beach by Italian seaplanes. So that scheme fizzled out ingloriously, whereas the M.A.S. frequently landed people on the Austrian coast at night, and even by day performed such annoying acts as to capture and tow away enemy seaplanes or small craft. Nor did the daring and skill end there. By considerable engineering inventiveness, the M.A.S. were fitted with a contrivance of gear wheels so that they possessed some of the qualities of a military "tank" which enabled them to pass over any kind of obstruction.

Here was a thoroughly practical device, which we shall quickly see proved, and it opened up such tremendous possibilities that the centre of M.A.S. effort must concentrate on even one enemy battleship in preference to all the submarines which might enter the Adriatic. In order thoroughly to value this novel adaptation of a motor-boat, one has only to ask oneself what would have happened if two or three

German submarines thus fitted had climbed the defences into Scapa Flow or the Firth of Forth some dark stormy night and, assisted by the rain with wind, sent torpedoes into flagships as well as any other bold masses looming up. That such a disaster is no Jules Vernian romance these pages will show too clearly. But that which has happened can occur again, and the sea-tank is now a new danger for battle-fleets resting within most elaborate obstructions.

The first Italian naval raid of any importance was not by motor-boat, but by torpedo-boat No. 24, and the date was May 29, 1916. She chose her time well, entered Trieste soon after midnight, fired a couple of torpedoes at a steamer which was anchored in the harbour, but missed target with both of them. One exploded against a coal depot and did considerable damage. The net result of this raid was to put the Austrians into a state of apprehension and to have Trieste more adequately defended. A few days passed and on the night of June 7, the two M.A.S., Nos. 5 and 7, commanded by Lieutenants Pagano and Berard penetrated the net defences of Durazzo, torpedoing a steamer laden with supplies for the Austrian army. This, however, was a mere indication of what might be expected of the motor-boats before very long: the policy of wearing down the enemy and creating a feeling of uneasiness had only just begun.

Five days later Commander Ciano (of whom we shall hear more presently) took the destroyer *Zeffiro* into Parenzo harbour, which lies some thirty miles south and west of Trieste. This was a reply to an Austrian aerial raid of the day before, when Venice had been bombed by seaplanes. Ciano's visit was not without its humorous side, for, whilst he had come to seek the seaplane sheds and failed in locating them, he had the nerve to take his vessel right alongside the quay where a couple of Austrian policemen (not knowing one destroyer from another) very willingly obliged in helping with the visitor's mooring ropes!

One of these two was captured as a souvenir, and the *Zeffiro* having left some useful propaganda in the shape of Italian papers giving news of General Brusiloff's victories on the eastern front, shoved off and departed in peace. But now the alarm was raised, *Zeffiro* at a range of 800 yards delayed for twenty minutes whilst bombarding the place, met her supports waiting outside and retired homewards. Several squadrons of the enemy's seaplanes rose angrily into the air, overtook the Italians and caused a score of casualties. Another dash into Durazzo on June 26 enabled two steamers to be torpedoed, one being full of ammunition.

Pola, being a large naval establishment and headquarters of the Austrian fleet, with building berths, docks, coaling facilities, and all the manifold characteristics of a considerable dockyard, was quite the place for one of the M.A.S. craft to violate,

and there was reason on November 2, 1916, to suppose that within the Pola anchorage of Fasana the battleship *Ferdinand Max* (10,433 tons) might be here lying; for Austrian units were accustomed to do target practice, and this locality was well worth a risk. The Italian boat selected was under the command of Lieutenant Ildebrand Goiran, but the task was one requiring such exceptional presence of mind that many a cool officer would have felt it impossible. Before he could hope to enter Fasana there was a stout barrage, or boom defence, to be overcome; but how could this be accomplished?

He started across the Adriatic under cover of darkness this November night escorted by a torpedo-boat, and by midnight had reached the floating barrage which obviously was so designed that it would soon render useless a vessel's propellers. But, on the other hand, it was equally comprehensible that if this obstruction could be lowered to a certain depth it would permit so shallow a craft as the motor-boat to pass over safely. Now the torpedo-boat had been specially trimmed with a couple of heavy weights outside her bows, so these heavy articles were now cautiously lowered on to the barrage and secured to the beams. By this method did the obstruction sink sufficiently deep, and the motor-boat found herself inside the protected anchorage.

It was an impudent situation thus to invade the enemy's privacy, yet the most original form of gate-crashing hitherto attempted. But Goiran had to be shameless or fail altogether. We can imagine the suppressed excitement; the encouragement which came from the yielding of the floating baulks. When once inside, his electric motors enabled him to explore with unsuspected silence, and for two whole hours he cruised about unseen yet finally he could discover the *Ferdinand Max* nowhere. Disappointing! He did, none the less, catch sight of an old battleship^[30] of no value and loosed off a couple of torpedoes at 200 yards range. The battleship was riding surrounded by her torpedo nets, which made so excellent a curtain that the missiles entangled themselves harmlessly.

The time had now come for Goiran to get away hurriedly, but when he was abreast of the Austrian guardship the latter was on the alert. Someone looking down into the leaden water a few yards away could make out a small craft of indistinct shape, and challenged. It was an awkward moment, and the guns might begin without further parley. But Goiran never hesitated and answered the hail by feigning a Teutonic tone of voice and shouting back the word *gut*. Again he was challenged, and again he replied with the same syllable. After a third time he seemed to have satisfied the guardship and was permitted to carry on. He had just had the narrowest of escapes, and must make his best speed away. But the very noise of his starting up

the petrol engines revealed to the Austrians that this was another of those harassing Italian boats, and that they had been fooled badly. Heavy firing now broke the nocturnal stillness, and the anchorage jumped to liveliness. It was too late; for the motor-boat had got across the barrage once more and out into the void. Goiran had deserved better luck with his torpedoes, but his gallantry was afterwards rewarded by a gold medal.

That year 1916 had been full of excitements in the Adriatic. Apart from the submarines, which had come all the way from Germany under their own power and were using Austrian bases whence to carry on their Mediterranean attacks against shipping, there were smaller types which had reached the Adriatic by land. One of these was UC 12 which was trapped by the Italians on March 17. She was of 205 tons when fully immersed, and of 182 tons when on the surface, measuring about 100 feet long. The for'ard half was divided into six sections and in each section were two mines. The engines were right aft, and the accommodation amidships. She had come from Cattaro on this trip, but had been built at Bremen during the previous May and then sent by rail in three pieces from Kiel to Pola, where the parts arrived on June 24, 1915. A month later these were again put together, and she began her minelaying operations. After she foundered on her final cruise, the Italians managed to salvage her and discovered among the dead bodies everything German—letters, diaries, charts, and clothes made in Kiel.

For the Mediterranean U-boats the crux was at the Otranto Straits, and here a line of British drifters used to lie with their 180-foot deep nets. Often enough the U-boats used to get through, but we now know how heartily German officers loathed this obstruction. On December 17, 1916, the nets accounted for the destruction of the Austrian U 20, but five days later, as UC 35 was due to reach Cattaro on December 26, the Austrians in one light cruiser accompanied by four destroyers steamed south by night and at 9.30 p.m. shelled the drifter line, injuring two of these little steamers but causing no loss of life. By the following May the first British seaplane base had been established at the Taranto Gulf, and the aid of submarine air-patrols, as well as British motor-launches, was a further strengthening of this gateway against the enemy. Now during the early hours of May 15 (1917), three four-funnelled Austrian light cruisers^[31] swept down from Cattaro and sank fourteen drifters at one visitation. But the drifter line now began to be replaced by a fixed net barrage 50 miles in length, extending from Cape S. Maria di Leuca to Fano Id., moored by buoys and 150 feet deep, patrolled by destroyers and other mobile vessels. Moreover this net was well mined. It was a vast undertaking, involving the manufacture of immense amounts of material and the expenditure of considerable

labour, so that the actual laying did not begin till April 1918, and was not completed until six weeks before Armistice. In the month of August it was, however, able to bring about the loss of UB 53 which had left Pola to sink shipping in the Mediterranean. But even by June it had become a most serious obstacle, and just how this was to react on the M.A.S. in the most interesting manner we shall shortly observe.

In the meantime these Italian motor-boats were increasing their efficiency whilst their personnel grew in daring. To Admiral Thaon di Revel, Chief of Staff, and from February 1917 Commander-in-Chief of Italy's naval forces, belongs the credit of having multiplied and manned the M.A.S. with well-trained crews and adventurous-minded officers; so that when December came round again with its long nights of darkness the time had arrived for the boldest enterprise so far attempted. Very excellent preliminary staff work was as requisite as indomitable courage. The organisation had been entrusted to Captain Pignatti, Royal Italian Navy, the two M.A.S boats selected being No. 9 (commanded by Lieutenant Luigi Rizzo) and No. 13 (also under Rizzo's care but commanded by Yeoman-of-Signals, Ferrarini).

Rizzo was one of those hard-case, fear-naught, square-jawed men who seem to have been born to perform marvellous deeds of bravery. Formerly he had been Captain of a merchant ship, and now he was going off in one of the tiniest vessels that ever waged war. The plan was none other than to raid Trieste, the well fortified, boom-defended principal Austrian port. Here were ship-building and engineering establishments, where all the more important warships of the nation had been constructed, and a considerable amount of German money had before the war been expended. But the aim of this expedition was, if possible, to rob the enemy of at least one of his battleships. If, for a moment, we were to imagine ourselves feeling our way through the shadows of Portsmouth harbour on a mission of locating and then blowing up one of the newest battleships, we can well understand the magnitude of the imposed task.

The two motor-boats started out from Venice on the night of December 9, 1917, escorted by torpedo-boats until they were about five miles from Trieste, that is to say they were off Grossa Point at the southern approach to Muggia Bay which, in turn, is to the southward of Trieste, Servola being on Muggia Bay's northern shore. So Rizzo and Ferrarini parted company from their escort, stopped petrol motors and switched over on to electricity, went quietly onward, and at midnight, having crossed the bay, were already at the northern extremity of the long mole.

The job now to be tackled was that of clearing a passage between the two ends of the mole and so forcing an entrance into the anchorage. But to consider this

proposition on paper in peace and comfort at home is something direfully different from labouring with nervous hands under the very forts and guns of the enemy. It was found that the passage was intricately blocked up by festoons of heavy wire ropes. Anyone who has tried to cut through thin wire rope knows what an irritating slow progress this means: but here were real thick hawsers, and unless they could be sundered there was no possibility of entering.

The Italians had come provided with specially devised hydraulic sheers. Rizzo put some of his men stealthily on the mole; there were no fewer than nine fat wires to be severed, and it took two hours before this had been accomplished. Patience was thus rewarded and the two boats were now free to do their worst. Not making more sound than that when a light craft at 4 knots ripples over the water, they advanced for twenty-five minutes in the direction of Servola. Suddenly there loomed up a shapeless mass of tonnage which became clarified and revealed itself as the Austrian battleship *Wien*, 5600 tons, built as long ago as the year 1896, but with her four 9.4-inch, half a dozen 6-inch, as well as sixteen smaller guns, a deadly giant in comparison with any motor-boat.

When 200 yards distant Ferrarini was ordered to stop and not to fire a torpedo until Rizzo should fire simultaneously. The latter was about to cruise round and explore what other ships were in the harbour; but, if the *Wien* should in his absence raise the alarm, Ferrarini was not to delay firing any longer. Now Rizzo came back from his scouting without having found any more vessels, but was informed that the *Budapest* (a sister ship to the *Wien*) was lying just astern of the latter. He accordingly sent Ferrarini with orders to take up a position for torpedoing *Budapest*.

But No. 13 found it impossible to get in much closer to the second ship, as it would have meant passing under the stern of *Wien*, and that would have been to court a sudden awakening. The two M.A.S. thereupon wasted no more seconds and fired their torpedoes together at the twin targets. Both of Rizzo's struck the *Wien* right in the centre, though the others missed. And forthwith there burst a violent explosion, Austrian activity, and a blaze of searchlight from *Wien's* top. It shone down on to the motor-boats with an all too illuminating glare, though only for a few moments: the beam disappeared as quickly as it had come, for the water was rising rapidly and the ship sinking with a like speed.

The silent night was now pandemonium. The peaceful harbour had been roused to wild confusion, the *Wien's* crew yelling with terror and the *Budapest* intermittently making yellow-red patches against the black background as she opened fire with her guns. Of Ferrarini's torpedoes one had passed just ahead and the other immediately astern of the *Budapest* which was now making as much noise as if she had been

wounded. Rizzo started up his petrol engines and was able to get away out of it. Ferrarini was less lucky. His engines refused to be coaxed, and meanwhile No. 13 was under the enemy's short range fire. During five thrilling minutes this suspense continued, till at last the motors yielded to persuasion, there were some hoarse coughings, and the machinery whirled. Like a streak of invisible lightning she was off to follow her leader, and the miraculous thing was that she was never hit. Both boats passed out through the boom and reached Venice safely after a thoroughly satisfactory expedition.

The sinking of *Wien* was the means of immense joy to Rizzo's countrymen, for she had recently been to the top of the Adriatic shelling the extreme right wing of the Italian Army on the Piave. But for the Austrians, who for so many months had reaccustomed themselves to a sense of security behind their harbour defences, this torpedoing of one ship and the merest escape of a second were much more than the loss of 5600 tons. It was a heavy blow at the national will to win the war, the beginning of despair, the crumbling of all optimism; and Austria-Hungary never recovered from the shock. Consternation is the most accurate word for summing up the situation and, whilst courtmartials followed for the negligent officers who could have allowed two Italian boats to work their way in unsuspected, the naval authorities themselves had to face the nation's indignation. Patriotism is such that a whole fleet may be sunk in battle and the event may be regarded with calm resignation; but if one old-fashioned unit perishes in harbour by accident, or otherwise, this becomes a disaster.

In truth here was but the first of such disasters.

Obviously such drastic raids could not be attempted except at irregular intervals, and each success made the next more difficult. In any case full time must be given the enemy to allow him to relax some of his vigilance, settle down into contentment and the routine of inactivity. But the moral disintegration caused by remaining at moorings day after day was already doing its insidious work, just as the same disease was (largely from the same unhealthy monotony) ruining the crews of Germany's High Sea Fleet. After the sinking of *Wien* Austria went to considerable trouble to prevent such an event recurring. All the outer defences and barrages to her harbours were most carefully and heavily reinforced, and not an item was overlooked. Emphatically these Italians with their motor-boats must never be suffered again, or a political crisis might develop and cause a collapse through lack of confidence.

CHAPTER XI

BOOM JUMPING

FOR his brilliant bravery Lieutenant Luigi Rizzo was awarded a gold medal; nor was it the only occasion when he was to make his name illustrious. We shall go to sea with him again, but whilst he was otherwise employed there came a still more remarkable raid and one that is deserving of close study not merely for its amazing exhibition of courage but for the mechanical inventiveness first necessary. After reading this exploit can any future fleet ever consider itself safe in harbour? Will a Commander-in-Chief be able to get any repose at all?

During the late spring of 1918 the allied efforts of Great Britain, Italy, and France were at last within sight of their immediate aim: the denial of the Otranto Straits passage. The fixed net barrage, hanging as so deep a curtain that a submarine would have to dive till the depth might damage her sides; the mobile barrage of ninety drifters with their nets, and the thirty British M.L.'s with their hydrophones; the fifty trawlers ready with their guns and steel forefoot; to say nothing of destroyers and cruisers belonging to three nations; and the eagle-eyed airmen peering down into the depths ready to drop bombs—all was tending to close the Adriatic's southern gate pretty firmly.

But this, whilst making it risky for the Austrian Fleet to attempt an unlikely excursion into the unknown, was chiefly effective against the German submarines which came and went on their occasions of attacking Mediterranean trade routes. The Otranto barrage still left the Adriatic corridor for Austrian naval movements within. The only method of reducing the enemy's fleet was to force a way into his anchorages and keep on sinking his capital ships one by one till there was nothing afloat that mattered. In other words, that which might have been brought about in one fleet engagement had to be done in detail at long intervals by special prevision.

We have hinted at the human results which were accruing from Austrian inertia and Italian aggressiveness. This spring of 1918 saw the buds of mutiny pushing themselves forth, though the fruits were not yet. The Austrian crews, instead of being drilled into better technique, were being largely employed fishing or labouring in the fields: but they were also displaying, both at Cattaro and Pola, disquieting acts both of mutiny and revolt. Here, then, was the best of reasons for the Italians to maintain their motor-boat onslaughts, and this time Pola was the allotted objective. But how could the improved defences be overcome? That was the serious problem, and photographs taken by Italian aircraft clearly indicated that the booms were now too

formidable to repeat Rizzo's trick of cutting through. After much consideration it was decided that, since entrance could not be made by penetration, the only chance consisted in devising a boat which would be fitted with grappling chains, by means of which the boat could climb up and over the floating obstruction. Thus, instead of severance there was to be surmounting.

In principle it was to mean an adaptation of the British military "tank" to marine use; and, whilst this suggestion had often been made during the later stages of the war, it had been frequently dismissed as fantastic. Determination to attempt another violation of the enemy's principal naval base and destroy his ships led to a series of interesting experiments, but finally an Italian firm under the direction of Naval Instructor General Pruneri built a unique craft 36 feet in length, and in shape not very different from that of a pram dinghy. That is to say there was a transom stern, and the keel was perfectly straight for most of the way until it came up with an exaggerated gradual curve to the bows and thus provided a considerable overhang. Just as steam ferries are designed with this kind of bow for meeting a shelving beach; just as the military "tank" (so to speak) has its "bows," so this sledge-shaped boat was fashioned.

But along the keel ran two strong flexible endless chains led by means of cog wheels at the deck on bow and stern. The chains were thus free to work round and round, under and over the hull. But from these chains there protruded at short intervals three rows of steel teeth several inches long. It needed only a 30-horse-power electric motor and the chains could be set revolving; but when the boat on reaching the obstruction pushed its overhanging prow over the timber baulks, the steel teeth would bite in much the same manner as the mechanism for turning up the wick of a paraffin lamp.

First the boat's bows would come slowly up into the air, then the whole hull, and next like some large water-fly it would crawl over the whole obstacle till it could slide down the other side afloat again. A separate motor of 15 horse-power was added to drive the boat's propeller, and the latter was guarded from damage by a tunnel in a similar way to that customary in the River Thames motor fire-floats which have to manœuvre among wreckage and ropes. Finally the Italians found that the sea speed of their boat was not more than 5 knots, but her radius of action was 20 miles, and this should suffice for the special operations intended. Two 18-inch torpedoes formed the armament.

It was such an unprecedented type of craft, so refreshingly ingenious, relying on the most modern mechanical knowledge, that it would have fascinated all the world's schoolboys. The boat was so severely simple to appearance, yet so clever in its

gadgets. But would it work? Would it stand the war test? A number of replicas were built, and no fewer than six expeditions with these boom-boats were attempted, but on each occasion the result was failure; and once both boats had to be sunk outside Pola. Many people might have lost faith by these fruitless efforts, but with a contempt for the date of the month a gallant officer of the Italian Navy, Lieutenant-Commander Antonio Pellegrini, was anxious to try his fortune, and so we come to the night of May 13, 1918.

The name of his boom-crasher was *Grillo*, which means the jumping insect that we call a cricket; and his "tank" could certainly have been given no more suitable appellation. He started out from Venice this evening escorted by M.A.S. until he reached a point only one mile and a half from Pola's outer defence. For crew, he took with him Antonio Milani (torpedo rating), Francesco Angelino (seaman), and Giuseppe Corrias (stoker): three men each with his particular job. The *Grillo* was now by herself, steered for San Girolano, then, turning round under Cosada, made for the barrage entrance midway between Cristo Point and the end of the mole.

Pellegrini was soon to discover that the Austrians had indeed strengthened their defences; for there were four successive obstructions to be overcome. The two outermost consisted of broad floating wooden beams secured by three sets of wire rope. The two other obstructions were composed of upright cork cylinder buoys placed quite close to each other and supporting heavy nets. It was an unpleasant complication even for the *Grillo* with her smart gadgets, and there was not much hope for these four men if the tank-boat failed to function. There had been too many scares for the Austrians to be found asleep once more. Great joy was accordingly felt when the "cricket" jumped the first obstruction, as intended and hoped. Then came the second, and that was overcome: similarly the third. There remained now only the innermost obstacle, and then Pellegrini would be able to direct his torpedoes at the big battleship *Radetzky* (14,500 tons) which could be seen at her moorings only 300 yards distant.

But this fourth defence was the worst of all and, to clew up the situation, it may be at once stated that *Grillo* was frustrated. There she was, at the enemy's gateway, but unable to clear herself: it was a terrible plight, and do what they could these four men found extrication beyond their power. Trapped! Immediately ensued the unwelcome knowledge that they had been spotted. Aboard the *Radetzky* sounded the alarm, and then the Italians knew what to expect: it came quickly. The battleship was heavily armed with four 12-inch, eight 9.4-inch, twenty 4.1-inch, and eight other guns. A fierce fire was concentrated on the insect, yet Pellegrini was not dismayed, and ordered both torpedoes to be fired.

Unfortunately just then a shell took off the arm of Francesco Angelino, and this was followed by the arrival of the battleship's armed steamboat whose crew overpowered the four Italians. But the latter were so quick that, by opening the Kingston valves, and by setting specially prepared bombs, they were able to sink *Grillo* and prevent her from falling into enemy hands. The raiders were of course taken prisoners, but Giuseppe Corrias was afterwards awarded a gold medal by his grateful country. The Austrians were able to salvage parts of the wreckage and tried to reconstruct this mysterious naval "tank," but the secret eluded them.

One cannot help sympathising with Pellegrini, and those who had brought so wonderful a little toy into existence. The failure was more brilliant than many successes, and so little more was needed to have accomplished such an ideal achievement. But it was partially the means of producing a subsequent effect which no one might have suspected at the time. Events have a curious way of acting and reacting, so that the direct relationship between cause and result cannot always be clearly separated. First of all, the *Grillo* episode impressed the Austrian naval Commander-in-Chief with the truth that not even the most elaborate arrangement of wires, floats, and baulks could be relied upon to keep determined invaders in the right kind of craft from being a constant menace. On the other hand the harbour boom in its present condition had demonstrated that only the tiniest and least seaworthy boats could force their way through. Not the M.A.S. type but a special "stunt" species to do trick jumping could expect now to get over four sets of obstructions. The distance from Italy to Pola was so short that it rather encouraged such insects as the "tanks," when settled weather coincided with other conditions. It would, consequently, be advisable for the present to remove the fleet down to Cattaro where the width of Adriatic was greater, and the scientific floating toys would find the crossing more of an undertaking.

But there were two other reasons for inducing the move to Cattaro. It was about time that reprisals should be taken on the Allies' weakest spot, and thus, with the minimum of risk to the Austrian Fleet, show that all these irritating motor-boat incursions could not be tolerated. That weakest spot was of course the Otranto Straits net barrage, which was now fast approaching completeness. German naval authorities viewed its growth with considerable nervousness, for in a short while it would rob U-boats of a southern base and thus bring the Mediterranean submarine campaign to a standstill. Pressure was therefore placed on Austria to make one of her rare appearances at sea, and repeat the raid which had once accounted for fourteen drifters.

U-boats on leaving Cattaro had, by reason of the several lines of mobile barrage

in the Otranto Straits, to remain submerged for so lengthy a period that when they at last reached the southern end of the Adriatic approaches they had exhausted their electricity and must come to the surface to recharge. They would not be able to dive, if chased, for a good time, and were ready victims for the patrols. All this of course had been foreseen by the Allies, who had in fact planned the barrage organisation to produce exactly that result.

So June 11 was chosen as the date when Austria's destroyers and light cruisers should make a dash from Cattaro, fall upon the numerous drifters, M.L.'s and destroyers; then demolish that great explosive net which had cost such a fabulous amount of money and months of hard toil. The Austrian battle squadron (including "Dreadnoughts") was to be at sea between Brindisi and Valona, ready to encounter any Italian forces which might come out to attack the retreating Austrian cruisers and destroyers. Now all this was quite a sound plan, perfectly practicable, and likely to cause a serious delay to the Allies in closing the Straits. But the crux of the Austrian scheme was Cattaro: the raid must begin and end there, and at present the fleet was at Pola. Austria's finest capital ships were the four "Dreadnoughts": *Viribus Unitis* (built 1912), *Tegetthof* (built 1913), *Prinz Eugen* (built 1914), and the new *Szent Istvan* (completed in 1915). Each of these had a displacement of 20,000 tons, a speed of 21 knots, and was armed with twelve 12-inch guns.

The distance from Pola to Cattaro is roughly 300 miles, but by far the greater part of this journey can be done within the islands. In time of war an admiral would naturally arrange his movements so that the open sea passages would be done under cover of night, the entrance to the inside channels within the islands approached at dawn, and the daylight hours spent steaming between the islands. The second division of the Austrian Fleet, comprising the *Szent Istvan* and *Tegetthof* with a screen of ten destroyers were to have left Pola at 9.45 p.m. on June 9. Those of us who remember the elaborate boom defence during the war which existed for the Battle-Cruiser Fleet based on the Firth of Forth still recollect the fool-proof arrangements which were so necessary to prevent muddle. If the battle-cruisers were to go out at 10 p.m. (as they certainly did), then the gate must be open just in time and closed immediately after. To have delayed Admiral Beatty's fleet even a few minutes would have been a serious matter for the Boom Defence officer.

But the Austrians were less precise. Owing to an error in the orders, there was a misunderstanding on the part of those responsible for the booms and nets, the leading lights were not burning, and the senior ship had to wireless Pola requesting this to be remedied; so that the muddle eventually amounted to a delay of forty-five minutes. How grave was this postponement we shall presently see. The first division,

consisting of the *Viribus Unitis*, *Prinz Eugen* with another destroyer flotilla were scheduled to start a few hours later.

We may now follow the *Szent Istvan* and *Tegetthof* with their destroyers, which at 10.30 p.m. steamed out, and then passed southward down the Istrian shore. By morning they were proceeding in line ahead, well clear to the west of the islands, intending to enter the channel and make the intricate navigation in daylight, and to pass between Gruitza and Premuda. They were steaming at 11 knots and were to increase to 15 knots when inside the channel. Dawn was breaking over the Adriatic on June 10 about 3.30 a.m., and this was the hour when the hand of fate brought rivals together by the merest coincidence.

Already we have watched the gallant Luigi Rizzo with his two M.A.S. forcing his way into Trieste harbour in the previous December. Now this early June morning he happened to be at his patrol station with the two M.A.S., Nos. 15 and 21. He had been cruising between Premuda and Gruitza sounding for a minefield which the enemy were reported to have laid against Italian submarines; but night was fast vanishing, it was time for him to "pack up," and get across the Adriatic to Ancona. Just then his motors developed some minor trouble so that he had to anchor for half an hour before starting off home.

It was now 3.15 a.m., but when 6½ miles away from Lutostrak he sighted on his starboard quarter a considerable cloud of smoke, and at once realised that here were naval vessels of some sort. In the dim period between night and day it seemed to this experienced mariner that these were enemy destroyers sent out against him from Lussin, and that his best speed of 20 knots would not enable him to escape. But if he was caught in a trap, he would have a mighty fine try to defend himself by making an attack, relying on the still inadequate light to help him.

Accordingly he turned towards the enemy, but eased down to his lowest speed lest the bow wave should advertise his presence. As the cavalcade came rushing towards him, he was able to perceive that ten destroyers were escorting two big battleships, and that the former were both to starboard and to port. He now acted with a quick resolution, made to break across the starboard line between the first and second destroyer, and for that purpose accelerated from 9 to 12 knots. It was lucky that his motors did not hesitate at this juncture, or he would have been run down by a sharp steel forefoot. The leading big ship (*Szent Istvan*) was about 900 yards away, an impressive silhouette with her twin masts, two funnels and great guns, so he took a chance and fired his two torpedoes at her.

The missiles ran well and truly. Rizzo had scored again. Both silver fish registered hits, the one striking *Szent Istvan* dead in the centre between the two funnels, the

other halfway between the after funnel and the stern. Huge columns of water and smoke told their own tale. According to Leutnant Titz, the torpedo officer aboard *Szent Istvan*, who had been on the bridge ever since 2 a.m., he had just been ordered by his Captain at 3.30 a.m. to verify the position of the destroyer escort. Dawn was beginning to break, and Titz was informing his commanding officer that all the destroyers were present, keeping their proper stations . . . when blump! blump! Two sharp reports were heard to starboard just below the bridge, and the "Dreadnought" took a slight list to starboard. Shouts rose from the crew, and for a moment there was a panic. Telephoning down for information, Titz learned that the sea was already flooding the after boiler-room.

Meanwhile Rizzo was having an exciting time. The destroyer on his port quarter had spotted him, swung over to cut him off, but missed by about 500 yards. She then opened fire with one gun, but the shells fell over. Next she chased him, so Rizzo tried to scare her by letting go a depth-charge, but the latter failed to explode. Rizzo dropped another, and this burst just under the destroyer's bows, persuading the Austrian to turn eight points to starboard. Rizzo therefore turned hard to port, hopped away, and was soon a mere speck on the sea. He got back safely into Ancona and announced his amazing adventure.

As to the stricken battleship, she was soon reduced to a speed of 7 knots, but she also had a 7 degrees list, and the forward boiler-room was now flooded. Presently steam was cut off, leaving her with no light, no wireless, no use of pumps, and the list increasing one degree every fifteen minutes. One of the destroyers was sent to order the *Tegetthof* to take *Szent Istvan* in tow; but that battleship had gone on ahead and was now about five miles away. No one aboard the *Szent Istvan* had any idea who had fired the torpedoes: and the low-lying motor-boat had not been noticed from the "Dreadnought's" forebridge. It was supposed that an Italian submarine was the culprit, so the destroyers were now signalled to steam round in circles and keep dropping depth charges. The battleship was, however, listing worse and worse, and her condition was comparable to that of H.M.S. *Audacious* after the latter struck a mine and foundered in October 1914. But the *Szent Istvan* presently heeled at such a violent angle that two boilers were raised well clear of the inrushing sea and were able to provide sufficient steam for working the pumps. Unfortunately the latter were not powerful enough to keep the water under control, for there were terrible scenes and sounds of steel bulkheads being burst and a mighty irresistible torrent pouring forward. The ship leaned over alarmingly, so that the 6-inch guns, which were situated amidships just above the torpedo-net shelf, but several feet below the level of the quarterdeck, were now all awash on one side.

A strange sight it was to behold a first-class man-of-war with a list further increased to 12 degrees, the crew hauling up heavy 12-inch shells from the magazines, and hurling them overboard. The *Tegetthof* had returned and begun an attempt to take her sister in tow, but the Austrian nerves were so strained and all of a flurry that at the stage when everything was ready for this evolution someone reported a periscope, and there was further excitement. Periscope! Submarine! Open fire!

This wave of emotion passed, the "periscope" was found to be nothing of the kind, but a portion of the floating device belonging to an Austrian depth charge. So the *Tegetthof* a second time approached to get the tow line, and once more someone's imagination spoilt the result. Torpedo coming! Look out! And fire was re-opened. It was quite unjustified. The wake was not that of a torpedo, but the disturbance caused by one of their own destroyers as she churned up the water astern. Thus, what with all these panics and interruptions, it was not until 5.45 a.m. things had so quietened down that the *Tegetthof* could send one of her boats to the *Szent Istvan* with the first rope.

By that time it was too late, and the wounded vessel had 18 degrees of inclination, so that it was impossible to keep one's feet on the decks. The last few minutes of a dying giant had come, and the latter leaned over to 24 degrees. The starboard gunwale at 6 a.m. was beneath the sea, and constant gurgling noises from below were ominous of the doom that was coming. Abandon ship! A thousand officers and men were seen crawling on all fours like beetles over the side as the ship began capsizing, but there were two men amid this early morning drama who remained faithful to their respective high office. One was the ship's Chaplain, who was blessing the crew as they departed: and the other was the Captain, still on the bridge and, by holding on to the rail, keeping himself from being pitched into the sea.

Austria's newest, biggest ship, pride of the fleet, was already nothing better than a revolving steel barrel; so that as she kept turning over, so the men walked until their feet were now against the bilge keel. But a little later she was floating bottom up, a depressing spectacle, with water and steam issuing everywhere. Then, with that curious effort which so frequently marks the final passing of a ship, the *Szent Istvan* lifted her great stern out of the sea, bared her propellers, and took a deep dive down to the bed of the Adriatic.

It was all over now, except for the rescuing destroyers who did their best to pick up every possible survivor, whom they took into Bargulje Bay; but four officers and 120 men were lost. Definitely this summer's day had proved that there was no security for the biggest battleships against the tiniest motor-boats: neither in

protected harbour, nor at sea with a screen of destroyers, could immunity be found. A thousand lives and a million pounds worth of material were completely at the mercy of five men in a 42-footer. It was really an awful awakening for any nation, and calculated to knock the heart out of her people. But those two coincidences of unforeseen delay—the forty-five minutes at the Pola boom defence, and the half-hour during which Rizzo's engines were being put right—had combined most strangely to make this tremendous event possible.

Whilst it is easy to exaggerate the powers of small craft, and to forget that the latter must be favoured with smooth sea and such conditions as mist, fog, half-light, night, or smoke screen, yet one can never forget that in war it does so happen that ideal circumstances sometimes fully unite. This disaster to the *Szent Istvan* came at the psychological day when the Austrian people needed some victory by sea, and the harbour-ridden crews required some encouragement over their enemies. Not otherwise would the grumbling and disgruntled complainings be subdued from culminating into blunt mutiny.

Two results followed from the loss of the *Szent Istvan*: one immediate, and the other mediate. The Fleet was recalled to Pola, the intended raid against the Otranto barrage was cancelled, so that the net-layers were able to continue their work without interruption; and, secondly, Austria never again permitted her Navy to come out again for battle. Rizzo had no idea that this chance target for his two missiles could create such a powerful situation, and relieve the Allies of an impending misfortune. But the more one considers this accidental encounter off Premuda Island, the more we perceive its lasting influence; for the unhappy crews were again condemned to months of dull, unfruitful routine, and that was the worst possible treatment for an insidious disease.

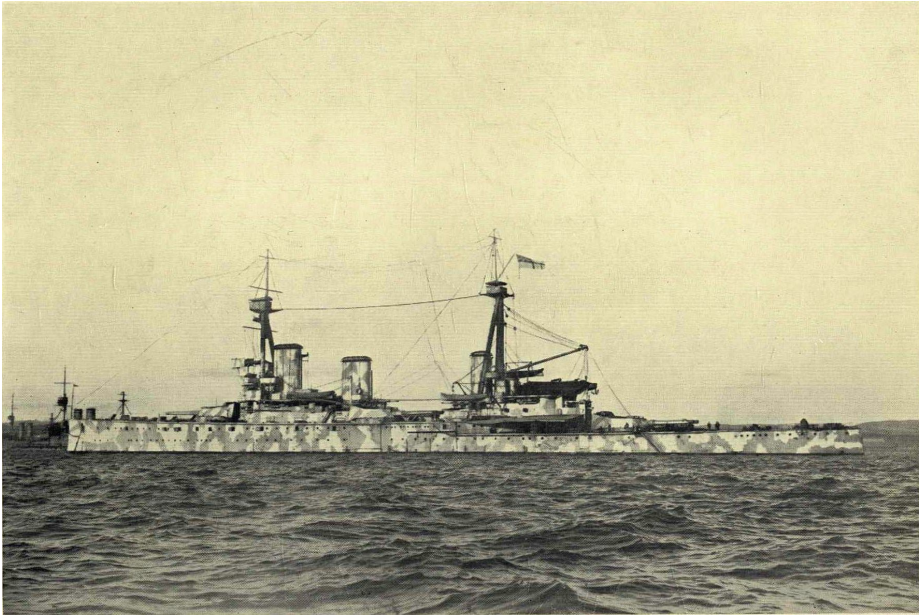
There was yet a third curious coincidence. In order to obtain the full national and international value of the coming victory over the Otranto Straits force, Austria had sent a cinema photographer with his camera aboard one of the destroyers, and it was planned to use the impressive films as propaganda. Unquestionably posterity would have hailed these first moving pictures of "Dreadnoughts" in action as valuable historical material. But the only pictures the camera ever recorded in this connection were of the *Szent Istvan* in her death agony.

No sort of publicity could do the nation more harm this summer than the release of such sad photographs so they were kept private but not destroyed. When at the end of October Austria crumpled up, so that by the 28th German U-boats were leaving Pola and Cattaro for home, and three days later the Austro-Hungarian Fleet was made over by the Emperor to the Jugo-Slav National Council, there ensued a

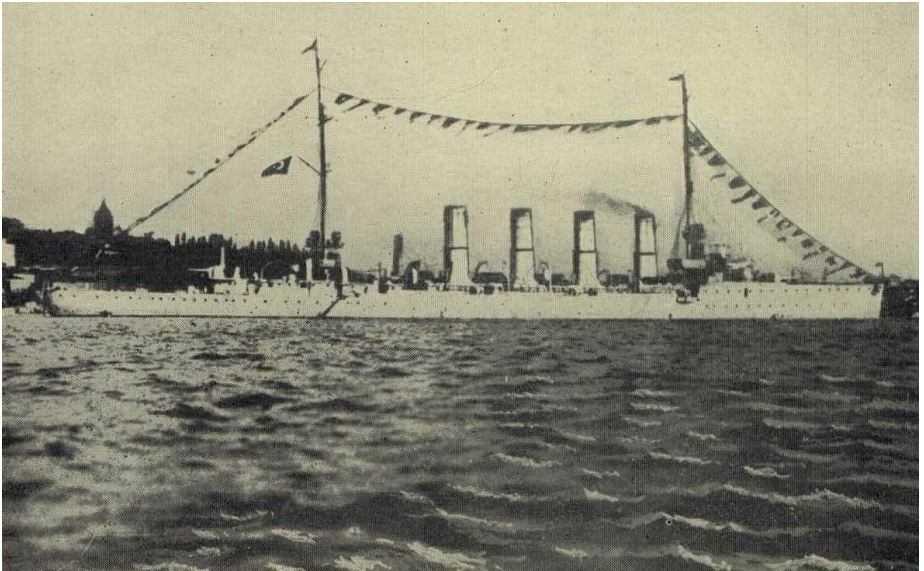
brief interval for a startling episode still to be related. But when on November 3 the Italians took possession of Pola, they were particularly desirous of obtaining this film. Someone, however, had spirited it away. Presently the film was offered for sale in Vienna, but there was no buyer: eventually it was sold to Italy, and the sinking of Austria's crack battleship was exhibited with no small success. This is one of the most convincing instances of the boomerang danger belonging to the art of mass persuasion.

Austria found it very difficult to believe that the Italian Intelligence department had not learnt all details of the impending attack on the Straits: they could not be convinced that the meeting with two motor-boats was casual. We mentioned UB 53 on a previous page. She was commanded by a most experienced German officer, Lieutenant-Commander Sprenger, who had been operating in Mediterranean waters for so many months that he had almost watched the Otranto net barrage through its various phases; but he was to have good reason for cursing Rizzo and blaming the Austrian Fleet. It was the evening of August 1 when this submarine left Pola, and she was able to make her way safely down the Adriatic. On approaching the Otranto Straits she hugged the eastern shore and at 2.30 a.m. of August 3 submerged, keeping at a depth which varied from 100 to 131 feet, proceeding at 3 knots, being anxious to use her electric power economically so that the batteries would last out till well clear of barrage dangers.

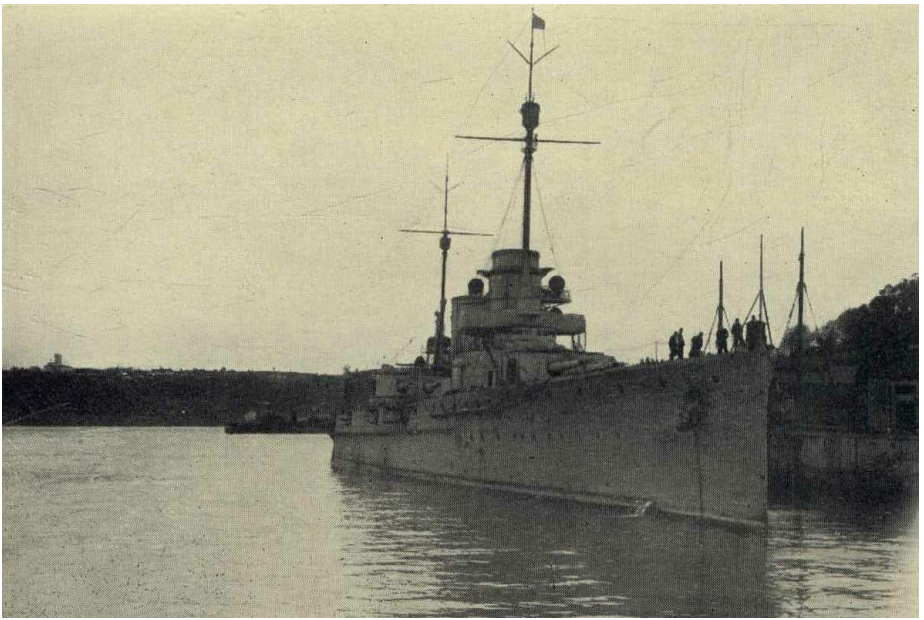
In this manner Sprenger slowly made good about forty-five miles, but about 5 p.m. was brought to a stop by a couple of violent explosions on his starboard side aft. He had not dived deep enough to avoid a mined curtain which depended 150 feet down. Calamity threatened the whole crew, the boat lost trim, and lights went out. He blew his tanks, came to the surface, used his Diesel engines, found his craft too badly damaged for escape, sighted a destroyer and two patrol trawlers in the distance, so he then sank his craft, and the Germans all took to the water. Several hours passed and one of the submarine's crew—an engine-room warrant officer—was still swimming about when H.M.S. *Martin* (a destroyer) stopped near him. The German warrant officer, who had formerly served in the Mercantile Marine, shouted out in English that thirty-five men from a submarine were floating around. The destroyer switched on her searchlight, used every effort to save life, and was able to rescue twenty-seven.



BRITISH BATTLE-CRUISER *INDOMITABLE*
As she appeared in November 1914 after an early experiment
with dazzle-painting.



GERMAN CRUISER *BRESLAU*



GERMAN BATTLE-CRUISER *GOEBEN*

CHAPTER XII

THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURE

WE now approach the last and most extraordinary of all these Italian sea adventures. The raids by small craft had won such noteworthy results that any idea of discontinuance was unthinkable: the war of attrition must go on, for three more Austrian "Dreadnoughts" still remained, besides a squadron of smaller battleships dating from 1897 to 1911, and ranging from 5600 to 14,500 tons. Obviously the most desired attainment would be the sinking of another "Dreadnought," and thereby reduce the enemy's strength to a fine point; but the difficulty now was that the Austrians had shut themselves up inside Pola and apparently had no intention of coming out again. All ideas of contesting the supremacy of the Adriatic were, it would seem, abandoned.

Nevertheless a fleet in being, that still contains three first-class units, is a dormant menace; and circumstances might arise when it would come out and weight the balance of events. Moreover, Pola was for the Italians too close a neighbour to be ignored: not merely were all these naval guns so near to Ancona as well as to Venice with its romance, its historic buildings, its artistic treasures, but to the Italian military operations. During the autumn of 1918, the Italian Army was launching its great offensive along the Piave front, and the light naval forces were of great assistance in opening up for the Army the coastal road to Trieste.

But that was not enough: the enemy's fleet remained still unaffected. As it would not show itself outside, it must be again sought within the boom defences. The date, however, was now long passed when an M.A.S., or even such a "tank" as the *Grillo*, could expect to worm its way through a maze of timbers, hawsers, floats, and nets. But the job had to be done somehow, and the problem caused at least two officers in the Italian Navy to work at the puzzle quite independently, yet to arrive at a fairly similar conclusion. It may be that the Latin temperament with its ardent zeal and powerful imagination is less conscious of precedent: more inclined to independent thinking and original invention. At any rate Italy was always during the war quick to devise some novel little craft suited for each phase. Pola's defences must be overcome, and the means thereto will surely be found: that was the inspiration which set clever minds hard at work.

We now introduce Major (later Colonel) Raffaele Rossetti, and Surgeon Lieutenant Raffaele Paolucci, the former belonging to the Royal Italian Naval Constructor Corps, and the latter to the Navy. For some time Rossetti had been

secretly toiling at a device which makes all those bright ideas of scientific fiction writers absurdly simple. Rossetti's conception was so different from tradition, so extravagantly fancied, that his superior officers might have been pardoned if they had vetoed it from the first. There certainly are countries where the appropriate Government department would have returned the notion back to its originator and ridiculed his freak intellect.

But such was not the case in Italy.

The principle common both to Rossetti and Paolucci was to produce the most miniature vessel that could be controlled by either one, or not more than two men. It was to be so low in the water that it was awash all the time; there must be some sort of engine for propulsion, though only a low speed would suffice; but the essential features of the contraption must be two detachable mines having time fuses. In short, it was to be a kind of torpedo on a big scale, but the explosives could be manoeuvred cautiously this way and that, instead of being sent direct for a target and no longer under command when once launched. Further, there must be some easy method of hitching each mine to an Austrian battleship's side.

The young doctor had been so firmly convinced of the practicability, that, having once been brought by ship across the Adriatic and dropped outside Pola, he would be able to swim inside pushing his floating mine ahead of him. In fact so keen was his enthusiasm that for a long time he had been training himself every night by swimming in the cold water of a lagoon, steeling his body to prolonged immersion. Now the great value which resulted when these two men pooled their brains was that, whilst the surgeon had no engine in his scheme, and was planning an entirely single-handed raid, the other had at last brought to satisfaction a complete mechanism.

This was finally adopted, so that the extraordinary production was as follows. It was similar to a torpedo in shape, but the for'ard part was composed of two detachable mines, each containing about 350 lbs. of T.N.T. In the after part was a small engine driven by compressed air, which though affording only a slow speed could be relied on for several hours. As to the mines, these could be fixed at any depth to the battleship's hull, the setting of the internal clockwork machinery deciding when the explosion should take place. Personal accommodation did not exist, steering was of the crudest, and, since there is no special word which describes the Rossetti-Paolucci product, it will be convenient if we refer to it as the device or machine. When this was under way, the two men would sit astride, head and shoulders lowered to prevent conspicuousness, and by their arms against the water they could (paddle-like) turn her in either direction. The suggestion of men sledging gives a partial picture of this strange marine operation.

The two officers, having now firmly committed themselves to this unique venture, went into a period of severe training together. This began in July, and during the next four months they delighted to try their skill against every possible obstruction, guiding their device up and over, round and about. It was a gruelling test of faith in their device and themselves: only men capable of heroism would have survived these preliminary hardships. But on October 31 everything was ready for the great undertaking, so they betook themselves and this quaint steel fish aboard an Italian torpedo-boat at Venice which was commanded by Commander Ciano. The time was 1 p.m., the sky cloudy, with rain likely to follow; the sea dead, dark, and dull in autumnal dreariness.

Away they started over the northern Adriatic, the campanile of St. Mark dropped lower and lower astern till it was consumed in the horizon, the torpedo-boat began the first part of their journey, and at 15 knots the open sea was for part of the time traversed. The device could not have crossed it unaided. By 8 p.m. they could see through the darkness those Brionian Islands (opposite Pola's harbour) whence the quarries, centuries ago, had yielded stone for building the Venetian palaces. It was not advisable for anything so big or noisy as a torpedo-boat to approach the enemy's base nearer than this; so the device was lowered carefully into the sea, a motor-boat came alongside into which Rossetti and Paolucci stepped, and under silent electric drive this motor-boat towed the steel fish until within about a quarter mile of the Pola mole. The constructor and surgeon then got astride their strange creature and cast off. The time had come when they were to make an attempt rivalled, but not surpassed, by the British submarine which had immolated herself that same year under the viaduct of Zeebrugge's mole. Who could say whether Rossetti and Paolucci would ever see St. Mark's again?

It was 10 p.m. when the last farewell was made; and the night was very dark, creating an immense, mysterious silence over the intervening space. Paolucci was at the device's bows, with Rossetti at the stern. Each had clad himself in a special light waterproof suit so that the whole body was enclosed except the face, and there was an air pouch at breast as well as back. They had also previously applied camphor to themselves, as this had been found valuable for considerably increasing their resistance whilst in the water. But, as they tardily advanced, there was some anxiety lest the unusual brilliant phosphorescence of the water to-night might give them away; and the enemy's searchlights in the distance reminded the Italians that whatever Austrian vigilance had been in the past, it was now alert. No risk hitherto made would compare with to-night's. There was nothing of the dash-and-get-it-over kind; but painfully deliberate and prolonged was this wet cruise.

Rossetti from where he sat was controlling the mechanism, and now accelerated in order to shorten the interval, simultaneously causing a wave to flop over the man at the bows and to find its way down his neck, in spite of the patent suit. Paolucci's experience was that the Istrian water was decidedly colder than the Venetian lagoon. At last the headland loomed up which they had been instructed should be left to starboard, before entering Pola through the outer obstruction, and by 10.30 p.m. they were examining the outer defence. It was seen to consist of numerous empty metal cylinders each three yards long, below which depended heavy steel wires.

By holding on to the device with one hand and to a cylinder with the other, the men pushed the former over without having to use the motor. Thus they continued for another hundred yards, but realised that if they went on at this slow speed they would be too late to get their main job finished according to schedule. The motor had to be started, and they assisted this by swimming with their arms. Presently they reached what was believed to be the gate of their objective, but only after valuable time had been wasted did they realise that this false opening was caused by the immersion of some cylinders. It required many efforts to get clear and on to their correct course once more. But now came a great shock.

Rossetti saw something, seized his companions arm, and pointed to a curious black mass approaching them. It was indefinite, yet certainly under way. So they stopped motor, immersed themselves and their device to the uttermost, and now the black thing had come so near that it was recognised as a submarine's conning tower. "I began to suspect," wrote Paolucci afterwards in his report, "that we might have been found out, and instinctively I placed my hand on the control valve to fire the mines and destroy the machine, so as to fulfil my duty of honour. But the black mass passed on about fifty yards from us and disappeared, leaving us to go on our way again."

At length they did reach the gate and found themselves alongside the concrete pier. They took counsel together and decided it was necessary for one of them to swim forward alone in order to discover whether the concrete blocks forming the pier went straight down into the sea, or if they were laid on a rock sloping towards the sea. If the latter, then, being compelled to keep some distance from the pier, there was a risk of the sentries from above discovering the men. So Paolucci set off on his own to investigate.

"I put my head above the level of the water, dragging myself by my arms along the obstruction, and keeping my feet quite still for fear of the phosphorescence betraying my presence, and, to my utter joy, ascertained that the rock was upright in the sea. I went back to tell the news to Rossetti, and got along under the pier with

the whole of the machine. It was already past midnight. Swimming very slowly, and being almost completely under water, with the machine close to the stone, we crept along the wharf for about fifty yards. But there, again, a new inspection was necessary. We wanted to see whether it was better to enter from the right or left side of the small breach which was about sixty yards wide.

“I went on very slowly, clinging to the rock with both hands, and reached the end of the pier. Hearing footsteps above my head, I stopped. After a few seconds the noise ceased. Still submerged, with only my head half out of it, I raised my eyes towards the rock but did not see anything. We had our heads wrapped up so as to look like floating wine flasks. I got a little further away from the pier, in order to see better what the danger was that lay three yards above my head, and waved it so as to imitate the movements of a floating flask. I could clearly see a shadow which was motionless. Had it seen me? I stopped again, and heard it cough a little. At last I resolved to continue. I reached the obstruction which closed the gate: it was formed by long floating timbers joined to one another so as to form two rows crossed by many intersecting beams. From these protruded steel-tipped spikes three feet long, with their points turned outwards. To some were fixed petrol-cans for the obvious purpose of giving sound warnings. At the other end I saw a trawler on guard, aboard which a red lamp was moving for a while and was then put out. Perhaps the man carrying it had gone below into the hold.”

So, what with all this complex protection of heavy timbers and ugly spikes, it was well that surface craft had already given up their boom-jumping efforts: such tactics were out of date with all these improvements. Paolucci, also, was none too pleased with all that he saw, and made his way back to Rossetti who had become anxious that nearly half an hour had elapsed. But the ebb tide coming out of Pola was found very strong when swimming. Rossetti decided to carry on with the plan, but it was already 1 a.m. and they had made precious little real advance.

Now they had barely got beyond the pier than there occurred one of those incidents which might have meant a fatal finale. The surgeon was trying to keep hold of the outer obstruction, but, whilst so doing, the ebb caught the device and carried it away. At the peril of being discovered Paolucci swam his hardest, but it was some time before everything was once more in trim. The greatest anxiety now was that there was so little time left and they would find their opportunity gone. This forced them to a dangerous decision of taking a big chance. Starting up the motor, Rossetti made a wide circle, turned the device round and steered boldly for the middle of the gate. It was the only thing to be done, but how soon would the enemy's fire assail them?

“Expecting to be shot by the sentry,” related Paolucci, “I gazed up at the point where he had been standing, but did not see him any longer.” Luckily the weather developed dismally just at the right moment, for it had begun to drizzle and doubtless the sentry had begun to button his coat and seek shelter. With great difficulty the two officers were negotiating the gate. First the engine had to be stopped, then they slid into the water, and only by pressing with the united efforts of their two bodies did they succeed in pushing the device against the tide over the obstruction. (For the benefit of those unfamiliar with such defences it is advisable to explain that the obstruction is more complicated everywhere except at the gate; but the latter is slacked off for lowering, and hauled up tight by wires when closed. The device had thus to be coaxed awkwardly over.)

Having climbed over the beams one by one, their perseverance was rewarded: they had overcome the external barrage, the gate, and were ready for any inner obstructions. They had evaded the sentry so nicely, and now they sighted two guardships about which they had been warned by the Italian Chief-of-Staff. Feeling their way along the pier, as before when outside, they were not challenged, yet at any moment expected to encounter another though light obstacle made of longitudinal beams. At any rate the photographs taken by the airmen had conveyed that idea. But possibly it was nothing more formidable than some alarm system with fine electric wires. For no such obstacle was met with.

They were getting on now, and next they suddenly came upon an old sailing ship with a long bowsprit. She was at anchor. After avoiding her they searched for some wire net obstructions, and soon found them in all their complexity. There was a triple row which ran parallel with the pier, and another triple set which stretched across these at right angles. But here a worrying difficulty met them. The defence at this point differed from the plan supplied by Italian headquarters; the rain and darkness were not making it any easier to find just where they were from the shore, and Rossetti's compass, having become full of water, was out of action. However, the gallant and fatigued adventurers did imagine that after pushing over these triple nets they had now climbed the last of Pola's impediments.

Not a bit of it! The Austrians, in their resolution to be secure beyond doubt, had brought into being a veritable labyrinth, and after a few more yards the Italians arrived at another triple-net horror. “For a while I feared that, having lost our direction, we might be going back the same way we had already come; but Rossetti had no doubt, and resolved upon keeping straight on. When, however, the first of these obstructions was behind us and we were about to reach the second, we saw at a few yards' distance from us a vessel moored to these very nets, and on her a

shadow whose form could not be clearly delineated. Was that a sentry aboard a guardship? We stopped: and meanwhile the strong stream coming out of the port turned the machine round, and we were about to go under the boat. Rossetti immediately decided I should swim up to the third obstruction with a line, and from there haul the machine by means of a rope and so pull it straight. We succeeded, but, whilst so doing, the current again capsized the machine. The moment was critical, owing to the presence of that sailing ship with the mysterious shadow; but we mustered the whole of our strength. Rossetti pressed his feet on the nets and his shoulders against the machine, whilst I tried to straighten it with the rope, and at last we succeeded again.”

All these hindrances, the splashing about in water on slippery wires, the weight lifting, the seeming hopelessness of getting through in time, with the persistent expectation of being shot, would have frustrated men of inferior Spartan pluck. But with Paolucci keeping the bows straight and his companion ready to start the engine, away they straddled their device and made good. Triumphantly the seventh and last obstruction within the harbour was crossed, but it was 3 a.m. The orders received from Admiral Thaon di Revel, Chief-of-Staff had been: “Whatever naval force you may meet with, however important it may be, attack!” Now three o’clock was the very hour when the first two ships in harbour should have been attacked, and the device be on her way back to the open sea where the same motor-boat was to have been waiting.

Would the latter meet with that mysterious submarine which had been passed? Or be sunk by some torpedo-boat? It was unfortunate that the timetable, so carefully detailed, should have been upset, but there should have been more allowance for the current. The phosphorescence, the false break in the outer defence, and the additional defences were the cause of the unexpected delays. But, to make matters less comfortable still, a new worry had to be weighed. The motive power (that is the compressed air) for the little propeller was running short after all the round-about wandering.

“Rossetti made signs that he wanted to speak to me. I got near, and he told me that of the 205 atmospheres of initial pressure, more than one half had already been consumed: so what was left was hardly enough for the return, even if we should give up the enterprise now. Immediately we resolved to give up the intention to return. As we had still three hours before dawn, we decided to carry on in order to attack the great men-of-war of the *Viribus Unitis* type.” The order of the Austrian ships at anchor in the port, reading inwards from the entrance, was: *Radetzky*, *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*, *Zriny* (pre-“Dreadnoughts”),^[32] *Prinz Eugen*, *Tegetthof* and

Viribus Unitis, (super-“Dreadnoughts”).

“Consequently we steered towards the biggest ships with the intention of attacking two of them; and we proceeded pretty rapidly along the line of the hulls, always keeping as far as possible from them. The *Radetzky* was entirely darkened, but the *Viribus* which was much further up harbour was illuminated by white lights. We advanced at a good speed through the rain which came pouring down like a real storm, mixed with hail, when I perceived that the machine was sinking. I got near Rossetti and saw him desperate, the water up to his mouth, endeavouring to keep the machine from going down.

“I made sure of the immersion-valve at the bows being closed, whilst Rossetti manipulated that at the stern which had (by some means) become open. He shut it and opened the emersion-valve, and so at length we saw the machine coming up again. Of all the trying moments we had spent, this was undoubtedly the most painful. We went on our way again, but it seemed as though we should never arrive. Half-past three, and four o’clock had already passed, and we were not yet at the level of the *Viribus Unitis*, where we arrived only at a quarter-past four. The steam was still running out.”

The intention now was to reach a spot about a hundred yards ahead of the *Viribus Unitis*, stop the device, immerse it as much as possible, whilst the two men flopped into the water, and allow the tide to carry them all gently down to the battleship’s bows. But most annoyingly this plan failed, and the current took them out of their course; so they had to go a long way upstream again and begin afresh.

“When we were at twenty yards’ distance from the *Viribus Unitis*, in accordance with the pre-arranged plan of headquarters, I was to swim under the bows and then fix the mine. But Rossetti bade me wait for him, because he wanted to go himself. I obeyed, and it was perhaps as well; because, under the bows of the *Viribus* he met with unexpected difficulties which he overcame with admirable firmness and with his great experience, both of which I do not flatter myself to possess. When Rossetti left me, it was ten minutes to five, and I was to have waited for him at a few yards’ distance, cruising further out. But the stream took me away, and carried me to a place where another small man-of-war was at anchor, and I turned the machine round. I made the most desperate efforts to put it right again but did not succeed, and was about to run the risk of knocking up against the ship, when . . . after diving several times, with short breathing for about five minutes, I succeeded in giving the machine a proper direction; and then, putting the motor in motion, I slowly moved towards the *Viribus*. It was a quarter-past five.

“Twenty-five minutes had passed since I left Rossetti. Could he have been

discovered and taken prisoner aboard the *Viribus*? In that case I should have seen some light, or heard a voice or some alarm. Nothing of the kind. Would he have placed the torpedo and, not finding me at his return, have thought that I had forsaken him? Had anything happened to him?"

But suddenly aboard the Austrian flagship the reveille was sounding. This, surely, was now the climax of their prolonged adventure.

"I saw men coming and going on deck, some of them over the position where Rossetti ought to be working. I saw them, but they did not see me, because I was in the darkness while they were in the light. But in the distance the first dawn was breaking. At the same time the stream once more capsized the machine, and carried me again under the smaller ship. After repeating the same desperate efforts as before, I again succeeded and steered under the *Viribus*, resolved if I did not see Rossetti to go alongside with the whole machine. I was at last moving against the ship's side, when I saw something like a floating flask. It was Rossetti! My heart had never experienced a greater joy. But day was dawning fast, and the wish to hurry to the shore, so as to find escape in the open country, made us go faster. Suddenly from the fighting-top of the *Viribus* a searchlight projector illuminated us completely. We were discovered."

As every moment ticked by they expected to be fired upon, but they had not forgotten their oath to destroy the device at all costs. Rossetti therefore opened the immersion-valve, whilst Paolucci actuated the second torpedo-mine and put the device in motion. The latter mechanical combination thus went ahead by itself and in due time reached a bay where there lay the auxiliary ship *Wien* together with some old battleships. This *Wien* must not be confused with the 5600-ton battleship already mentioned, but was a transatlantic Austrian-Lloyd liner of 7367 tons.

The situation now became lively. Here were two men alone with a mine splashing about under the bows of a 20,000-ton "Dreadnought," and a boat which had been lying alongside this *Viribus Unitis* switched on her lights, shoved off, and steamed towards the Italians who were still under the searchlight glare.

"*Wer da?*" demanded the man in charge of the boat as he gazed down at this strangely clad couple.

"*Italienische offizieren,*" Paolucci frankly admitted.

So they found themselves picked up out of the water and taken on board the flagship. On being conducted to the upper deck they found themselves quite close enough to their two tons of most dangerous explosive, which would certainly blow this great warship into pieces very shortly. For it was now five minutes to six, and the mine had been set to go off at 6.30 a.m. Rossetti and Paolucci quite realised that

they would go up with the general eruption, and naturally enough the crew did not receive them with affection. The sailors surrounded and took them down below, but it was noticed that the word "Jugoslavia" was on their caps.

In explanation of this one must here explain that the Italians could not have chosen a more exceptional date than October 31. Already we have noticed the Austrian internal rumblings, the national dissatisfaction, the mutinous spirit of the seamen: but now all this had culminated in the grand collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The country was in a state of revolution, the Navy in upheaval, the Pola crews had taken possession of the ships, expelling all German and German-Austrian officers, locking up others below decks. The Slavs were thus in command nominally. Actually, however, on this memorable political night which by accident was that for the two Italians' great adventure, there was no discipline; but revelry and inebriation were being continued until the early hours of November 1. There was neither a vigilant harbour patrol, nor efficient boom defence guard. This in no way detracts, even minutely, from the brilliant achievement of Rossetti and Paolucci, which was heroism itself. But it was just another of those coincidences which belong to history, and not infrequently manifest themselves.

The two Italians were now informed of the new condition, that the Austrian Admiral had been put ashore only a few hours ago, and that the Fleet had been handed over by the Emperor to the Jugo-Slav National Council. The commanding officer was now Captain Voukovitch, and he was asleep but had to be awakened. Rossetti insisted that he must interview the latter in private. When they were alone he broke the news.

"Your ship is in serious and imminent danger. I urge you to abandon it, and save your men."

Captain Voukovitch required details: yet Rossetti merely replied:

"I cannot answer you, but she will sink in a short time."

The captain then called to his men: they were to save themselves.

"The Italians have put bombs in the ship."

Tremendous activity followed, men half-clothed rushed here and there frantic to reach the upper deck. There was a sound of doors banging, and the splashing of sailors diving into the sea rather than be blown up. The Italians asked and received of Captain Voukovitch permission to save themselves, so they also went on deck and dived into the chill water where they had already spent eight anxious hours. Rossetti was still clad in his rubber suit, Paolucci had cut away most of his a few moments before, but somehow one of his legs became involved in the coat. He was unable to free himself, began to drown, with the water already in his mouth; when

Rossetti came and held him up, removing the steel helmet which in the confusion of the moment had been forgotten.

Nor were their troubles ended. With great difficulty they swam away from the doomed ship, hoping to reach the safety zone, but after a hundred yards they were overtaken by a boatload of menacing seamen who insisted on the Italians accompanying them back to the *Viribus*. Up the same gangway were the prisoners led once more, where they were received by a crowd of angry semi-naked men, some of whom were still dripping with water. There was a confused shouting for, whilst some accused the Italians of having deceived them for the purpose of escape, others required to know exactly where the bombs had been placed. Exhausted physically and nervously, and almost at the limit of their endurance, they seemed now destined to perish by their own instrument.

"After a few minutes," says Paolucci, "we succeeded in making our way to the end of the stern. I looked at the stern clock. It was twenty-seven minutes past six, and at half-past six the torpedo was to explode. I heard a sailor shouting, 'Let us take them to the hold: if it is true that the ship will blow up.'"

Meanwhile the threatening mob surrounded and pressed close on them, some cutting away Rossetti's rubber clothing to search him, whilst others rummaged that which Paolucci had left on deck.

Paolucci glanced at the clock once more.

It was 6.28 a.m.

Then a minute passed. And another.

Something happened. According to Rossetti, who throughout this night had kept his watch in a glass suspended from his neck, the explosion occurred just after 6.44. But whether his watch had been jarred by all these shocks does not really matter: the mine burst within fifteen minutes of the set time.

"A dull noise," Paolucci described the occurrence, "a deep roaring, not loud or terrible but rather light. A high column of water followed. Under my feet I felt the deck vibrate, shake, tremble. I turned round, and nobody was there any longer. Everyone had thought of saving himself."

But the Italians found one who was still there and in no hurry to quit. That was Captain Voukovitch, who was a real man. It was a scene as curious as on that early June morning when the sister ship *Tegetthof* was going down. Voukovitch was slipping on a lifebelt, Rossetti was undressing and munching a piece of chocolate which had fallen from his clothes, but the critical minute had come when officers must follow the men. Voukovitch was a gallant gentleman and a sportsman, who recognised that war is war, and that his two enemies had played the war game

according to the rules. But there was little opportunity to philosophise, so he just shook hands with Rossetti and Paolucci, pointed to a rope that was hanging over the ship's side and to a rowing boat that was passing. Down this rope the two Italians slid and swam towards the boat. At first the Jugo-Slavs tried to prevent their entry, but among that crowd one happened to be Italian and he helped his compatriots aboard. Even during this solemn few minutes there was a ludicrous incident which so often is the accompaniment to the most serious situation. For, when Rossetti slid down he found (says Paolucci) "there was a fat German," who was "yelling in his fear like a bull."

Dawn had broken, the *Viribus Unitis* was slowly sinking, and the word *Unitis* was already submerged. Amid shouts and oaths, the confusion of men and things, the 20,000-ton battleship heeled more and more till the sea lapped her deck, and then she turned completely over.

"I saw the big guns of the turrets being broken like toys; but it was for an instant only, because they disappeared and only the keel of a shining greenish colour was visible. Then the ship slowly sank into the water. On the keel I saw a man crawling along to reach the top. There he stopped, and stood straight up. I recognised in him Captain von Voukovitch, who died a few minutes afterwards, struck on the head by a beam whilst trying to save himself by swimming, after having got away from the whirlpool."

So the water closed over the *Viribus* and boiled in foam. It was another impressive sight of a giant wiped out of existence by an insect: another hopeless dawn for what had once been a powerful Austrian fleet. Two of her four biggest ships wiped out within six months!

Rossetti and Paolucci were taken to the hospital ship *Habsburg*, and dripped up the gangway, hands and feet almost frozen, ill in body and mind. One of the sailors now struck Paolucci with his fist and the Italian almost fainted. When the ship's doctor felt the latter's pulse he made one ominous exclamation:

"*Fünfzig!* (Fifty!)"

Rossetti, with marvellous powers of endurance, was feeling slightly stronger and started to rub his companion's numbed limbs. Hot coffee and cigarettes had the most comforting effect, and gradually both recovered. But that day was not a happy one, and both expected to be shot. They were treated chivalrously thereafter, though confined on board. And so they might have remained months or years, had not an historical event of European import taken place so conveniently at this time.

"At the end of the fifth day," Paolucci relates, "while I was looking out of my cabin window, I saw the *Saint Bon*^[33] entering the harbour of Pola. I thought I was

dreaming. I hastened on deck, seized a megaphone and, mad with joy, I shouted: 'Admiral of the *Saint Bon*, long live the King!' But nobody answered. Assisted by Rossetti the hail was repeated, and a man standing on the bridge, surrounded by a numerous staff, took off his cap and waved it in the air crying, 'Long live the King!'"

It was Admiral Cagni, Commander-in-Chief of Spezia. For at long last Armistice had that fifth day of November been signed on the Italian front, and now those two brave adventurers were given back their freedom. As they went aboard the *Saint Bon* it was one of those emotional minutes which rightly belong to heroes who have defied death for patriotism. Loud Italian cheers that evening rang across the harbour when Rossetti and Paolucci stepped up the gangway, at the top of which Admiral Cagni was waiting to greet and congratulate the pair who had been given up for lost. Next morning at seven o'clock they were steaming back through the inner defences that were now freely open to them, and then beyond the outer gate into the Adriatic. There was another great reception waiting on arrival in Venice.

"I had computed," records Rossetti when they had started out on their task that October night, "the odds as being sixty to forty against returning." Still not merely had they destroyed the *Viribus Unitis*, but the other mine attached to the device had struck the *Wien* after travelling over 1500 yards, and sunk her also. What an amazing achievement by two men with a vessel displacing 1½ tons, about 27 feet long, with a speed of 2 knots! Lieutenant-Colonel Rossetti (as he now is) has since given to the world a few additional particulars which modestly and quite unconsciously show that the fine spirit of this officer was not peculiar to the one night: both before and after the event his was the character of a man who is neither discouraged by ridicule, nor fails to see the valour in a vanquished foe.

"When the world war broke out, I was a Lieutenant in the Construction department of the Italian Navy. . . . At the time I first proposed my idea of destroying the giant flagship of this fleet, my plans were laughed at. . . . Across the narrow mouth of the pocket-like harbour was a great stone wall, with but one narrow opening." Could it be possible that so odd a craft might worm its way through all the obstructions? His superiors shook their heads, but Rossetti went plodding on with the construction of his boat.

"First of all, I took the shell of a German torpedo which had been discharged against one of our ships, but had failed to go off. To one end of this I affixed a small compressed-air engine, with twin-screws like a torpedo. The rest of the tube consisted of a big tank for compressed air, which was to be the motive power. To the nose of the tube, then, I fixed—one behind the other—two big metallic barrels,

each of which contained 400 lbs of T.N.T. and a clockwork by which the charges could be exploded in any given period from five minutes to five hours. Pressure in the air-tank was 3900 lbs to the square-inch.’^[34]

It may seem, as we contemplate the constructor and surgeon prolonging the peril of their lives only to find success followed by a political anti-climax, that the effort was thrown away: had they but known and waited less than a week longer, all this would have been unnecessary, and Captain Voukovitch would not have died. There is something not to be denied in this argument. But such a possibility could scarcely have been anticipated. War is an ugly business, and we have no right to depict it otherwise. Nevertheless it has always through history been the means of revealing one of the noblest human achievements—the practical expression of that cardinal virtue, fortitude.

Whilst, therefore, it is permissible to show up war as so horrible that it must be never entertained until all other influences have failed, yet from amid the smoke and desolation we can pick out most inspiring acts of courage and self-sacrifice such as are esteemed by all men as perfect models. There are at least two sides to any contest. We see Rossetti and Paolucci being respected by Voukovitch for their gallantry: but in like manner we find Voukovitch for ever held in highest honour for that generosity which belongs to a big soul. It must have been terribly difficult to have forgiven so readily two enemies who admitted to have brought doom to the captain’s ship. But he maintained also the tradition of the sea and was the last to remain in her.

Rossetti thinks of Captain Voukovitch as having “left me an ineradicable example of generous humanity,” and adds that, “while I live, the image of that gallant Captain will remain.” Long after the event, the Colonel went to Pola in the hope of paying a last respect at the Captain’s grave: but the body had never been found, and there was no grave. The Italian Government awarded Rossetti the sum of 650,000 lire: but it is typical of the man that secretly and unostentatiously he handed this over intact to be shared by the widow of Captain Voukovitch and the other war widows in that ruined country.

So there are more ways than one whereby brave men may express their moral elevation.

CHAPTER XIII

DASHING INTO KRONSTADT

ON previous pages we have seen how effectively in the Adriatic did the smallest motor-boats and the greatest gallantry combine to send even the most powerful of battleships to utter destruction. We shall now witness in northern Europe another of those brilliant nocturnal episodes, which show that forts and guns certainly can be of only slight hindrance when youthful pluck is willing to take its chance in the most mobile craft.

The difference between the Italian and British endeavours was not merely in respect of temperament but of boats, yet in dashing vigour and disregard for death there was a complete identity. The Coastal Motor Boat section of our Navy was forced into existence during the war by the development of events. Its prime object was to provide small, shallow, but exceedingly fast little vessels, driven by internal combustion engines, and capable of bouncing across minefields harmlessly until an attack was launched by torpedoes against Germany's bases. Originally, the scheme was to carry these boats aboard the Harwich cruisers of Commodore Tyrwhitt's force until within short distance of the objectives, but this idea was found to contain difficulties. A cruiser's davits could not deal with a weight exceeding $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons.

It is true that Coastal Motor Boats, 40 feet long, carrying fuel, crew, one torpedo with gear, were built in April 1916, having a speed of $33\frac{1}{2}$ knots and the total weight was not more than $4\frac{1}{4}$ tons. But the intention grew in the direction of independence. Having been used from Dunkirk along the shallow waters in the neighbourhood of Ostend and Zeebrugge to the great anxieties (as we now know) of German submarines and torpedo-boats, causing the former to cruise on the surface and the latter to be kept in harbour, the C.M.B.'s soon justified the assurance of young officers. Slightly bigger units of 55 feet were built, which provided increased seaworthiness plus the improved speed of over 40 knots, and enabled two torpedoes to be carried instead of one.

The crew consisted of two young lieutenants, sub-lieutenants, or midshipmen; there were two motor mechanics to look after the twin engines of 750 combined horse-power, and there was one wireless operator. They were further armed with light quick-firing guns and on certain occasions with an apparatus for making a smoke screen. In some operations they laid mines in lieu of firing torpedoes. The historic attack on Zeebrugge and Ostend on St. George's Day, 1918, was merely one example of the invaluable work which these tiny mosquito craft were capable of

performing. Only their high speed, their small size, and the manner in which they were handled, brought them safely through so many terrible hazards. But the great fact had been established that for bursting into enemy harbours, firing off torpedoes by night, and then making a hasty retreat, these C.M.B.'s had won for themselves a reputation as high as that which belonged to the Adriatic M.A.S.

Thus, when the Armistice passed, and the Baltic campaign against the Bolsheviks was the scene of naval activity in the year 1919, it was quite obvious that there was work which only the C.M.B.'s were able to undertake. Rear-Admiral Sir Walter Cowan was sent out in command of a British force which included light cruisers and destroyers, his base being at Bjorko on the Gulf of Finland's northern shore, and his duty to blockade the Bolshevik Northern Fleet which lay within Kronstadt. The latter is, in effect, the outpost guarding Petrograd and is at the eastern end of Kotlin Island, the harbour entrance being on the south side. It is the Portsmouth of Russia, a mighty fortress, but there is a series of forts which stretch in a broken line to the mainland on either side, the whole forming a kind of ring against any operations from seaward.

Theoretically, it would seem quite impossible for even destroyers or any other fast craft of small tonnage to get through before being sunk. But the European War had proved that the most unlikely occurrences had taken place, and the full capabilities of the C.M.B.'s had not been reached when the curtain was rung down at Armistice time. A number of these fragile wooden boats were accordingly sent out to serve under Admiral Cowan, and in June 1919, Lieutenant A. W. S. Agar, R.N., in a 40-footer had quite independently made a daring night raid, dashed towards Kronstadt, and torpedoed the three-funnelled cruiser *Oleg*, 6650 tons, lying anchored outside the harbour. He had evaded four Bolshevik destroyers, definitely sunk the *Oleg*, and got back to Admiral Cowan in safety. Such a splendid bit of bravery was afterwards recognised by awarding the Victoria Cross.

British airplanes on August 17 were able to establish the information that the enemy no longer thought fit to risk having a guardship outside, save for one destroyer; and aerial photographs clearly revealed the Russian Fleet within the harbour. Thus, on entering between the piers, and turning sharp to port some little distance one saw lying almost parallel with the quay the *Petropavlovsk*, a fine battle-cruiser of 23,300 tons, and quite close to her was the battleship *Andrei Pervozvanni*, of 17,200 tons. The former was quite modern, and the latter less than ten years old, each being armed with 12-inch and many smaller guns, together with five torpedo tubes. Other shipping was also in this western portion of the harbour, but the two Goliaths were those which really mattered.

Almost facing the harbour entrance, yet right inside, was the submarine depot-ship *Pamiat Azov*; but, further to the eastward (that is to say to starboard if one were entering the port) and right up by innermost quays were five vessels parallel to each other, stern on to the quays. The second of these was the twelve-year-old cruiser *Rurik*, 15,170 tons. An examination of the aerial photograph made it quite evident that if a raid were attempted on any of these men-of-war, it would be the nearest thing to committing suicide. First of all, the enemy had been so shaken up by Lieutenant Agar's surprise that they could hardly be caught napping again: therefore the chance of even the swiftest and tiniest boat ever running the gauntlet between the two pier heads was infinitesimal. But, secondly, when once the alarm had been raised, it would be extremely doubtful if any surviving C.M.B. could get up to any target before being blown out of the water. Thirdly, should a miracle happen and the job be accomplished, how could any boat be expected to make her escape through the same pier opening?

No seaman feels quite at home when entering a strange harbour for the first time, even after the most careful attention to the chart. But to do this at night, to go tearing about among a crowd of foreign warships without collision, torpedoing right and left without doing the wrong thing, is a task which calls forth qualities of coolness, self-sacrifice, and the highest intellectual alacrity. It is a job only for super-seamen: yet that was the task which this August had to be attempted. Eight of the 55-footers had been despatched from England, viz. Nos. 4, 24 A, 72 A, 79 A, 31 BD, 62 BD, 86 BD, and 88 BD. The senior officer in charge of this outfit was Commander C. C. Dobson, R.N., who was one of the most experienced submarine captains in the service. I remember him and his reserved, almost shy, manner during the early months of the war when he was based at Leith ready to come out in his small submarine to torpedo enemy units who might invade the Firth of Forth. Then, in June 1915, when the flotilla had become bored with inactivity, he had been able from submarine C 27 in conjunction with the trawler *Princess Louise*, to carry out a glorious stunt which caused U 23 to be destroyed. But now, four years later, he was concerned with surface craft more delicate and finicky than even the C-class submarines, and his gallant band of young officers was to consist of hard-case lieutenants of the Royal Navy, one lieutenant-commander and some acting sub-lieutenants, both from the Royal Naval Reserve. The following table will be convenient for further reference and clarity:

Number
of
C.M.B.

Name and Rank of Commanding
Officer

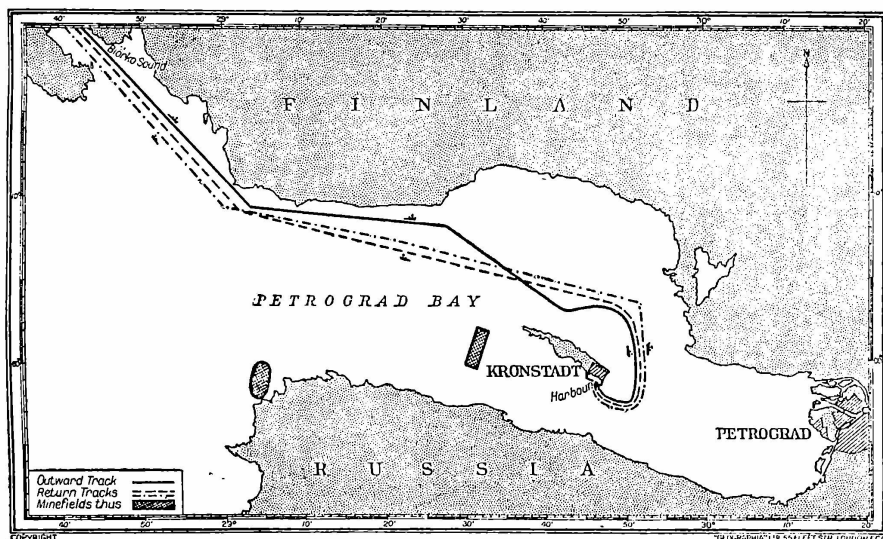
31 BD	Commander Claude C. Dobson, D.S.O., R.N., in command of the flotilla, with Lieutenant R. H. Macbean, R.N., in command of the boat herself.
62 BD	Lieutenant-Commander F. T. Brade, D.S.C., R.N.R.
4	Lieutenant A. W. S. Agar, V.C., R.N.
79 A	Lieutenant W. H. Bremner, R.N., one of the three pioneers of the C.M.B. idea.
24 A	Lieutenant L. E. S. Napier, R.N.
88 BD	Lieutenant A. Dayrell-Reed, D.S.O., R.N.
72 A	Acting Sub-Lieutenant E. R. Bodley, R.N.R.
86 BD	Acting Sub-Lieutenant F. Howard, R.N.R.

Perhaps there never have been collected in eight small boats so much concentrated courage and such a representative muster of the two sea services' young men who were already veterans in war experience. Lieutenant Bremner, for example, was unrivalled alike for his technical knowledge as for the number of times he had courted death off the Belgian coast. His enthusiasm had been largely instrumental in getting the Admiralty to adopt these high-speed motor-boats, and Messrs John I. Thornycroft, the shipbuilders, had been the means of putting the idea into practical shape, combining their own inventiveness and their experience in torpedo-boat construction with this new development. Lieutenant-Commander Brade, who had already won the D.S.C., had been in the Royal Naval Reserve even before the war, but for the last three years had been associated with Bremner, Macbean, Dayrell-Reed and others in C.M.B. work. Napier had served in destroyers.

But the three officers of 88 BD especially demand our attention. Lieutenant Dayrell-Reed first went to sea in a sailing ship, and the war summoned him from the merchant service to take part in the Royal Naval Reserve as navigator in one of those Harwich submarines mentioned in an earlier chapter. His conduct had been so distinguished that he was one of the very few who were transferred from R.N.R. to Royal Navy. He had, among other adventures, taken part in the first C.M.B. raid on Zeebrugge. Now, as his second-in-command for this Kronstadt expedition, Dayrell-Reed had no other than Lieutenant G. C. Steele, whom we saw winning his promotion from R.N.R. to R.N. because of his gallantry in the *Baralong*. And it is eloquent of this officer's zeal for dangerous exploits that, although during the intervening four years he had served at Jutland in the *Royal Oak* (the battleship next astern of Admiral Jellicoe's *Iron Duke*), and then later on had command of two different ships, he now came back volunteering to take a junior position in a wooden motor-boat. After Jutland he had put in some time aboard the *Iron Duke*, where another young Mercantile Marine officer, Midshipman N. E. Morley, R.N.R., who

had joined the service only in November 1916, was midshipman of Steele's division. Morley afterwards was accepted for C.M.B. duties, and now (promoted to Sub-Lieutenant, R.N.R.,) he was with Steele again in No. 88 BD.

The latter has been good enough to give me a detailed narrative of his experiences during that ever memorable night in this C.M.B., and the reader will prefer to have this personal account rather than any other. For the *Baralong* hero enables us to live with him through the very gates of death itself, and this survivor's document has increased value in that its author was to play a part with a distinction which was shared only by one other. We may be thankful, indeed, that it is possible to preserve this record for posterity before pages become yellowed and writing fades away. Only where it is necessary to insert some supplementary fact will so human and thrilling a story be interrupted. It may be mentioned by introduction that the C.M.B.'s had been towed from England to the Baltic, which was no mean trial for such light vessels, and that H.M.S. *Vindictive* which acted as their tender at Bjorko was the recently built successor to that other *Vindictive* which ended her life so superbly at the second Ostend raid more than a year previously. August 17-18 (1919) was the night selected for this raid on Kronstadt, and the conditions of a flat calm together with dense darkness were ideal. As part of the operations, and to assist the C.M.B.'s, an aerial bombardment over Kronstadt was to precede immediately the sea attack. It was arranged that Lieutenant Bremner should enter the harbour first.



THE COASTAL MOTOR BOAT RAID

This indicates the night dash of August 17-18, 1919, from the British base to Kronstadt, when small motor craft achieved one of the most brilliant raids in modern naval history. The courses are shown of the C.M.B.'s out and home.

One boat had been lost coming across from England, but eight started out from Bjorko for Kronstadt as in the above list. The general course was roughly first S.E., then E. along the shore, thence S.E. again, sweeping round for a semi-circle to the eastward of Kotlin Island through the line of forts to the south side, and then heading up north-westwards into Kronstadt harbour, returning (if possible) by much the same route.

"After a rough trip across the North Sea," relates Lieutenant-Commander Steele, "in which one boat was sunk, the C.M.B.'s were finally towed into Bjorko Sound, the base of Admiral Cowan's squadron. Preparations for the raid were rushed through, as most of the boats had been slightly damaged during the passage: the engines of my boat, in particular, took a long time to pick up after the soaking they had had, water being found in the petrol, and other such complications.

"We worked morning, afternoon, and evening, to get them right; but even so, the day before the raid we were only doing three-quarters speed and were afraid we should reduce the speed of the whole flotilla. Final preparations were made on the 17th, 'first-aid' lecture given, the plan of our operations read over to all officers taking part, and finally a farewell address from the Admiral, who had all along taken the greatest personal interest, and had got to know almost every individual serving in

the C.M.B.'s.

"The officers of the *Vindictive* gave us a good send off, and we were treated as their guests for dinner. After dinner we got into our 'glad rags,' tin-hats, Gieve's waistcoats, sweaters—or just whatever we thought would give us the best chance in the adventure. There was about half-moon, but the night was very cloudy, the sea calm and wind light.

"10 p.m. We started up, seven in all, in fine form, although everyone in the harbour thought that the din from our engines would have woken up the Bolshies about twenty miles away. Formation was taken up according to pre-arranged organisation, and we proceeded at about 30 knots. Our boat ran very well and gave no trouble. We had on board Reed, myself, and Sub-Lieutenant Morley, R.N.R., and two motor mechanics.

"After about ten miles of the distance had been covered, some of the boats were dropping a long way astern. Every now and then we flashed a light to show them where we were, but they did not seem to catch up, and eventually Commander Dobson in C.M.B. 31 stopped off Euonemi Point and waited for them. I took the opportunity to pump out our boat, as she was never properly watertight, and all the way from England had to be pumped out every few hours. After a quarter of an hour's wait, two of the boats astern came rushing up out of the darkness so we all went ahead again. I could just make out five in sight. All this time we were hugging the Finnish coast, and could plainly see the trees and beach.

"11.45 p.m. Altered course for Kronstadt, and soon lost sight of land to port. Boats astern dropped far behind, and only three boats could be seen besides ourselves. After about half an hour's run land could be seen far away to starboard, which we knew was Kronstadt Island. We ran on some miles, and then the first large fort loomed up. This is a new fort and not marked on the chart. We were getting closer to the island and now sighted the chain of small forts guarding Petrograd Bay. They rise right out of the sea, and seemed perilously close together, although we had carefully measured their distance apart on the chart and knew it to be 1½ miles.

"We seemed to be in sight of these forts for an interminable long time. I began to feel quite sleepy, and had to keep awake by constantly reminding myself that any instant those high black objects might break into flashes of gunfire. Indeed, from the noise our engines were making, and presently from the large sheets of flames which were coming out of the exhaust of '31's' engine, we were rendered liable to be spotted any minute.

"Only two other boats could now be seen, but we knew it was too late to slow down for the remainder. Our small number made one feel slightly less safe, as the

programme had been made assuming all the boats arrived. Kronstadt Island was now only a few miles off on our starboard beam, the first large fort was being left behind, and the chain of small forts we were to pass through were now only a few hundred yards off.

“12.50 a.m. Passed through forts Nos. 8 and 10. The seconds seemed like hours. It appeared outside all possibility that they would not see us—what with the deafening roar of our engines and flaming exhausts. I stood by the double Lewis gun, pointing it at the fort as we passed: not that it would be much use, but it gave one confidence.

“1.00 a.m. At last we were inside the forts, and at the back of Kronstadt Island. The lights of Petrograd could be distinctly seen. Boats formed ‘single line ahead,’ in the order ‘31,’ ‘79,’ and ‘88,’ and steered for Middle Harbour of the dockyard. The aerial raid had started some minutes before this. We saw searchlights being switched on from various parts of the island, bursts of shrapnel in the sky, and an occasional red flame where a bomb dropped. All this was on the opposite side from us, and we knew that our faithful supporters, the Air Service, were taking the enemy’s attention off us, getting a warm reception themselves in consequence.

“1.10 a.m. We rounded the point of the island: there was a small old fort on it. The houses and quay could be seen quite distinctly, as we were only a few hundred yards off. Everything appeared so peaceful, there did not seem a soul awake. The aerial guns were silent, and we slowed down a little to make less noise. The entrance to the Middle Harbour could now be seen on our right, and close ahead was the guardship looking so peaceful at anchor with not a soul on deck: it was hard to imagine she was an enemy, and guarding the entrance to their harbour. We had expected her to put up a stiff resistance, as she was a modern ship. Two C.M.B.’s and an aeroplane had been detailed off to attack her but, none of these having arrived, she was left to herself; and, one after another, the three C.M.B.’s went past her, opened machine-gun fire on her, for which we cursed heartily, as it would obviously wake them up.

“But nothing seemed to happen, and we arrived at the dock entrance without a single shot being fired. We stopped, as the other two boats were rather slow going in. Suddenly a familiar bump and dull thud was heard: I knew something had been torpedoed. A high column of water could be seen rising from the side of a cruiser with three funnels and two masts. Bremner in ‘79’ had found his mark, and the *Pamiat Azov* submarine depot ship listed rapidly on her side. After this a dead silence, and still no signs of life.

“We all entered the harbour: ‘31’ opened machine-gun fire on the sides of the

dock, '79' made a quick turn to get out of our way, and we followed close behind '31,' heading for the corner of the dock where our objectives lay. '79' opened fire all round her, but we still held ours, as it seemed quite useless to fire at nothing in particular, and would only succeed in waking everyone up. I stood by, however, with my fingers on the trigger ready directly anything fired at us. Almost in an instant several crashes were heard, small splashes were seen on both sides of the boat, and uncanny whistling sounds were heard that took away one's breath.

'Morley and I instinctively ducked for a moment. When I looked up, I noticed the splashes although falling everywhere in the harbour were not so close to us. I turned round, and was just saying to Reed, 'Where on earth are you going to?' (as we were heading right for the hospital ship) when I noticed that although standing up and grasping the wheel, his head was resting on the 'conning tower' in a pool of blood.

'I instantly took hold of him and lowered him down in the cockpit. I put the helm hard over, and tried to get on our proper course again, behind '31.' We were quite close to the battleship *Andrei Pervozvanni* now, and I knew in a few more seconds it would be too late. I throttled the engines as far back as I could, and was just going to fire a torpedo when '31' turned right round to go out of the harbour. She went across our bows, and I was nearly going to fire, hoping the torpedo would go under her, but then thought better of it and waited.

'Directly she had passed I pulled the lever to fire starboard torpedo: it went off our stern, shaking the boat, but I had too much to do to watch the run. I put the wheel hard over and slewed her away from the battleship, pointed her nose somewhere at the battle-cruiser only a few yards—perhaps a hundred—off, and gave the order to Morley, 'Fire port torpedo!' Almost as he did so, I heard two crashes, saw two columns of water rise alongside the battleship and knew that one of Dobson's and my first torpedo had found their mark. I then went ahead on the starboard engine and turned the steering wheel as far as I could, as there was hardly any room to turn. Two lighters—not shown in the photograph—were alongside the hospital ship and I could only hope for the best—that we would not collide with them. As it was, the boat just missed them by a couple of feet.

'Whilst we were turning, the most enormous explosion was heard, the boat gave the most awful shake, and the water was in an upheaval all round. I looked over my shoulder and saw that our second torpedo was the cause of all this, and one could literally see the side of the battle-cruiser crumble in the smoke of the explosion. A shower of fine yellow picric was thrown from the bursting 'war-head' over the stern of the boat, stained and spattered it with a yellow colour which we could not get out

afterwards.

“As soon as we had cleared the lighters, I opened out and the boat shot ahead, catching up to ‘31,’ which was now out of the harbour. There was quite a sharp turn at the entrance, but we went through beautifully. I just had time for one glance back, and saw a high column of flame from one of the ships we had hit. It lit up the whole harbour. We again passed the guardship still at anchor. Morley opened fire on it with our Lewis guns as a parting present. I then told him to look after Reed; which he did. He bandaged his head and gave him a morphia pill, but presently I heard another ‘rat-a-tat-tat’ and saw Morley busy firing at the town, smashing windows, etc. I told him to leave the guns alone, as no one was firing at us now.

“We were now right up to ‘31,’ which was going home full speed, and I kept in a position a few yards astern all the time. We passed another boat (‘72’) going into harbour. I saw Dobson was signalling to him—presumably to return—but it went on. It afterwards returned safely and had tried to torpedo a destroyer, but unfortunately a bullet had put their torpedo out of action. Hunter-Blair^[35] was in that boat, and an old *Worcester*^[36] in command. At this stage ‘79’ was blown up. Her petrol tank must have caught alight, for there was a large flame from her. I did not see it, as I was too busy steering to look round.”

It may here be explained that when Bremner in “79” led the others into Kronstadt he dashed straight across the harbour slightly to starboard, made for the three-funnelled *Pamiat Azov*, torpedoed her, turned sharply round and came out. But she was unlucky enough to be hit by the Russians, and Bremner (who was wounded in eleven places) rather than let her fall into the enemy’s hands blew her up. He was rescued by the Bolsheviks and taken prisoner but afterwards came back to England. When “31” with Macbean and Dobson on board followed “79” into Kronstadt, turning sharp to port, Dobson had quickly torpedoed the *Andrei Pervozvanni* and come out safely in spite of terrific fire from the forts. It had been allotted to “88” the duty of torpedoing *Petropavlovsk* in the same corner of the harbour; but if the *Andrei Pervozvanni* were so placed as to prevent such a shot, then the latter was to be torpedoed. But, whilst Dayrell-Reed became a most unfortunate casualty just at the critical moment, and the C.M.B. seemed destined to be finished, Steele not merely took over command and carried out the original intention of torpedoing *Andrei Pervozvanni* but did the same thing also to the *Petropavlovsk*. The performance was thus a perfect model of pluck and completion. It would have been impossible to have carried out orders with greater thoroughness, or with more disregard for personal danger.

“We were not fired at for the first part of the journey back,” Steele continues,

“but, as soon as we tried to pass through the forts, a brisk machine-gun fire was opened. I could not see where the shots were going, as we were travelling full speed and throwing up the spray high on either side. Presently, however, a fort on the right started shelling us with some light Q.F. stuff. One shell came very close, throwing up a splash a few yards off. I tried to zigzag, and ‘31’ made a smoke screen, which I kept in and must have been hidden; for presently the searchlights started looking for us. Our engines sound just like an aeroplane, and this deceived them all the time, for they were searching all over the skies. Presently, however, they grew tired of that and tried the sea. I could see the light get closer and closer until it went right on us. It was rather an awful moment, but then happily it went past us, which indicated that we were not yet discovered by the big new fort. I made a smoke screen, as well as ‘31,’ and four times the searchlights came on us, but always off again. Very heavy firing was then heard. We could see the gun flashes, but I don’t think the shots could have come near us.

“Day was fast breaking. We had got through the chain of small forts, and were rapidly passing the large one at the western end of Kronstadt. The boat never went better, the wind had fallen to a flat calm, and a red glow over Kronstadt showed us that their ships were still burning. Reed nearly recovered consciousness once, and tried to speak. We all shook hands with him in turn. I think he knew that ‘88’ had played her part, and he must in consequence have died happy.

“We soon lost sight of Kronstadt but—most welcome sight of all—we found a British destroyer waiting for us at the edge of the minefield^[37] over which (unlike us) they can’t go. I shouted out to inquire if they had a surgeon on board; but they had not, so I went on and presently saw the whole squadron waiting for us at the entrance to the Sound. I ran up to the flagship *Delhi*, but just before I got there the engines gave out completely, the starboard clutch broke and also a camshaft on the port engine. I think the run must have been too much for them, and we had ultimately to put in two new ones.

“The flagship cheered us, and the Admiral greeted me and made anxious inquiries about the rest. Poor Reed was taken out in a stretcher, and died about an hour later. A destroyer towed us back to the *Vindictive*. About an hour later three C.M.B.’s rolled up, one towing another which had never been inside Kronstadt. Three out of the eight boats were lost. Lieutenant Napier, we heard, had turned up late and torpedoed the guardship, but tried to get out by a different way, where he was sunk by gunfire, happily most of his crew being taken prisoners.”

In explanation of this it may be added that the three boats which never came home were “62,” “79,” and “24.” The fate of the second we have witnessed, and we

may now watch Brade in "62." He had swung into Kronstadt after the exploits of the first three, but had then been hit by the enemy so that he had to rush out again whilst still afloat. He then saw the destroyer guardship and torpedoed her, but in return received such a hot fire that the C.M.B. with her brave crew went down. No. 24, as originally intended, torpedoed this same destroyer but was likewise sunk, Napier being taken captive. To No. 72 there had been entrusted the task of entering Kronstadt, turning to starboard, and then going to the far corner of the harbour where she was to have torpedoed the dock gates. Unfortunately whilst coming in between the batteries a bullet struck her carburettor, so that she lost speed and dropped astern. As she approached the harbour entrance, she sighted the destroyer and fired a torpedo: but the firing gear had been shot through, so the torpedo failed to run.

About this time Lieutenant Agar with the other boats reached the scene. No. 86 should have entered Kronstadt and torpedoed the 15,000-ton armoured cruiser *Rurik* lying a little distance from the *Pamiat Azov*, but the big end of this C.M.B. seized up, most unluckily, just at a very awkward moment and "86" lay disabled outside the forts; yet she was snatched from death by "72," who was able to pass a line and tow her back safely to Bjorko. Lieutenant Agar, the young Victoria Cross veteran, remained on the scene in perilous loneliness after all the others had started for home. It was his duty to be ready for any of the enemy ships which might come out, and he was there to torpedo them. But there was no pursuit, for these little boats in having destroyed within a few minutes one modern battle-cruiser, one battleship, and one submarine depot-ship, and taken the enemy by sudden surprise, had left him bewildered.

Still, anything might have happened, and whilst Agar in No. 4 went cruising about looking for any signs of the boats that had once been commanded respectively by Bremner, Brade, and Napier, the darkness began to withdraw its protection. Daylight burst on him, and it was time for him to quit. As a last gesture, he fired a torpedo which struck a transport in Kronstadt's military harbour, and then No. 4 hopped back for home.

"When we got back," says Steele, "the Admiral came over to the *Vindictive* where he made an inspiring speech. Reed was buried the next day. It was a most impressive ceremony; the band playing the 'Dead March,' passing through miles of Russian forest. The children ran out and put flowers on the coffin as it passed. Aerial photographs the next day showed the submarine depot-ship lying on her side, the *Andrei* was still on fire. And although the *Petropavlovsk* looked all right, she was worse than the other ship, a large hole having been blown in her, causing her to fill

and rest on the bottom of the dock. About five bullets had gone right through my boat, and one mechanic was slightly wounded, a bullet having penetrated his overall. Another bullet had lodged in one of the Lewis guns in the conning tower.”

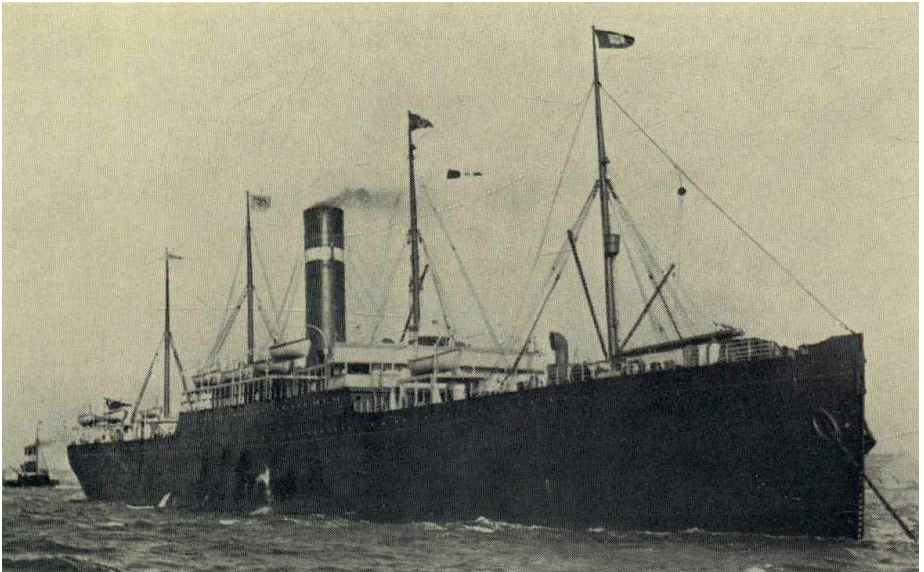
Such, then, was that wonderful summer’s night when the younger generation of seamen proved to the world what could be achieved by the newest type of vessel. Among other awards which were most justly made, there were two Victoria Crosses. One was given to Commander Dobson, and one to Lieutenant Steele “for most conspicuous gallantry, skill and devotion to duty.” Since then he has been made a Younger Brother of Trinity House, and has retired from the Royal Navy. But he is still afloat, as Captain of the Thames Nautical College, otherwise H.M.S. *Worcester*, off Greenhithe, his old *alma mater*. Could any appointment be more appropriate, more likely to inspire the future officers of our Merchant Service and Royal Naval Reserve with the daily influence of one who in the brief period of five war years put in such varied and such thrilling exhibitions of brave energy?

In these days of a highly mechanised civilisation there is something marvellously invigorating to see that it has not killed the heroic. Now to have converted a threatened disaster into victory just after poor Dayrell-Reed had been shot through the head and the boat was thrown off her course; to have steadied her and then made the difficult manœuvre of torpedoing both ships, in spite of overlap and the obscuration by smoke; next to have turned his craft in that crowded corner and to have escaped into the open, firing his guns all the way along the wall, whilst passing through a heavy fire from the Bolsheviks; this, surely, is the kind of daring which in the great days of Greece and Rome would have roused some poet to write a noble epic.

But, taken in conjunction with the Adriatic adventures, there are few stories of seafaring in small craft so remarkable and encouraging when we realise that the possibilities of success appear so utterly remote.

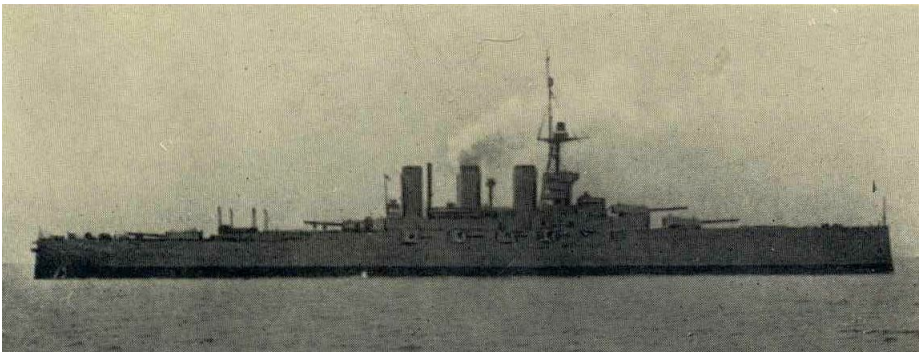


THE REAL H.M.S. *TIGER*



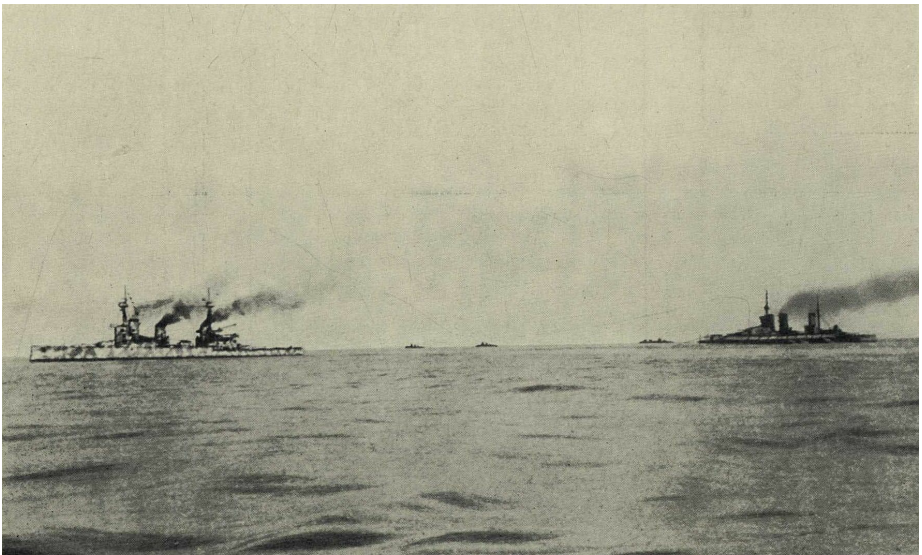
THE S.S. *MERION*

Before being altered to become the dummy battle-cruiser *Tiger*.



THE DUMMY H.M.S. *TIGER*

This is the S.S. *Merion* after her conversion to represent a battle-cruiser.



THE LAMED *LION*

This shows H.M.S. *Indomitable* towing Admiral Beatty's *Lion* after the latter had been injured at the Battle of the Dogger Bank. The *Lion* is down by the head and heeling over slightly. In the distance can be seen the destroyer screen.

CHAPTER XIV

PLAIN PIRACY

PIRACY and the Chinese have since time immemorial been so intimately connected that to seafarers the one suggests the other. At varying periods of history the attacks on shipping break out feverishly and then seem to die down; yet the disease never is really exterminated from the blood of a Chinaman.

During the mid-Victorian period, for example, when so many richly laden tea-clippers and other fine sailing ships used to pass along the coast, Chinese pirates had a very busy time operating from well-manned and armed junks. Their technique was to take every advantage of a becalmed ship. Thus one day a clipper was coming down the China Sea when the wind died away, leaving her rolling to the swell, idle. A little while later fifteen pirate junks with large sails and bringing a faint air with them approached. They fired at short range with their guns and seemed destined to capture the helpless clipper, but the breeze freshened, the easily-driven clipper's hull gathered way and after a singularly narrow escape, left the pirates well astern. But on another occasion a sailing craft with a valuable cargo had just reached the outer roads of Hong-Kong one evening at 9 p.m. when it fell a flat calm and she had to anchor.

Three hours later a pirate junk stole quietly alongside, captured passengers and crew, placed them for the present below hatches, but after getting under way tied the prisoners' hands as well as feet. The unfortunates were then thrown into the sea and the booty was sailed to the piratical stronghold near Macao. Such incidents were by no means rare so that during the 1860's and 1870's the British Navy on the China station was kept very busy chasing out the delinquents, and destroying their junks no less than their villages. For a period these drastic measures were efficacious, yet the Chinaman's character has not altered during the age of steamship progress, and he merely awaits an opportunity to resume his old operations under new conditions.

After the Great European War, therefore, piracy in these Oriental waters increased considerably because of the internal political turmoil and lack of governmental control. Since the year 1920 a new chapter of Chinese piracy was begun, and with that reckless confidence which robbers always enjoy when the organisation of law and order has broken down. But these attacks were of two distinct classes: (1) on the rivers; and (2) on the high seas, as well as off the coast. The absence of any settled government at Canton, and the vast river spider web of waterways in the Canton delta seemed to afford every encouragement for (1). The

river steamers and tows came along as ripe fruit for the pirates, who would act as follows. The steamers would wend their way along the narrow channels until suddenly the waterway was seen to be blocked by a sunken vessel purposely staged. Sometimes, too, the Chinese launches would intentionally bring about a collision; at other occasions there would be steel wires so cunningly placed as to foul a steamer's propeller and make her stop. In any case, immediately the vessel had ceased to go ahead, or run aground, she would be subjected to attack.

The tows usually consisted of a launch, in each case with passenger or cargo junks astern. This was always a welcome sight to the pirates. Slow moving and unhandy, the collection of craft was most easily captured in the narrow waters of the Canton or West River delta, unless protected by an armed guard on board or escorted by either an armed launch, or one of the British Navy's shallow-draught river gunboats. As long as there was no continuity of policy in South China, and the political outlook was so kaleidoscopic, the profession of piracy was bound to be prosperous and progressive. The Canton delta had been only under the partial control of the various Chinese generals, and because there was no permanence this amounted to little.

Between the river Chinaman and the racketeer of Chicago there is indeed a certain resemblance. Each is actuated by the belief that he is entitled to extract payment by threat of force and the unsubstantiated claim to rule. The Chinese river pirates considered themselves justified in "taxing" all merchandise that should pass through their area, and they went about their lucrative business in no casual manner. They were able to strike deep fear for miles around, and were careful indeed to kidnap those persons affluent enough to produce a large ransom. So well was the pirate intelligence system carried on that it was not difficult to get an accurate assessment of a prisoner's worth.

As much as 20,000 dollars would be asked to be paid in return for one person's release, and if this amount were not forthcoming, the pirates would despatch an ear, a finger, and other parts of the captive's anatomy to his relatives. If there was no response to this hint, the account would then be closed for ever by death to the prisoner. Most notorious of all was the female leader named "One-eyed Ying," whose devilish degradation and callous brutality had no bounds. This terrible woman herself used to lacerate and mutilate the prisoner, finally going so far as to cut out his heart and eat it. Fortunately "One-eyed Ying" was captured in the end.

The depredations in the Canton delta had a serious effect on trade. Continuous patrols were being maintained by the British gunboats, which at the end of 1923 consisted of the *Cicala*, *Moth*, *Cricket*, and *Tarantula*, all of the "Insect" class, and

the *Robin*. Now the first four had all been constructed during the latter part of the Great War and represented the latest design in shallow draught fighting ships. Fitted with one mast, and two funnels abreast of each other, armed with two 3-inch as well as smaller guns, this type of vessel was 230 feet long, 36 feet at extreme beam, but drew only four feet with a displacement of 645 tons. They could thus float in almost a ditch. Moreover they could steam at 14 knots.

But this "Insect" class was found too long and too unhandy for navigating the winding creeks of the delta; so that H.M.S. *Robin*, although of only 85 tons, 7 knots speed, and armed with a couple of 6-pounders, was by her light draught and small turning circle the ideal vessel of the flotilla. It has been easy enough in some quarters to criticise the lack of results from so much gunboat patrolling, yet one has to understand the difficult conditions which obtained before one can appreciate the impossible situation. We all know by this time that surprise is one of the first essentials for making a successful attack in expeditions against robber citadels. But, unfortunately, the physical nature of the country with its flat monotony made it difficult to approach the pirates unawares. The gunboat's mast could be seen for a long time zigzagging between the banks; and there was a series of foothills which provided ready-made stations for the Chinese lookouts.

Nor did the latter fail to get cover from the high crops that were growing, or to run their craft safely up some creek so small that the larger gun-boats could not follow. Thus the most completely planned naval expedition would become a failure, and the forewarned gangs had the chance of getting right away. In some sections, however, the pirates did not hesitate to establish their strongholds with machine-guns, and even field ordnance, with bold defiance. When this was allied to their successful terrorism, and their perfect intelligence regarding the traffic movements together with details as to cargo assignments, they were able to create a most complex problem. At the beginning of 1924 they exhibited their daring by capturing a couple of launches belonging to the Asiatic Petroleum Company, but this was followed on March 20 by an expedition against a pirate lair near the mouth of the East River, when H.M.S. *Tarantula* was able to see forty of the gang captured.

Again no permanent result ensued, for in the following August over 300 men, women, and children were slaughtered by the Chinese as punishment because a tow bound from Canton for Kongmun had put up a resistance. The pirates had come into collision with the towing launch which had been diverted into Sandpiper Creek. Eventually the same lesson for the protection of merchant traffic was evolved that had been tried with satisfactory results in such different ages of history as the period of ancient Rome, sixteenth-century Spain, eighteenth century England, and the

twentieth century era of submarines. The most satisfactory method is that which defeated the U-boats by means of convoy. And this was the system which the British Navy had to adopt in the treacherous waters of the Canton delta.

The time arrived at length when internal events permitted the Chinese authorities to co-operate in the British naval operations. In October 1924 the pirates began scattering, and to seek refuge in such places as Hong-Kong and Macao, but three of their notorious leaders were arrested. On November 21 came a joint operation on a considerable scale directed against a large pirate body who were holding a position at the junction of three creeks, two of which led into the Kerr Channel and one into the Sailam. The pirates were 300 strong, in possession of some armed launches, besides four small field guns and thirty machine-guns. It was unfortunate that the creeks giving access to the pirate position were so intricate that only the *Robin* could navigate them, but all the exits were closed during the night of November 23 by H.M.S. *Tarantula*, H.M.S. *Moorhen* (another shallow draught steamer, of 180 tons armed with a couple of 6-pounders), and three armed launches. The net result of these efforts was that the wily pirates had all departed by 9.30 the next morning, but a separate small pirate band of another independence happened to be there and were compelled to surrender. A sweep by the gunboats of the surrounding waters brought in some more prisoners.

A more pronounced success occurred when a joint operation was made against the pirates, who for several years had been occupying Wantung. This strengthened position lay between three peaks of a rocky hill that rose 250 feet from the paddy fields. Fortifications had been constructed on the east and west of these peaks in such a manner as to render it impregnable. When the Anglo-Chinese attack was launched, simultaneous attacks were made by a force of 500 Chinese soldiers who had been landed to make onslaughts against the east and west peaks as soon as the *Robin* had completed her preliminary bombardment. At dawn from a creek to the south she had opened fire, and was able also to use her machine-guns with good effect. Thus the soldiers advanced, captured the fort, set fire to the village and, assisted by a landing party from the *Robin*, drove the pirates from their last line of defence. Only forty of the whole gang escaped. No fewer than 144 rounds of 6-pounder shells had been fired by the *Robin*, and there was no question that these water bandits had suffered a severe blow.

Nevertheless it is sad to relate that once more, owing to political events, this achievement possessed no permanency. Some months later the pirates burnt the small township of Wong Kong, three miles south of Sainam, and the glare of the conflagration was actually seen by the *Robin* whilst on passage elsewhere. Next

morning a tow was fired on by the gang just outside Sainam. Seventy pirates had established themselves on a sandpit at an island flanking the channel, and from here they directed their machine-gun fire on all tows which declined to pay the "immunity tax." They were able to discriminate between those who consented to be blackmailed, and those who refused: for all ships which had paid were content to display what was known as an immunity flag. On to-day's occasion the pirates had their activities brought quickly to an end when the *Robin* steamed on to the scene and shelled slaughter into them, though some managed to escape to the mainland among the reeds and long grass.

And so the annoying epidemic has kept recurring, and these inland water piracies are as likely to be stamped out utterly as burglary is likely to become wiped from the criminal records of western cities. All these attacks against steamers and tows under class (1) must, however, be reckoned of an importance inferior to those of (2) where the sea operations are of a more subtle kind; and, as we investigate these, we shall find they culminate in an action where the gallantry of European officers and men finally triumphed over the cunning treachery of murderous Chinese.

Different ages and types of seafaring demand different tactics, yet the pirate never changes his basic character. We saw at the beginning of this chapter how that in the sailing ship days a calm was especially chosen for surprise attack. As soon as steam did away with that opportunity, the modern Chinese pirates brought their methods up to date by coming on board as apparently innocent passengers, and when the steamship was well out on the ocean springing their surprise. There followed a sudden concerted rush against officers and crew, both on deck and below, forcing them to take the vessel into Bias Bay or some other pirate harbour. Here passengers and ship's company from captain to greaser would be plundered, and the cargo confiscated before the steamer and her people were suffered to proceed. This sort of thing, in fact, went on so frequently that the pirates got the idea they could carry on for ever without fear of molestation.

The first recorded instance of an ocean piracy after the Great War was when the S.S. *Sui An* was seized in December 1922, whilst on passage to Hong-Kong. She was taken by her captors into Bias Bay, which is about forty miles to the north-east of Hong-Kong, and a district not under control from any authority in Canton. Merchant ships are not usually over-manned; there is quite enough work for the engineering and deck staff without having to be on their defence against oriental malice. Resistance to the pirate-passengers' demands of course might, and very often did, mean death; and the best precautions of the white man could even be overcome. Experience indicated, none the less, that whilst one Chink looks pretty

much the same as any other, and that he might be a perfectly peaceable person or the most cut-throat type of pirate, who had shipped aboard as one of a gang; a good deal of uncertainty could be settled if all these easterners were searched by the police before embarkation. Not by physical strength but by guns concealed about his person does the Chinaman conquer on the high seas in the present age. It was realised in time, also, that Indian guards and the erection of grilles on the deck were effective against any sudden rising and massed attack.

That these were advisable is obvious enough. The officer-of-the-watch pacing the bridge, keeping his lonely vigil some dark night, with one eye on the binnacle and another on a look out for shipping or coastal lights, ought not to be distracted by the suspense of being possibly shot in the back any moment. The captain snatching a few hours' sleep in his cabin is entitled to his rest without fear of having his door broken in and his throat cut. So, likewise, the wireless operator on deck, and the engineers down below, cannot give undivided attention to their respective jobs unless they know that the Indian sentries and the iron grilles are there to ward off sudden assault.

But, somehow, the wisest precautions become neglected and when the next high seas incident occurred in December of 1923 it was in spite of the fact that all the passengers had been searched before being allowed on board. This was the British S.S. *Hydrangea*, which was on her regular run between Hong-Kong and Swatow, a vessel of about 1200 tons displacement. Originally she had been built as a warship, and did good work as one of the flower-class sloops; but was afterwards sold following the advent of peace, and converted into a merchant vessel. It was thus doubly regrettable that she should become a victim to the gang of pirates who had embarked with such seeming innocence at Hong-Kong.

Only a month later the Chinese-owned S.S. *Hong Hwa*, flying the British flag, was captured on voyage from Singapore to Hong-Kong by the gang which had come aboard at the first mentioned port. It is true that she carried wireless and could therefore summon the aid of some British man-of-war, but the captors promptly put the instruments out of action; and moreover there were no guards aboard this ship. A few days later a joint expedition was sent against Bias Bay, but, whilst several pirate houses were destroyed and a few men found with loot were shot, yet even this drastic step could not cure the evil, which broke out again two years later. For in December 1925 the S.S. *Tungchow*, owned by the well-known shipping firm Messrs Butterfield & Swire, was on her trip from Shanghai to Tientsin, and had reached a spot 200 miles south of Wei-Hai-Wei, when she was suddenly seized and taken into Bias Bay. Inasmuch as the Chinese authorities did nothing to prevent

them, the Bias Bay pirates performed three more attacks shortly afterwards, including one against a French steamer in February, and then on November 15, 1926, another of Messrs Butterfield & Swire's steamers was to suffer from the same enemies.

She was the *Sunning* and was bound from Shanghai to Hong-Kong. Every care had been taken, she was fitted with wireless, grilles had been erected and Indian sentries placed; yet, in spite of everything the crowd of Chinamen succeeded in a surprise onset, took the officers when least expectant and locked them up in their cabins. The tussle now developed, and the officers having effected their escape made for the bridge which had been already fortified. Severe fighting ensued, during which the pirates found themselves so stoutly resisted by inferior numbers that the Chinese resorted to a desperate measure. In an endeavour to smoke out or burn the officers, they set fire to the *Sunning's* superstructure. Matters were fast approaching a crisis, when the conflagration was sighted in the early morning against the sky by H.M.S. *Bluebell*. The latter was one of the flower-class sloops just mentioned, and now happened to be on her way from Hong-Kong to Swatow. She hurried to close the burning ship and was able to arrive before it was too late to render the needed assistance. Whilst some of the pirates got away in the *Sunning's* boats, ten of them were afterwards captured; but a dozen were arrested on board, taken off to Hong-Kong, where they were tried and executed.

Sunning and her European people had barely reaccustomed themselves to normal existence than they heard of the British S.S. *Seangbee* being seized whilst voyaging from Singapore bound for Hong-Kong and taken by the pirates into Bias Bay. This incident occurred on January 27, 1927, and on March 21 another British vessel, the S.S. *Hopsang* (Swatow for Hong-Kong) met with a similar fate. Matters had now gone so far, and by this interference seaborne trade had become so seriously endangered, that the British Navy had to make a more determined action against Bias Bay; so an expedition of considerable strength was organised. The cruisers *Frobisher* (flying the flag of Rear-Admiral W. H. D. Boyle, commanding the First Cruiser Squadron), and *Delhi*, together with aircraft-carrier *Hermes* and the 750-ton sloop *Marazion* steamed out from Hong-Kong for Bias Bay, where they were to arrive just before dawn. In order to prevent their approach being revealed to the pirates, each ship was darkened, and immediately on reaching the appointed spot, boats were lowered with naval and marine landing parties as well as demolition parties.

These boats were collected astern of the *Marazion*, whose 7-foot draught enabled her to tow them in two lines right inshore. When the water shoaled till the

sloop could go no further, the boats cast off and advanced through the shallows, the men finally having to wade through the water. Now we referred on an earlier page to the excellence of the Chinese system of intelligence, whose headquarters and organising brains were located in Hong-Kong. So efficiently were their branches communicated with; so faithfully were their secret signs guarded; so thoroughly in fact was the whole business of membership cards, regulations and circulars ordered, that there was an exceptional unity among the pirates.

The Hong-Kong piracy chiefs had evidently given warning to Bias Bay of what was impending. When the naval parties reached the two small villages, it was to find the enemy had fled to the hills, but only after having left their live stock behind. The latter were now removed to places of safety, and then the demolition parties burnt or blew up the known houses of the bandits. By 11 a.m. the lair had been laid waste and the expeditionary force returned to their ships: yet so small was this temporary result that only four months later the Norwegian S.S. *Solviken* and two other steamers were pirated in the customary manner. Another naval punitive expedition was despatched to Bias Bay, 500 men landing at dawn on the first of September, destroying houses in both villages as well as the junks in harbour.

So the contest went on between Westerners and Orientals; between modern civilisation with all the advantages of science and invention, and the determined Chinamen with all their subtle cunning. Bias Bay was the obvious base whither captured steamers would certainly be brought, and the overpowered European officers would be compelled at the threat of being shot dead, to direct the ships as ordered. It was accordingly decided to maintain a naval patrol off this notorious bay, in order to render aid to stricken steamers and deal drastically with the pirates themselves. Strategically this was a better method than any: for it possessed assurance instead of probability, based on the same principle which actuates the policeman who captures a criminal on returning to the thieves' den where the booty is shared out.

At first, then, seaplanes were employed to reconnoitre, and then a submarine patrol was established. H.M. Submarine L 4 was assigned for this purpose and her very ability to render herself invisible was just the condition requisite for surprising the enemy who were so artfully clever. We come, then, to the night of October 20, 1927, and at 8.20 p.m. L 4 sighted a darkened steamer running into the bay. It was pretty evident that she was yet another capture with the Bias gang on board, but the submarine now on the surface waited till the stranger was only a quarter of a mile away. The signal to stop instantly was then made, to which the steamer paid no apparent attention. A further signal likewise received no reply, and the darkened ship

still steamed onward. The submarine next fired a round of blank, yet again no heed was exhibited, the steamer held on her way.

The commanding officer of L 4 had no alternative now but to fire live shell, nor was it till a couple of rounds of these explosives reached the stranger that she decided to obey and stop her engines. She became on fire, complete confusion reigned, but L 4 motored alongside the blazing ship in an effort to save crew and passengers. This was the S.S. *Irene* of 828 tons net, owned by a Chinese firm and bound from Shanghai for Amoy with a mixed cargo. It was learned that on the second night out from Shanghai, the pirates disguised as passengers had obtained complete control and were now bringing the valuable loot to be sorted out in the usual manner. But, having perceived that their fate was sealed by the arrival of the submarine, these rovers began to add terror to terror by firing with their revolvers indiscriminately before seeking to abandon the *Irene*.

Amid all the conflagration, the shouts and yells of excited Chinese, the shooting and fighting, the smoke and crackling flames, it was difficult for the low-lying submarine to rescue the innocent and deal with the others. A regular *saue qui peut* had set in, the steamer became a total loss by fire, but the entire gang were drowned, burned to death, or captured; whilst eight suspects were taken prisoners, tried, found guilty and condemned to death. They were ascertained to be members of a notorious gang, and several were proved to have taken part in the attacks on the *Seangbee*, the *Solviken*, just mentioned, as well as against the British S.S. *Yatshing*. Now the accommodation aboard a submarine, which is little more than a mass of machinery with a tiny cabin space, may be regarded as the most restricted of any craft that floats; but L 4 managed to take 222 souls on board, whilst fifteen were saved by other means, only twenty-four out of the total 261 persons on board meeting death.

It was a couple of years later that the pirates, in attempting their standardised methods of seizure, brought up a contest which reads more like full-blooded fiction than actual modern events. Indeed, it bears such a remarkable likeness to the kind of exciting story which every schoolboy and most grown-ups love to read, that had the facts not been authenticated we might have felt suspicious. The following details are true, however, in every detail. On Sunday, December 8, 1929, about 1 a.m. the Douglas Steamship Company's S.S. *Hai Ching* was steaming past Chilang Point. The Second Officer was on watch on the bridge; the Third Engineer was on watch in the engine-room. The Master (Captain O. H. Farrow) and all the other officers were off watch in their respective cabins.

At this hour the quartermaster came to Captain Farrow, awoke him, and

reported that there was a thief on board. Captain Farrow turned out immediately, dressed without switching on the light, and went on the boat deck. From here he was able to look down through the grating which ran fore and aft over the starboard alleyway, and heard a smart scuffle going on in the guard-room. It needed little reflection before he guessed that there were pirates at work, so he wasted no time but rushed on to the bridge. Here he found besides the Second Officer, and the quartermaster (who had brought the message), two Indian guards. One of the latter had been on duty at the foot of the bridge ladder on the boat deck, whilst the other was supposed to have been stationed in the starboard alleyway. Things began to happen quickly, for some pirates started to rush the bridge ladders, and the situation became ugly.

This first attempt was repulsed, and just afterwards there safely reached the bridge two more of Captain Farrow's staff: Chief Officer R. Perry, and the Second Engineer. The latter had an adventurous journey from his cabin. He arrived wounded, but had killed his assailant on the very bridge ladder. Next came the Chief Engineer, and he too had passed through some thrilling moments. The sound of shots being fired had roused him from his sleep, so he got up and glanced out of the cabin door only to notice several crouching pirate Chinamen along the port alleyway. The picture was not pleasant. So, switching out the light, this officer hurried into some clothes after closing the door, waited till the scene was temporarily clear, and then made a run for the bridge.

But there were still the Third Officer and the Second Engineer officer not yet accounted for, and they had their berths situated in the forward cabins. The little party on the bridge with their guns therefore covered the fore well-deck so as to clear a space and afford these two a chance of gaining the bridge. The Third Officer dashed forth clad only in his pyjamas, got across, but was shot just as he approached the bridge ladder. A pirate standing in one of the alleyways had done the deed. The Second Engineer made a quick leap but he was wounded in the same way. Both actually reached the bridge, though the Third Officer collapsed almost simultaneously. The Chief Officer had the satisfaction of shooting dead the pirate just mentioned, but was himself wounded.

There still remained the Third Engineer, whose non-arrival increased Captain Farrow's anxiety. When the Master sent down for him, and the officer did not appear, the worst aspect seemed probable. Actually the latter was being held up in the engine-room by four Chinks who made him stop the main engines and dynamo. The next demand was to be supplied with some kerosene, but the Engineer well knowing the intention to set the ship on fire firmly declined. The pirates took matters

into their own hands, knocked the lock off the kerosene tank, helped themselves, and burned the dynamo. They were an excited, nervous lot of ruffians, and their next move was to push this officer up the engine-room ladder at the point of a gun, whence they were conducting him along the starboard alleyway; when, with a good heavy fist, this officer knocked the leading pirate out flat on the deck. This provided the chance that had been awaited for some time; the Briton saw and took it, tore forward and up the ladder to join his friends on the bridge.

Up to now the officers had been using only pistols, but the whole personnel having been collected, the Captain sent the quartermaster down into the chart-house below the bridge to fetch up the Winchester rifles together with ammunition. Again there was an awkward uncertainty, for the quartermaster did not return. Captain Farrow went down himself, found the man had lost his nerve and was hiding in the bathroom: the Master picked up rifles and ammunition, returned to the bridge and made ready for a real duel to death. It should be explained that the pirates were showing every determination not to be robbed of their prize. Armed with Browning automatics, besides one or two old Winchester rifles, these Chinamen had shown themselves quite capable of doing their worst.

In lonely insecurity the band of officers were keeping the bridge from being rushed, and this must be the last stand. The darkness of night, the stealthy silent tread of the enemy, the horrible clatter of their tongues and their shrill cries, formed the environment of this suspense. The deck party of pirates, having been strengthened by those who had arrived with kerosene from the engine-room, now increased their vigour. Something new was going to happen and very speedily. Captain Farrow had stationed two officers at each side of the bridge who were shining down their electric torches over the alleyway entrances and shooting down the pirates every time the latter showed themselves. But the enemy was now ready with his big effort.

The flashlights soon revealed the Chinamen throwing kerosene about plentifully, setting fire to the bridge and foremost ends of each alleyway. Next one of them was seen climbing up over the guard rails on to the boat-deck abreast of the bridge. Captain Farrow focused his torch, took careful aim with his gun, fired, and the body fell lifeless into the sea. That was another danger passed of being sniped, but the furnace which had been started around the bridge had now become so fierce, that the position was no longer tenable. Already the flames were flicking about the officers, so they started to quit their refuge and move aft along the boat-deck, taking with them the dead body of the Third Officer. But at that moment there came another alarm when the bo'sun caught sight of some pirates moving about on the after end of the starboard boat-deck. Fire was concentrated at these Chinese, who

were driven back. They were next descried clambering into the starboard lifeboat on the poop, and thus making their way on to the boat-deck. They, too, were using electric torches and for picking out the officers before firing, but the latter were taking advantage of every cover which the water-tanks afforded and returned the fire promptly: in fact so successfully that the Chinks were driven out of the starboard boat, and across the poop, where they leapt into the corresponding boat on the port side.

But the officers were at last getting the upper hand, for they managed to turn their enemies from this last station, and firing next came from the well-deck. Two hours of this anxious irregular warfare had now passed, a period that had been doubly trying because it was so difficult to perceive exactly how it was going to develop and what surprise the enemy would spring next. Neither side could show any mercy, but always there was the traditional cruelty of the Chinese, coupled with the lust for loot, likely to express passion in the most violent form at the first opportunity. Only the fact that the band of white men were so quick to anticipate each move, and were so careful to co-operate in defence, had prevented complete massacre. And Captain Farrow by means of a 12-bore gun using 3½ shot was now doing some powerful work against the well-deck concentration.

As soon as the pirates had been swept from the upper deck, there came a panic rush of Chinese passengers into the port poop boat. A wild and chattering mob began to lower it over the ship's side, but with the usual result. One of the falls—the after one in this case—got foul, the foremost fall was let go with a run, so that the whole crowd in trying to escape found themselves either thrown into the sea or against the gangway ladder. There is scarcely an occasion of a small passenger steamer lowering her boats in a hurry where someone in the excitement of the moment does not make this same mistake, and it happened too often during the Great War after a vessel was torpedoed. So recognised an accompaniment of abandoning a stricken vessel did this phenomenon become, that it was one of the essential features of a Q-ship's performance in her endeavour to convey reality; the "panic party" being well drilled in this simulation.

The situation, so far as could be ascertained amid the darkness and confusion, the noise and the lurid conflagration, was that the pirates no longer had the upper hand and realised they had been defeated. But the fierce flames now became the greatest enemy, and there was every chance that death would soon arrive in one terrible holocaust. Unfortunately the hoses, which were kept stowed under the bridge, had been destroyed, so the officers began working strenuously with buckets of water to keep the fire back. But the effort was useless, the red and yellow

tongues were consuming everything combustible with an insatiable hunger. Again and again were buckets filled, but the heat was so terrific that the Captain had no other alternative than to let his officers abandon ship and stand by in the boats. This was done in a seamanlike manner, and two rafts were lowered likewise. It was thus that a number of people were rescued from the sea, and a fishing junk which chanced not to be far distant sent her sampan which took off four boatloads. Some other junks of the fishing fleet refused to take the slightest notice of the distressed, and the inference is of course quite obvious.

Now, with great gallantry, Captain Farrow, true to the fine customs of the Merchant Service, had remained on board after the others had gone; and he continued his efforts to keep the fire from getting worse. By 4 a.m. things seemed to take a change and become quiescent, so he recalled the wireless operator. This is easy enough to narrate, but more difficult to accomplish. How to get the operator up the ship's steel side, without any ladder? A little resource soon made it possible. First of all a rope's end was dropped, and the captain helped an agile seaman to reach deck, and then the two of them hauled up the wireless expert. The latter was, now that the enemy had been cowed into a corner, a most important personage. If only he could tap his Morse out across the ether, there was still a possibility that some naval or merchant ship might hear and come to the rescue before trouble broke forth again.

But the operator found that his aerial lead was down, so he had to make use of a secondary wireless set which was usually carried for emergencies like this. "S.O.S." . . . "S.O.S." . . . "S.O.S." The dots and dashes sparked. Then an interval of waiting. "S.O.S." . . . "S.O.S." . . . "S.O.S." . . . The signals had been picked up and answered by the two destroyers H.M.S. *Sterling* and *Sirdar* at 5.15 a.m., who came racing along so rapidly that three-quarters of an hour later they arrived alongside. But what a picture of desolation for them to behold! What a pathetic transformation of a peacetime passenger steamship!

The *Hai Ching* was still burning forward, the bridge had collapsed completely, the port poop boat was hanging ridiculously in the air by the after fall, one body was lying a few yards astern of the ship drowned, with the steamer's logline fast about him. The decks aft were crowded with a mass of scared Chinese passengers and their belongings, among whom the pirates had scattered themselves to escape prominence now that their plot had been scotched. The steamer had developed a slight list to port; three boats with officers and crew were lying off awaiting events, and now a boarding party which came off from *Sirdar* found a series of ghastly sights. They came upon seven Chinese and one Indian guard lying dead, but in the

guard-room was a wounded Chinaman whom the third engineer of *Hai Ching* was able to identify as one of the gang which had held him up at the time of the kerosene incident. This culprit and his friends at the beginning of the attack had gained access to the grille-protected area by working their way through a coal-bunker and boiler-room, next shooting the Indian guards who were off duty and asleep.

Whilst *Sirdar* remained secured alongside, the *Sterling* took the helpless *Hai Ching* in tow, about 350 oriental passengers having been removed to the destroyers' decks. There happened, also, to be six European passengers, consisting of five ladies and one man, but luckily they had all passed through this ordeal of shots and flames unharmed, so that they were able to tend the wounded. Five busy hours were passed in a big effort to save the ship, and the combined activities of both sea services were rewarded at 11 a.m. when the fire had been got under control. At last the *Hai Ching* was able to proceed under her own steam once more, and came into Hong-Kong at six that evening a terrible spectacle of gutted steel.

It was entirely owing to the pluck, the coolness, and dogged determination of Captain Farrow and his brother officers that the ship had been snatched out of the pirates' hands during those critical early morning hours. Sheer gallantry and a refusal to give up, even at the most hopeless moment, saved their own lives and the shipping company's property: it was an achievement which will rank with so many other glorious chapters in the history of the Merchant Navy, and formed an inspiration for the young men who will one day take their responsible place.

The pirate gang had made their plans most cleverly, and were within a few strokes of success. There were about twenty of them, and apparently their leader was killed early in the fight: otherwise there might have been a different conclusion, during which all the European officers and white passengers would have perished. The weak feature aboard *Hai Ching* was that the Indian guard, who should have been at his station, was away from his beat. This culpable neglect enabled one gang of the pirates to fall upon the wireless operator and the guard-room, whilst the other gang operated on deck and sought to rush the bridge. As ever happens among wild men, they did not even make best use of their opportunities. In spite of all their daring and organisation, they could have done far better. If only they had stationed one pirate at each alleyway, they could have shot all four officers coming out of their cabins. It was because the officer-of-the-watch, on hearing the trouble in the guard-room, took such prompt steps in calling the Captain, and the latter reached the bridge without waste of time, that a defence was organised before the worst of the pirate assault could be presented.

It is evident that this was not the first scheme to be attempted. On a previous

occasion, just before the *Hai Ching* was about to sail, a number of rifles together with a supply of ammunition were discovered hidden in the ship's coal bunkers. The concealment had been done not without ingenuity: there had been left a layer just so thick that by the time *Hai Ching* was off a suitable point sufficient coal would have been used to let the arms be recovered without difficulty. Now such secret stowage would have been impossible without assistance on board, and the inference was undeniable that the Chinese firemen were implicated in the plot. But the intriguing Oriental, with his sly insidious stealth, his secret societies and signs unintelligible to Westerners, will still continue to adapt himself slowly to modern conditions of piracy, until strong and settled government can bring him under strict control. Historically piracy is almost the oldest of the world's professions, so we cannot be surprised if it should die out only with reluctance.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The *Goeben's* speed during her trials in 1912 was 27.9 knots.

[2] The best speed of *Inflexible* was not more than 25 knots, and of *Indefatigable* 27 knots, at this date.

[3] The *Gloucester* on August 7 reported the *Goeben's* speed as 29 knots. There can be no doubt that *Goeben*, when in good mechanical condition, was at least 2 knots superior to the fastest British battle-cruiser in the Mediterranean.

[4] The meeting between the two British battle-cruisers and Admiral Souchon was far less a chance, lucky, occasion than some have imagined. Captain Kennedy had, in his appreciation of the situation, deemed it probable that the Germans would be on a line extending from the North coast of Sicily westwards—well out of sight from Sardinia or the African coast, and if possible away from the mercantile traffic routes. For, obviously, Admiral Souchon would wish to effect a surprise on the French and then escape out of observation. But Captain Kennedy equally was desirous of not being reported by either the land or passing shipping, until he had either met the enemy or was about to come up with the French Transport line. Thus both the British and Germans aimed to pass through the same localities. The *Indomitable* and *Indefatigable* were well up to the north, and on the proper course, some hours before meeting with *Goeben*.

[5] The wireless station in southern Sicily.

[6] *The Flight of the "Goeben" and the "Breslau,"* London, 1921.

[7] Our submarines could even have reached Messina Straits under their own power and there waited for the *Goeben*, if any sort of mother ship (e.g. the 1070-ton gunboat *Hussar*) with wireless had attended them; the mother ship could have retired into neutral Italian waters on *Goeben's* approach.

[8] See my *The Sea-Raiders*.

[9] Denusa is just east of Naxos and nearly 140 miles N.E. of Cape Malea. But *Goeben* did not go directly. After steering N.E., she left Syra to starboard, Tenos to port, and cruised about to the south of Khios before going straight south

to Denusa, where she arrived at 5.30 a.m. August 9, and left at 5.45 a.m. August 10. *Breslau*, however, made for Denusa by a more direct route.

[10] *Memories*, London, 1919, p. 145.

[11] *Fifty Years in the Royal Navy*, London, 1919, p. 284 *et seq.*

[12] *The Grand Fleet*, p. 173.

[13] *The World Crisis*, 1915. See pages 127, 144, 299.

[14] *The World Crisis*, 1915.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

[16] Compare a similar precaution by Admiral Souchon at Denusa Island. See Chapter I.

[17] That is to say a gale blowing at 90 miles an hour.

[18] *The Sea-Raiders*.

[19] *Defence* did not accompany the squadron. Before Admiral Sturdee's arrival at the Abrolhos, Admiral Stoddart in accordance with Admiralty instructions had shifted his flag to the *Carnarvon* and sent *Defence*, via St. Helena, to Capetown.

[20] *Macedonia*, after searching for *Karlsruhe*, had been sent away from South American waters, together with *Otranto*, to Sierra Leone, before Admiral Sturdee's arrival at the Abrolhos. Having cleaned boilers at Sierra Leone, *Macedonia* rejoined whilst the squadron was still at sea.

[21] *Bristol* had been compelled to let her fires out in order to effect some engine-room repairs, and was at six hours' notice. She had also been delayed till *Glasgow* had finished coaling.

[22] *The Battle of the Falkland Islands*. By Commander H. Spencer-Cooper, R. N., London, 1919.

[23] This was *Leipzig*.

[24] *The Battle of the Falkland Islands*. *Vide supra*.

[25] Compare this incident with the lesson which was not yet learnt till after the Battle of Jutland where "it was probable that the loss of one, if not two, of our battle-cruisers was due" (wrote Admiral Jellicoe in *The Grand Fleet*, p. 418) to inadequate "arrangements to prevent the flash of cordite charges . . . being communicated to the magazine itself."

[26] And an annuity of £20.

[27] Fifteen miles south of the Old Head of Kinsale, Ireland.

[28] A perfectly legitimate *ruse de guerre*, provided that before opening fire false colours were lowered and the naval ensign hoisted. This was scrupulously performed by our decoy ships, and I even remember seeing it done too conscientiously once when a submarine was not yet visible. German disguised raiders were not always so scrupulous.

[29] The reason that the *Baralong* had failed to find any trace of the *Arabic* was due to the latter's distress signal having given her position 30 miles wrong as to latitude. But, by good fortune, this position coincided with that where the *Nicosian* was found.

[30] *Mars*, 7390 tons.

[31] These were the *Saida*, *Helgoland*, and *Novara*, all completed in 1914. They were of 3500 tons, with a speed of 27 knots, armed with nine 4.1-inch and two 12-pounder guns: able, therefore, to massacre any small vessels. The Austrians' speed enabled them always to escape from allied cruisers and destroyers on the return trip.

[32] These were the battleships of 14,500 tons built between 1910-12.

[33] One of the older Italian battleships, 9800 tons, 16 knots speed, four 10-inch guns, and others.

[34] *Great Moments of Adventure*, p. 61, "Sinking of the *Viribus Unitis*," by Lieut.-Colonel Raffaele Rossetti. New York, 1930.

[35] Sub-Lieut. Roland Hunter-Blair, R.N., had been Lieut. Steele's second-in-command aboard H.M.S. P 63.

[36] Acting Sub-Lieut. E. R. Bodley, R.N.R., was, like Steele, an old *Worcester* boy.

[37] This had been laid by C.M.B.'s on a previous occasion to the west of Kronstadt and would have been a perfect trap had any Bolshevik forces pursued.

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some illustrations were moved to facilitate page layout.

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