

## CHAPTER CCXII.

# THE NAVY'S WORK IN 1917

GERMAN NAVAL POLICY—RAIDS AND COAST DEFENCE—CHANGES AT THE ADMIRALTY—SIR E. CARSON AND SIR E. GEDDES AS FIRST LORDS—UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE—EXTENT OF THE GERMAN MENACE—SMALL ACTIONS OFF THE DUTCH COAST—GERMAN "TIP-AND-RUN" RAIDS—BRITISH COUNTER-MEASURES—SHIPPING LOSSES—THE AMERICAN NAVY IN THE ALLIANCE—DELIBERATE DESTRUCTION OF HOSPITAL SHIPS—ADMIRALTY REFORMS—INCIDENTS OF THE YEAR'S OPERATIONS—ACTION IN THE KATTEGAT—THE ALLIED FLEETS.

THE three salient features of the sea campaign during the third year of war were an increased aggressiveness of the enemy from the Belgian ports, the intensive and ruthless character of the attack by submarines on the world's Mercantile Marine, and the result afloat of the entry of the United States and other nations into the struggle. The effect of the Revolution in Russia upon the sea war in the Baltic theatre and that of the reverses in Italy upon the position in the Adriatic were felt widely, and necessitated the reconsideration in some of its aspects of the naval policy of the Allies. Furthermore, in a survey of the sea affair during 1916-17, it must be noticed that the changes at the Admiralty and in the Government were influenced largely by public opinion, deeply stirred and concerned by questions of naval policy.

The Battle of Jutland Bank took place May 31—June 1, 1916, and after that event on only one occasion within the period under review did any large German force appear in the North Sea, and then only to retire at once to its port when some of the heavier ships of the Grand Fleet were sighted. The policy adopted by the enemy was that of sallying forth in detachments small enough to evade the British patrols and swift enough to seek safety by

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flight if discovered. In this manner a number of raids were made upon the British coast and in adjacent waters, chiefly from the seaports of Belgium, and mainly with small craft assisted or accompanied by air forays. These raids became more frequent, and greater audacity was exhibited by the German naval commanders, towards the end of 1916, when not only the coasts of Essex and Kent but the entrance to the Thames and the Straits of Dover were boldly attempted, and Calais, Dunkirk, Folkestone and Dover were bombed from the air or shelled from the sea.

The successes of the German raiders at this time and their immunity from serious retribution or punishment were attributed, in part at least, to the naval policy of the British Government and its strategic interpretation by the Admiralty under Mr. Balfour's administration. Certainly, there were indications of a change in the method of utilising the naval resources of the country for its protection. When the German cruisers shelled Scarborough in December, 1914, some complaint was made that this watering-place was without adequate naval protection. The Admiralty of Mr. Churchill and Lord Fisher replied in an official *communiqué* in these terms:—

The Admiralty take the opportunity of pointing out that demonstrations of this character against unfortified towns or commercial ports, though not difficult to accom-

plish provided that a certain amount of risk is accepted, are devoid of military significance. They may cause some loss of life among the civil population and some damage to private property, which is much to be regretted; but they must not in any circumstances be allowed to modify the general naval policy which is being pursued.

The general naval policy of that period was indicated by the action in the Heligoland Bight of August 28, the constant bombardment of the Belgian coast ports in October, the air raid on Cuxhaven in December, 1914, and the cruiser action off the Dogger Bank in the following January in which the *Blücher* was



[Bassano.]

**SIR ERIC GEDDES, K.C.B.**

Appointed Inspector-General of Transport in all Theatres of War, March, 1917—Vice-Admiral and Controller of the Navy, May, 1917—First Lord of the Admiralty, July, 1917.

destroyed. With these operations may be coupled the decisive battle off the Falklands about the same time, all of them significant of an offensive-defensive strategy, as a reply to the sallying tactics of the enemy. When, however, in April 1916 England's home coast was again attacked, and an appeal was again made for local defence, the reply of the Admiralty was of a different character. In a letter to the Mayors of Lowestoft and Yarmouth, Mr. Balfour, after pointing out that from a naval and military point of view the German bom-

bardment of open towns had been singularly futile, added:—

It is not an experiment which (so far as we can judge) they would be well advised to repeat. This would be true even if the distribution of our naval forces on the East Coast was undergoing no alteration. In the earlier stages of the war considerations of strategy required us to keep our battle fleets in more northern waters. Thus situated they could concentrate effectively against any prolonged operation such as those involved in an attempt at invasion, but not against brief dashes effected under cover of the night. But with the progress of the war our maritime position has improved. Submarines and monitors, which form no portion of the Grand Fleet, are now available in growing numbers for coast defence, and, what is even more important, the increase in the strength of the Grand Fleet itself enables us to bring important forces to the south without in the least imperilling our naval preponderance elsewhere. It would be unfitting to go into further details, but I have, I hope, sufficiently stated the reasons for my conviction that another raid on the coast of Norfolk (never a safe operation) will be henceforth far more perilous to the aggressors than it has been in the past, and if our enemy be wise is therefore less likely.

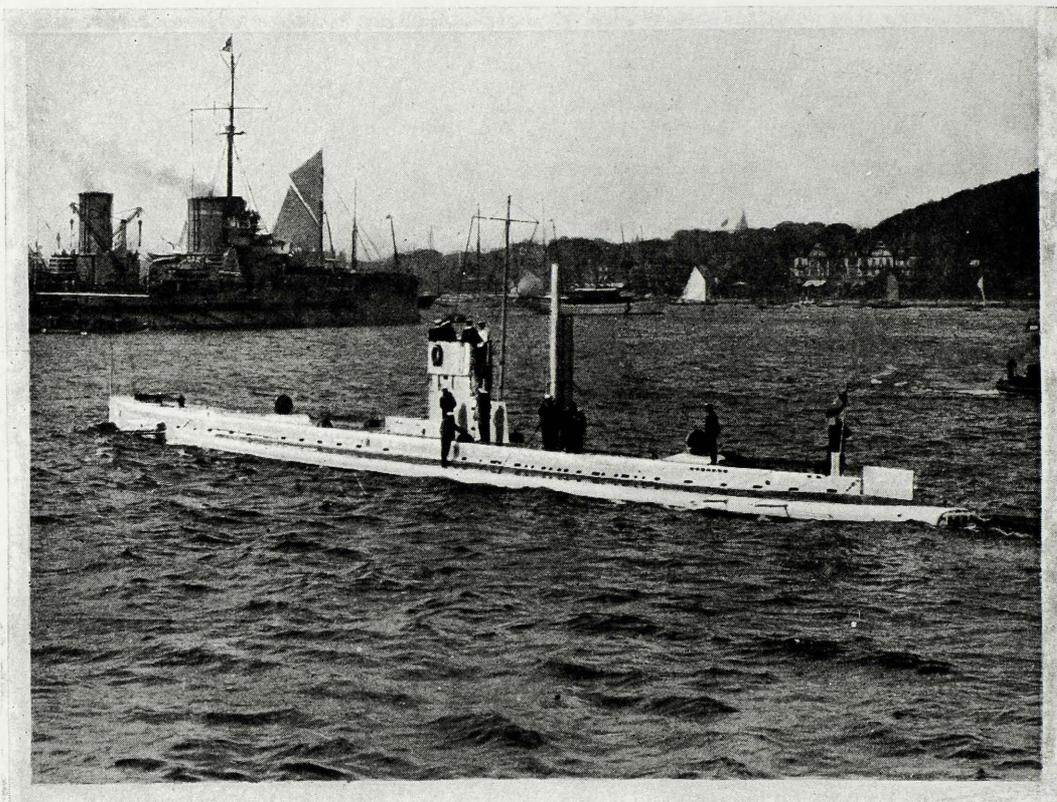
Here there was suggested a change of policy, and a decision, in response to public agitation, to resort to measures of local coast defence in substitution for the methods of offence which had proved effective at an earlier period, and which had the sanction and support of centuries of naval experience. It was within a few weeks of this letter being written that the Battle of Jutland occurred, in appearance a chance collision of the British and German forces, but possibly brought about by an attempt on the part of the enemy to test the strength or the weakness of that division of the Grand Fleet adumbrated by Mr. Balfour. There followed the raiding tactics and desultory coast warfare to which reference has already been made, and which is more fully described later. The naval policy of the Government and the administration at the Admiralty were challenged in the Press, and more aggressive action by its naval forces demanded by the country. As a result of this agitation, combined with other matters, important changes in the composition of the Board were made, having for their object reforms in the constructive policy of the Admiralty and the initiation of more vigorous measures at sea. Simultaneously, a new Government came into office.

As will be shown later, the preparations begun at this time could not, and did not, have effect for some months, but Sir John Jellicoe, who had been recalled from the command of the Grand Fleet to take the post of First Sea Lord, made it clear in an interview with an American journalist on April 12, 1917, that he

and the Board which he represented were in favour of the traditional policy of an offensive-defensive, and were determined to put it into practice as soon as the means were available. "In conclusion," he said, "I cannot do better than quote from your great author, Captain Mahan, in his volume, 'The Interest of American Sea Power, Present and Future.' He wrote :

To Great Britain and the United States, if they rightly estimate the part they may play in the great drama of human progress, is intrusted a maritime interest in the broadest sense of the word, which demands

done in this matter was fully explained by Sir Eric Geddes, for whom the office of Controller was revived in the first place, and who afterwards succeeded Sir Edward Carson as First Lord of the Admiralty. Of Sir Eric Geddes it may be said that he had won distinction as an organizer of the output of material. He gained experience in railway management in America, and afterwards became Deputy General Manager of the North-Eastern Railway Company. At the beginning of the war his services were rendered in connection with the organisation



KIEL HARBOUR IN 1914.

In the foreground a German Submarine of that period.

as one of the conditions of its exercise and its safety the organization of a force adequate to control the general course of events, to maintain if the necessity arise, not arbitrarily, but as those in whom interest and power alike justify the claim to do so, the laws that shall regulate maritime warfare.

"And again :

War, once declared, must be waged offensively, aggressively. The enemy must not be fended off, but smitten down. You may then spare him every exaction, relinquish every gain, but till down he must be struck incessantly and remorselessly."

During 1917 further changes were made in the composition of the Board of Admiralty, with a view to the division and better co-ordination of the branches of strategy (operations) and supply (maintenance). What was

of the supply of munitions, and then his energy and driving power were directed to the reform of the military transport system. He became Director-General of Military Railways, and afterwards Director-General of Transportation. His appointment in May as Controller of the Navy was a great tribute to his efficient work as an administrator, and his reputation in this connexion, combined with his business capacity, were doubtless the qualifications which weighed in his selection as the civilian head of the Navy. The substitution of officers fresh from the Fleet and with war experience, as well as younger men for the new Admiralty *personnel*,

was a marked feature of these changes. The distribution of work among the members of the Board was thus described by the First Lord in an address to the House of Commons in November:—

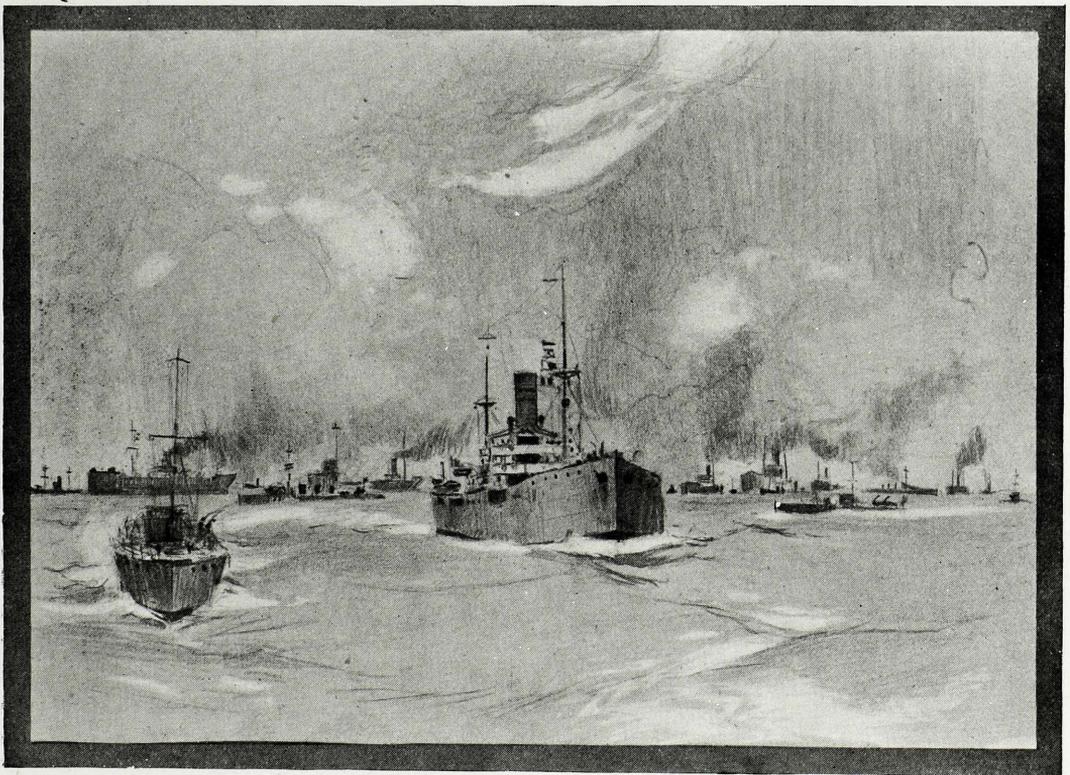
The members of the Board, in addition to dealing individually with work allotted to them under the table of distribution of business in the Admiralty, have been grouped into two formal Committees—namely, the Operations Committee and the Maintenance Committee, each of which meets once a week, or more often where necessary.

The First Lord is the *ex officio* chairman, and personally I make a point of presiding over them as often as is possible. The Operations Committee consists of myself, as *ex officio* chairman, the First Sea Lord, the Deputy First Sea Lord, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, and the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, with the Fifth Sea Lord attending when necessary. This Committee deals with large questions of naval strategy, with operational plans, and with the scale of provision and equipment of the Navy, as a fighting force, and with its efficiency, organization, and utilization. The other Committee, the Maintenance Committee, consists of the six members of the Board concerned with personnel, material, supplies, works, production, and finance. It deals with questions affecting these matters, and with the fulfilment of the demands of the Operations Committee and Naval Staff. The Deputy First Sea Lord, representing the Operations Committee, and the Fifth Sea Lord, attending when necessary, form the link between the operations side of the Board and the maintenance side of the Board. The Board itself also meets once a week, or more often if necessary. Matters coming within the administrative spheres of the different members of the Board are, if they fall within certain definite categories of importance, referred for

consideration to the appropriate Committee of the Board, which either arrives at a definite conclusion or refers the matter for decision or confirmation to a full meeting of the Board, as the nature of the subject may require. This is generally the change or development of the organization that has taken place in the Board of Admiralty and in its procedure.

The favourable view of the nation on these appointments and changes, and the more vigorous policy they denoted, was reflected in the speeches of public men and in the Press.

Towards the end of 1916 the growing seriousness of the submarine menace became a matter of national anxiety. The alleged dilatoriness of Ministers in their preparations for dealing with this matter was a factor of influence when a change of Government took place in December. There was a public demand for the immediate arming of all merchant ships and for more energetic measures against the underwater boats and the lairs from which they issued on the Belgian coast. Towards the end of February the Prime Minister stated his belief, in view of the shipping losses, that “the ultimate success of the Allied cause depends, in my judgment, on our solving the tonnage difficulties with which we are confronted.” Mr. Lloyd George further stated that very drastic methods were necessary for dealing with the submarine peril, and that, if



GENERAL VIEW OF A CONVOY.

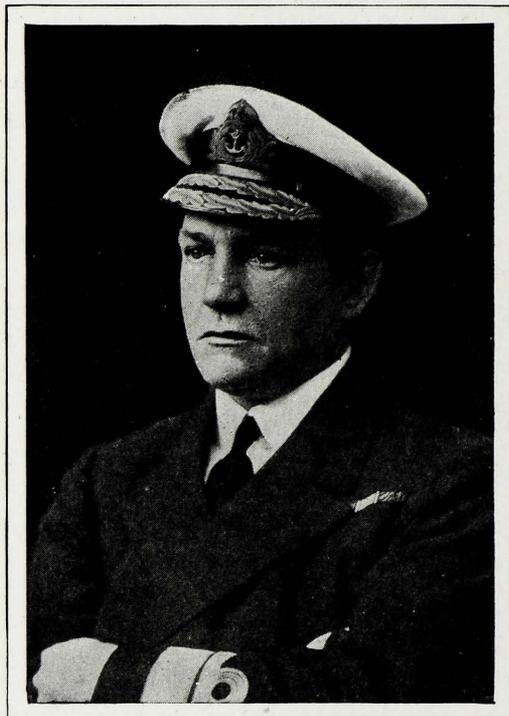
the nation was not prepared to accept them, "there was disaster in front of us." He outlined these measures as follows:—

(1) Measures to be adopted by the Navy to grapple with the menace.

(2) The building of merchant ships wherever we can get them.

(3) To limit our needs from oversea transport by dispensing with all non-essential commodities which are brought from overseas, and by producing as much of the essentials of life as we can at home.

The intensive submarine campaign threatened by the German Chancellor at the end of January was at this time in full swing, both with underwater craft using torpedoes and mines and guns on the surface. Never was a more ruthless campaign against innocent traders and non-combatants attempted since the days when the pirates waged war indiscriminately upon all who sailed the seas. The cowardly and brutal treatment of merchant seamen and seafarers of both sexes has been described in a previous chapter,\* and details of the attacks made on hospital ships are given later on. The campaign was carried to its greatest height in April, when the heaviest loss in British tonnage occurred, and the Merchant Marine of the Allies and neutrals suffered in proportion. The campaign was waged with an utter disregard of restraint or respect for international law (which the Kaiser said no longer existed) and the precepts of humanity. A little later new methods of meeting the menace began to take effect, and Mr. Lloyd George was able to announce in the House of Commons that the figures for the month of May were a considerable improvement on the anticipations of the Admiralty. The First Sea Lord stated that the increasing armament of the Mercantile Marine had made the submarines more cautious, and a larger proportion of attacks were made by the boats in a submerged condition. This had an advantage, as the submarines were dependent upon their torpedoes for such attacks, and, being only able to carry a limited number, had to return more often to their ports for a supply. In a speech made on August 16 the Prime Minister was able to say that the Government had come to the conclusion that, with the exercise of reasonable economy, there was no chance of the Germans succeeding in starving out the population of the British Islands. The definite promise given to the German public, that by the month of August the submarine campaign would have effected such ravages on



*(Russell.)*

COMMODORE GODFREY M. PAINE, C.B.,  
M.V.O.,  
Fifth Sea Lord.

the Mercantile Marine that England would be forced to abandon the war, could not be fulfilled. Mr. Lloyd George added that owing to the means which had been devised for dealing with the situation the losses, which were in April 550,000 tons, in July had come down to 320,000 tons, and, if the August figures continued at the same ratio, the net losses during the months of July and August would be at the rate of 175,000 tons a month. In October there was a further increase in the number of ships sunk, but by the following month the First Lord was able to state that the measures taken by the Admiralty had considerably lessened the gravity of the situation. The arming of merchantmen, the introduction of the convoy system, measures taken to replace lost tonnage, and the more stringent use of the blockade were all matters which had their effect in curbing the enemy's activity and assisting in the prosecution of the sea war.

As a result of the extension of the submarine campaign and the continued and notorious infraction of every agreement, promise, and pledge the United States declared war on Germany, and many other nations hitherto neutral followed their example. Before the end of 1917 17 countries had taken up arms against Germany and nine others had severed relations

\* Vol. XIII., Chapter CXCIV.

with that country. The American Navy, and to a larger extent than before the Japanese Navy, provided contingents to the naval forces of the Allies in European waters to assist in meeting the submarine menace. Owing to the large number of merchant vessels taken up for naval and military purposes, the proportion of tonnage engaged in carrying food products and other necessaries to the British Islands and to the Allied countries was small, and it sustained further diminution from the action of submarines and mines. Owing to the reduction of imports due to these causes, it became necessary to take precautionary measures for economising many of the essentials of life.

Generally, the work of the Allied Fleets was devoid of large dramatic incident, and was principally confined to affording protection to the ships of the Mercantile Marine engaged in the conveyance of reinforcements of troops and supplies to the various armies and for carrying out the business of trade and commerce. At the same time, the entry of the United States into the war enabled the blockade of Germany to be enforced with greater stringency and with a corresponding influence upon her economic condition. She was made to feel to a wider extent than before the deprivation of many articles and commodities necessary for the prosecution of her military aims. The position towards the end of the year 1917 was admirably summed up by General Smuts in a speech made to the Association of the Chambers of Commerce in October :—

More and more the real inwardness of the war situation is being appreciated in Germany. The German rulers are trying to still the fear of the people with vain hopes that the submarine weapon will beat us yet, and that we will be forced to make a German peace. All their hopes now centre in the submarine, but these hopes are destined to be illusory. Whatever the dangers of the submarine, it has ceased to be a decisive factor. The submarine has been beaten by the silent heroism of our Navy and our Mercantile Marine. Deeds have been done on the sea so astounding that details cannot be published until the end of the war. In the general critical temper of our times less than justice has been done to this aspect of our naval effort, but I feel sure that the future will appraise it at its true value.

The period covered by the present chapter is from November, 1916, to December, 1917, and the change in the higher naval policy of the country which occurred during this period cannot better be illustrated than by recalling the circumstances which obtained at the earlier of these dates. On November 1, 1916, Mr. Balfour was still First Lord and Admiral Sir Henry Jackson First Sea Lord. With one

exception the Board was composed of members who had not seen active service at sea since the outbreak of war. Public opinion was at the time much stirred in regard to the apparent indecision or inability to make the most use offensively of the power of the Navy, in order to curb the activity of the enemy, such as had been shown by the raid on the Channel transport traffic on October 26, 1916.\*

In replying for the Navy at the Lord Mayor's Banquet on November 9, 1916, Mr. Balfour referred at some length to this raid in the Channel, in which the enemy sank several patrol boats and a destroyer and got away practically unmolested. He explained how, on a night of pitch darkness, no moon, clouds and storm, a few fast torpedo vessels were able to enter the Channel and get as far west as Folkestone, returning without having done any permanent damage to our lines of communication. The great stream of men and munitions which went ceaselessly from England to France was not disturbed. While he did not say that such a raid could not be repeated, Mr. Balfour did suggest that it would not be repeated, because it was not worth the enemy's while to run the risks involved, and he expressed the confident hope that if German destroyers again entered the Channel they would not be able to get out of it again without heavy disaster.

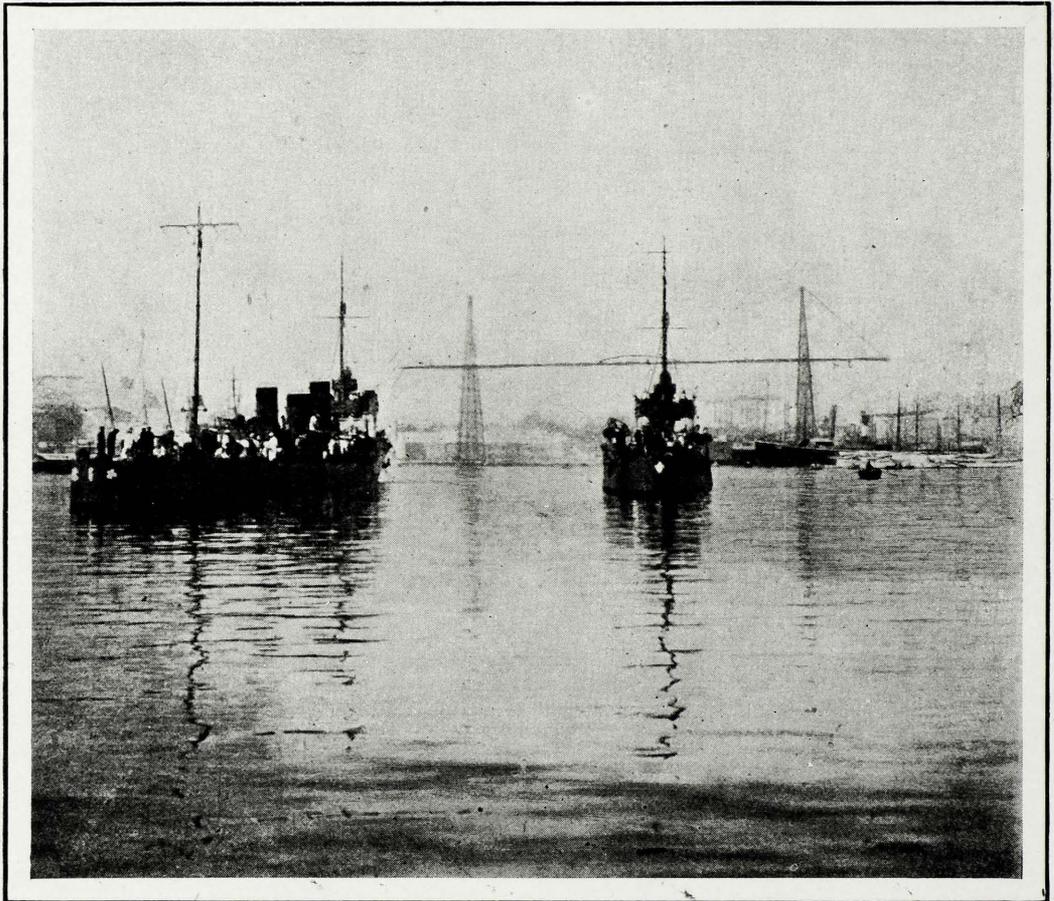
The Germans, however, soon afterwards made two raids into English waters in a week. On November 23 they sent six destroyers to raid the north end of the Downs. The boats attacked a patrol vessel, and claimed to have shelled Ramsgate, which was denied. All of them returned safely to their base. On November 26 German small craft raided the waters off the Norfolk coast and sank the armed trawler *Narval*, which was on patrol, capturing her crew.

It was apparently in response to the general criticism already referred to that the Board of Admiralty was, at the end of November, strengthened by the infusion of younger men fresh from sea service, men who had distinguished themselves in the war and knew what was necessary for the war. The appointment was announced on November 29 of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe to be First Sea Lord, and of Admiral Sir David Beatty to succeed him as Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet. Sir

\* Vol. X., page 55.

John Jellicoe brought with him to the Admiralty from the Grand Fleet Admiral Sir Cecil Burney as Second Sea Lord and Commodore Lionel Halsey as Fourth Sea Lord, as well as many other officers. Before the announcement of these changes had been made known to the public Mr. Asquith's Government went out of office, and in the new Ministry formed by Mr. Lloyd George the post of First Lord of the Admiralty was accepted by Sir Edward

and the rest scattered, having suffered considerable punishment. Meantime there was another encounter off the Schouwen Bank between British and German destroyers, in which one of the former was struck by a torpedo, and so severely damaged that she had to be sunk by our own ships. The severity of the conditions under which this action was fought was shown by the arrival at Ymuiden of the German destroyer "V.69," flagship of the



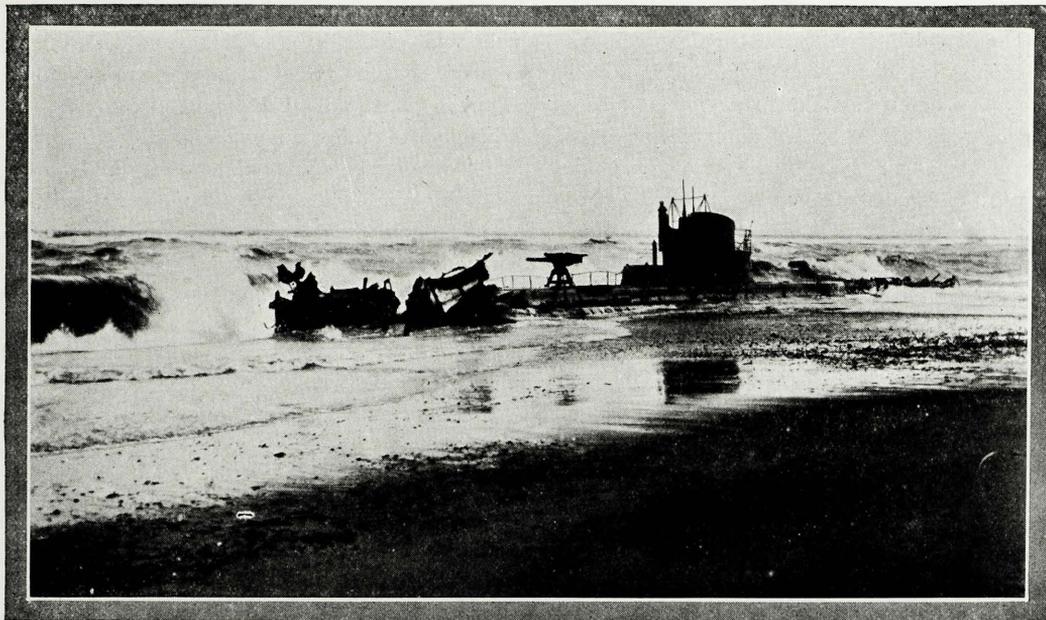
JAPANESE DESTROYERS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

Carson. The new patent was published in the *London Gazette* of December 15, 1916. The outstanding feature claimed for the new Government was its greater vigour and energy, and the speeding up was reflected in the administration at the Admiralty.

On January 22, 1917, a timely check was inflicted upon the German flotillas at Zeebrugge by two short and sharp actions off the Dutch coast, fought in very severe weather. British light forces met an enemy destroyer division whilst on patrol, and in the engagement which followed one of the German boats was sunk

flotilla. The boat limped into the Dutch port in a terrible condition, with eight members of her crew who had been killed frozen hard to the deck. Her commanding officer, Lieut.-Commander Boehm, was reported to be uninjured, but the commander of the flotilla, Corvette-Captain Schultz, was killed early in the engagement with other officers, by a shell which wrecked the bridge of the "V.69." The boat was repaired and returned to a German port on February 11, 1917.\*

\* See Vol. XIV., p. 198.



#### GERMAN SUBMARINE WRECKED ON THE COAST OF JUTLAND.

This check off the Dutch coast did not suffice to stop entirely the German raids into British waters. On the night of January 25, 1917, a small unidentified German vessel approached the Suffolk coast, and fired a number of shells, only a portion of which reached the land. There were no casualties, and only insignificant damage was caused. The night was very dark, and the firing opened with a star-shell, which lit up the coast, but most of the shells which followed fell into fields, and the bombardment was all over in less than five minutes. According to the German account of this little affair, their light forces "penetrated to English coast waters south of Lowestoft in order to attack hostile patrol vessels and outpost ships previously reported there. In the entire sea region which was searched nothing of the enemy was seen. Thereupon the fortified place of Southwold was illuminated from a short distance by star-shells. Our torpedo boats then opened fire, and direct hits were observed."

A more ambitious raid, by two divisions of enemy destroyers, was carried out on the night of February 25. The destroyers approached the Kentish coast at 11.15 p.m., and fired a number of shells at the unfortified towns of Broadstairs and Margate, the bombardment lasting for about ten minutes. The material damage caused was slight, but three people were killed in an old-fashioned cottage between Broadstairs and Margate which was destroyed by the firing. The hostile forces were reported

by a British destroyer on patrol duty in the Channel, and a short engagement ensued, in which the British vessel was not damaged, although under heavy fire from guns and torpedoes. The enemy vessels were pursued, but were lost in the darkness. In the German account it was mentioned that the destroyers were commanded by Commander Tillessen and Commander Konrad Albrecht.

In the next of these "tip-and-run" raids, also carried out by two groups of destroyers, the town of Ramsgate was subjected to a slight attack. Very early in the morning of March 18 some enemy destroyers approached the Kentish coast and fired a number of shells, but there were no casualties and the material damage was slight, one occupied and two empty houses only being hit, according to the British official report. These Ramsgate raiders retired hurriedly before the local British forces, and escaped in the darkness, so that it was not possible to ascertain the damage inflicted on them. At almost the same time, however, enemy destroyers engaged one of the British destroyers on patrol, to the westward of the Straits of Dover, sinking her with a torpedo. She returned the fire, using torpedoes and guns, but the result was not known. From the crew there were eight survivors, but all the officers were drowned. A second British destroyer was torpedoed, but not seriously damaged, whilst picking up the survivors from the first. During this same night a British

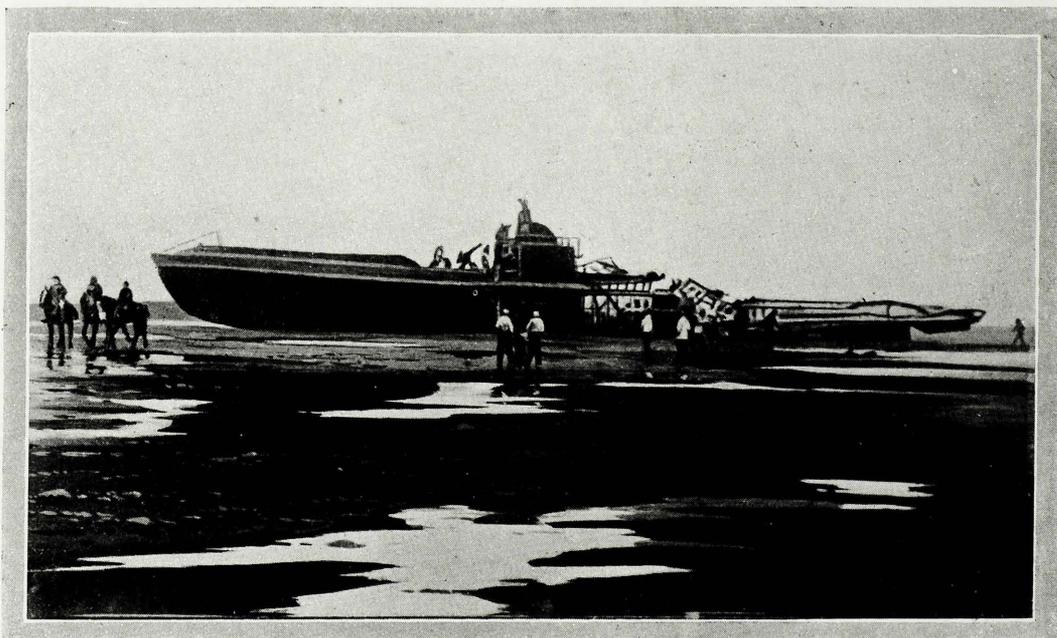
merchant vessel in the northern part of the Downs was sunk by a torpedo from what the Germans called their "northern attacking group" of destroyers.

Dunkirk was the next object of attack by the German raiders, some sixty shells being fired into the French town by torpedo boats about 2 a.m. on the morning of March 26, 1917. Similarly, during the night of March 28-29, there was a foray off Lowestoft, although on this occasion the enemy did not bombard the town itself. According to the Admiralty *communiqué*, "some firing was observed some miles off shore from Lowestoft. Our patrols were sent to the scene at utmost speed, but nothing was seen of the enemy, who had made off." The Germans claimed to have sunk by gunfire the armed English steamer *Mascotte*, and to have taken seven men of her crew prisoners. This vessel was a patrol trawler—a class of vessel the crews of which suffered much and endured much during the guerilla warfare which was practised with ever-increasing boldness about the time under review.

The frequent raids upon the coast of Thanet were naturally somewhat disturbing to the inhabitants of that part of Kent, and in the first week of April, 1917, a deputation from the towns in this locality waited upon Sir Edward Carson and Sir John Jellicoe at the Admiralty, the party including the Mayors of Margate and Ramsgate and the Chairman of the Council of

Broadstairs. Sir Edward Carson assured them that, in spite of alarmist rumours, the position was not more serious than it had been since the beginning of the War. The First Lord added that he had no intention of removing his grandson from the school he attended in Thanet, and he hoped himself, as in the past, to spend occasional week-ends there.

From about the middle of April a new phase in the raiding warfare was entered upon. A decided check was put upon the German enterprises, and the British counter-measures partook more of an offensive character than previously. Not that the Navy had remained content to leave all the offensive strokes to the Germans before this. On the contrary, the Royal Naval Air Service had kept up from the beginning of the winter a constant succession of bombing raids upon the Belgian coast strongholds from which the hostile craft emanated. These attacks, however, were evidently found to have only a limited value. On January 8, for instance, the *Echo Belge* stated that a great number of submarines and torpedo boats were then in the port at Zeebrugge, which had not suffered much from the bombardments. The harbour works were practically intact. This place differed from Ostend, in that it was merely the port of Bruges, and so long as that arsenal was able to turn out and to shelter war craft the latter could always fly back there for safety whatever happened to the port itself.

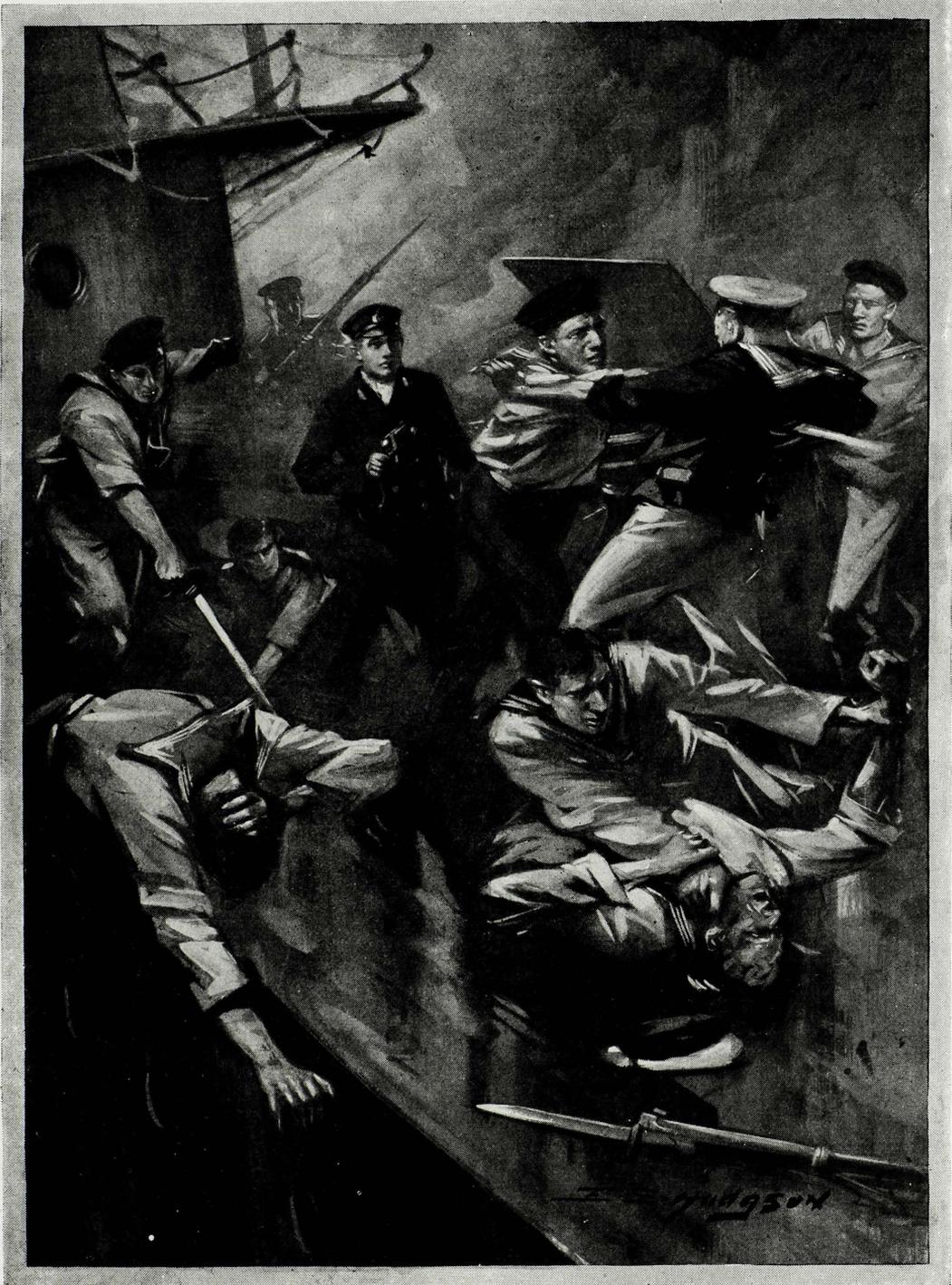


GERMAN MINE-LAYING SUBMARINE WRECKED NEAR CALAIS.

All the same, R.N.A.S. machines made frequent assaults upon Bruges, as upon Zeebrugge and Ostend, during the first three months of 1917.

In April, however, as has been said, more aggressive methods seemed to come into operation. On the night of April 7, in conjunction with seaplane attacks on the Mole at Zeebrugge and on ammunition dumps near

Ghent and Bruges, it was officially announced that "other operations were carried out off Zeebrugge during the same night, as the result of which two enemy destroyers were torpedoed. One of these was seen to sink; the fate of the second is not certain, but she was very severely damaged." In this attack the British sustained no casualties, but the Germans



THE HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT ON BOARD THE "BROKE."

admitted the loss of their torpedo boat G88. A fortnight later the country was thrilled by a spirited encounter in the Dover Straits, in which the Germans lost two more torpedo boats, G85 and G42. On the night of April 20 about five German destroyers attempted a raid on Dover, the Vice-Admiral at which base reported that

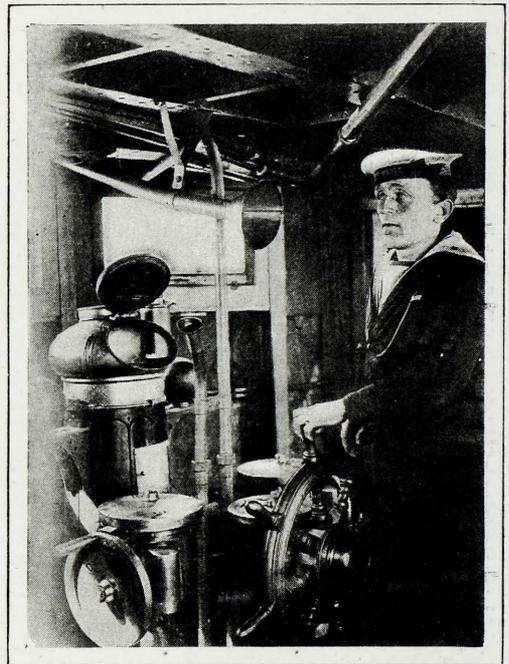


THE NEW BELL OF THE "BROKE."  
Cast from the lid of a Torpedo Tube of G42.

the attack resulted in the enemy firing a number of rounds into a ploughed field a few miles distant from the town. The enemy then apparently steered in the direction of some of our shipping, possibly with the intention of attacking, but was met by two vessels of the Dover patrol. In five minutes these two vessels, the Broke and the Swift, commanded respectively by Commander E. R. G. R. Evans, R.N., of Antarctic fame, and Commander A. M. Peck, R.N., engaged and sank at least two, and possibly three, of the five or six enemy boats, the remainder making off at a high speed during the short engagement, and escaping in the darkness. The British Admiralty report commended the conduct of those concerned in this affair as follows: "Our vessels suffered no material damage, and our casualties were exceedingly slight in comparison with the results obtained. Our patrol vessels were handled with remarkable gallantry and dash, and the tactics pursued were a very fine example of destroyer work. We were fortunate in being able to save the lives of ten German officers and 108 men from the vessels which were sunk." Telegraphing on April 27 to the Vice-Admiral at Dover, his Majesty the King commanded that his hearty congratulations should be conveyed to the commanders,

officers, and men of the Swift and Broke "on the skill, dash, and bravery displayed on the night of April 20-21 off Dover." During this encounter one of the enemy destroyers was rammed by the Broke, and while the two boats were thus locked together a desperate hand-to-hand conflict, in quite the style of the olden days, took place. With fine spirit, the men of the Broke, headed by Midshipman Donald A. Gyles, R.N.R., cleared their decks of the Germans who managed to scramble on board.

The skill and gallantry of the officers and men engaged in this affair were recognised in a *Gazette* dated May 10, 1917. Commanders Peck and Evans were promoted and awarded the D.S.O., Engineer-Lieutenant-Commanders Hughes and Coomber were also promoted. The



*Official photograph.*

THE STEERSMAN OF THE "BROKE."  
W. G. Rawles, C.G.M., who remained at the Wheel throughout the action, although wounded.

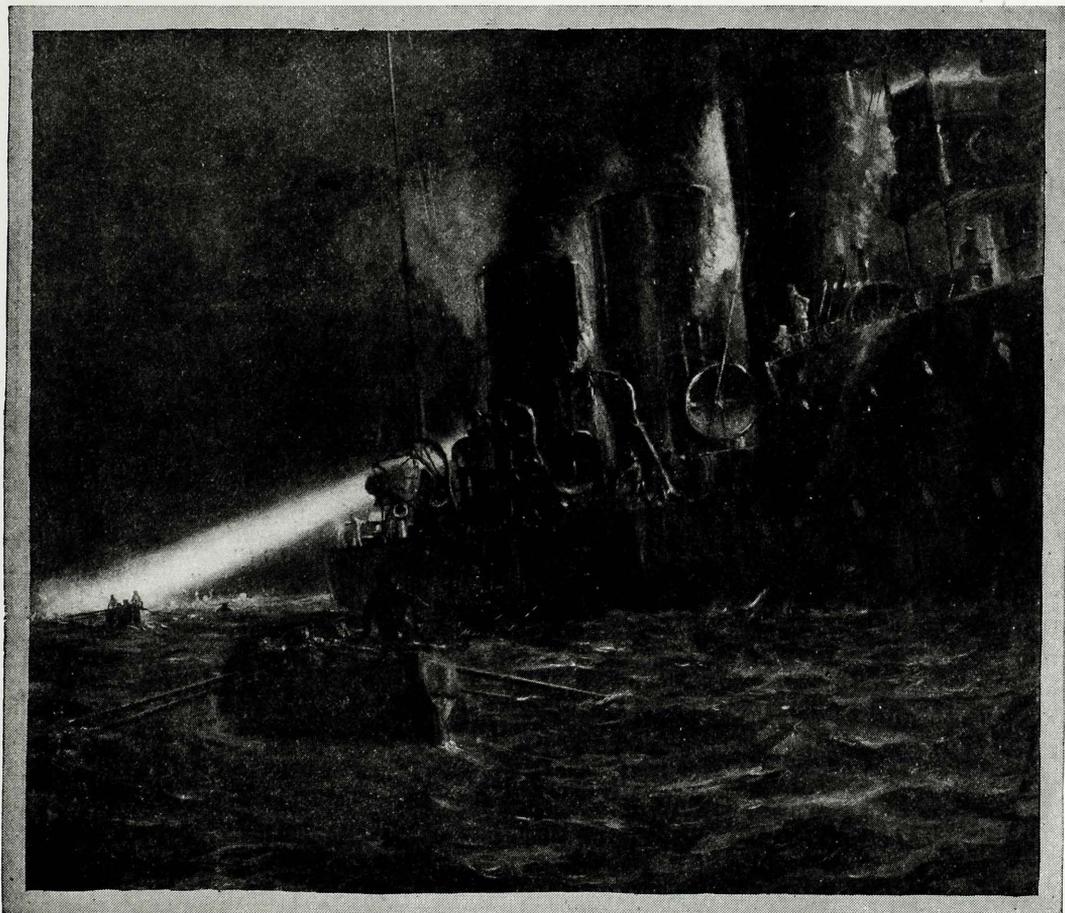
following officers were awarded the D.S.C.: Lieutenants G. V. Hickman, navigator and second in command of H.M.S. Broke; R. D. King-Harman, navigator of H.M.S. Swift; M. C. Despard, first and gunnery lieutenant of H.M.S. Broke; H. A. Simpson, executive officer and gunnery lieutenant of the Swift; the two Probationary-Surgeons C. T. Helsham, R.N.V.R., of the Broke, and J. S. Westwater, R.N.V.R., of the Swift; the two gunners H. Turner and F. Grinney, and Midshipman

Gyles of the *Broke*. The only award of the C.G.M. was to able-seaman William George Rawles, who continued to steer H.M.S. *Broke* although wounded badly in the legs in four places. There were other awards of the D.S.M., and also many officers and men were mentioned in dispatches or noted for early promotion.

After the *Swift* and *Broke* affray, coupled with more frequent and effective air attacks on the enemy's bases, there was a considerable diminution in the raids by enemy destroyers. The German boats were prevented from coming within striking distance of the British or French coasts. A few shells fired into Dunkirk early on the morning of April 24, by some torpedo boats under Captain Assmann, and the destruction of about 20 houses in Ramsgate on the night of April 26-27, were among the last attempts of the Germans to carry out raids in the Narrows. In the former a French torpedo boat was sunk, and in the latter, although most of the shells fell in the open country, two people were killed and three

injured. But with the advent of May the Allied forces had clearly asserted their mastery. On May 10 light cruisers and destroyers from Harwich under Commodore Sir R. Tyrwhitt sighted a force of 11 German destroyers at about 4 a.m. between the English and Dutch coasts, heading southward. The British forces immediately closed, but on their opening fire the enemy made off at full speed under cover of a dense smoke screen, and although shelled for an hour and twenty minutes at long range it was not possible to overtake them. Four destroyers chased the 11 German destroyers to within range of the guns of Zeebrugge. Again, on the night of May 19-20 a patrol of four French torpedo boats met off Dunkirk a flotilla of German destroyers making for that port, but after a short engagement the Germans withdrew at full speed.

Following up these successful operations, others of a still more successful nature were undertaken on June 5. Early on that morning the enemy's naval base and workshops at Ostend were heavily bombarded by units of



THE "SWIFT" PICKING UP SURVIVORS OF G42 SUNK BY THE "BROKE."



COMMANDER EVANS of the "BROKE"  
(left) and COMMANDER PECK of the  
"SWIFT."

Photographed at the Investiture in Hyde Park,  
when each received the D.S.O.

the Dover patrol, a large number of rounds being fired with good results. (On the 6th it was officially reported that photographic reconnaissance over Ostend showed that the bombardment had seriously damaged or totally destroyed the majority of the workshops in the dockyard.) While this operation was in progress, another force from the Harwich flotillas was patrolling off the Belgian coast, evidently with the object of bringing to action any of the German vessels which might be driven out to sea by the bombardment. This force under Commodore Sir R. Tyrwhitt sighted six destroyers, and engaged them at long range.

In the running fight one of the enemy boats, S20, was sunk by the British gunfire and another severely damaged. Seven survivors from S20 were picked up and made prisoners, and there were no British casualties.

The effect of the attacks on June 5, and of others made from the air, was that not only were several vessels sunk at Ostend but that the entrance gates to the dockyard basin, the wharf, the submarine shelter, and a destroyer under repair were badly damaged. On June 10 the Admiralty reported that, according to a message from the Vice-Admiral at Dover, the latest reconnaissance of Ostend showed that all large shipping had been removed from that harbour. The harbour presented a deserted



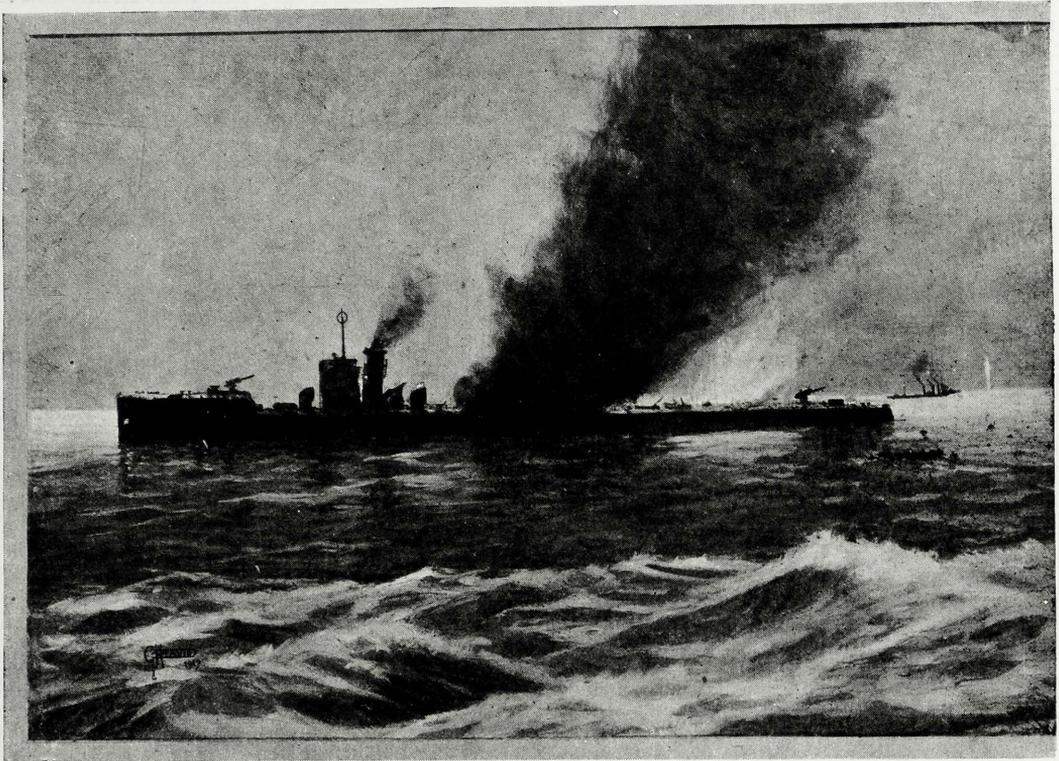
MIDSHIPMAN GYLES of the "BROKE"  
Who headed the fight against the boarding party.

appearance, it was added, and the two destroyers which had lately been reported as being towed to Zeebrugge were probably those damaged during the bombardment which had been removed from the basin.

Referring to these raids on unfortified towns and to the fighting in the Narrows, Sir J. Jellicoe said:—

We deplore the loss of life among non-combatants; but, after all, we are engaged in a war whereon the freedom of the world depends, and we cannot deflect our strategy from its main purpose. That is what the Germans hoped to effect, and they have failed. At the same time, perhaps, I may add that since the exploit of the Swift and Broke the enemy has attempted no raid on the British coast.

This leads me to say a few words as to the destroyer and submarine bases on the Belgian coast which are in the occupation of the Germans. One is Ostend, the other is Zeebrugge. The Germans have applied to this length of sand-fringed coast the same principle of fortification adopted higher up on the North Sea and the Island of Heligoland. The coast line is



THE DESTROYER ACTION OFF ZEEBRUGGE, JUNE 5, 1917:

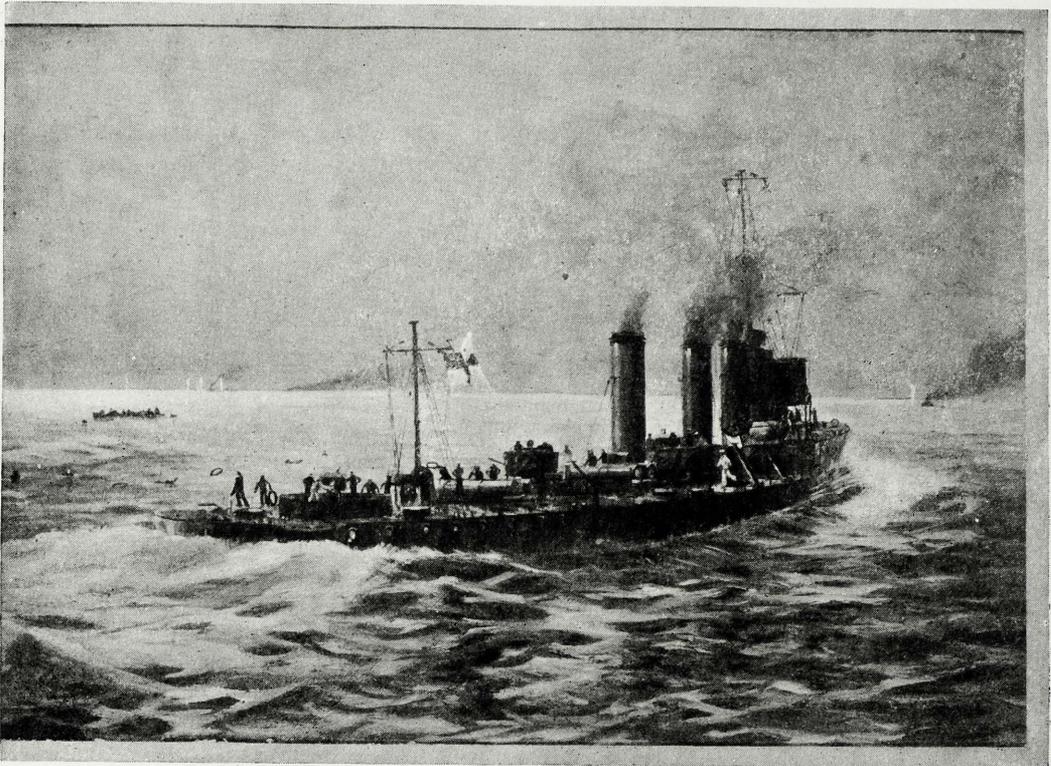
studded with heavy guns, which in themselves constitute infinitesimal targets at a range of more than 20,000 yards on which any bombardment could be carried out. Moreover, the enemy has not been slow to make the fullest use of aircraft and smoke screens by way of protection.

Ostend offers the best target, but it can only be attacked at rare intervals, when a favourable combination of wind, weather and sea conditions can be attained. Zeebrugge, in the real sense of the word, is not a naval base, but merely an exit from the inland port of Bruges, with which it is connected by a wide deep-water canal. There is little to hit at Zeebrugge. Still, I hope that the problem which the Belgian coast presents is not insoluble.

During the period under review the intensified submarine war waged by the enemy overshadowed events at sea. Towards the end of 1916, in addition to the dissatisfaction aroused in the country by the constant raids by torpedo craft on the east and south-east coasts, there was a feeling that the submarine menace was not being grappled with as it had been in the autumn of the previous year (1915), when Lord Selborne was able to say on behalf of the Cabinet that it was "well in hand." The sinking of merchant ships increased and the proportion of lost tonnage relatively to the amount available for the trade of the British Isles increased in even greater ratio. With something of a shock, the country learnt from Mr. Prothero, the new Minister for Agri-

culture (speaking in the House of Commons on December 20, 1916), that in his opinion "we ought to realize, and the War Office ought to realize, and the whole country ought to realize, that we are a beleaguered city." About three weeks afterwards, in the first public speech he made after giving up the command of the Grand Fleet, Sir John Jellicoe stated at the Fishmongers' Hall that "the submarine menace to the Merchant Service is far greater now than at any period of the war, and it requires all our energy to combat it." So much for the gravity of the problem. That its development had not been anticipated and provided against in adequate measure was made clear by Captain Bathurst, speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Food, in the House of Commons on March 23, 1917, when he said that "the food position and the food outlook are not wholly satisfactory, but it would be much easier to cope with the difficulties of this food stringency, which was likely to develop, had it been foreseen at an earlier period of the war and more far-reaching steps taken to grapple with it."

This, of course, was some few weeks after the official opening of the unrestricted submarine war, of which the Germans had given notice on January 31, 1917. But as early as November, 1916, there was much uneasiness



[After a Sketch by an Eyewitness.]

## BRITISH CREW THROWING LIFE-BELTS TO GERMAN SAILORS.

felt in regard to the matter. It was one of the causes of the disquiet which brought about changes at the Admiralty and the accession to office of Sir Edward Carson and Sir John Jellicoe. On November 30, 1916, *The Times* had said, in discussing elements of weakness in Admiralty administration, that "the departments responsible for strategy, intelligence, and supply notoriously call for immediate attention, for the whole *raison d'être* of the change is the public dissatisfaction with lack of initiative, ignorance of enemy movements, and ill-organized construction." On the following day, December 1, 1916, a meeting was held in the City, under the chairmanship of Lord Leith of Fyvie, which passed a resolution calling on the Government to exercise a more thorough blockade of Germany, and to take efficient steps for the protection of merchant shipping against enemy submarines.

Indications of what the Germans could do with their submarines of the newer types had been given by the journey of U53 to the United States in October, 1916, and there were also several reports from the Continent of feverish activity in submarine construction. Lord Milner, while in Petrograd on February 9, 1917, estimated the number of U-boats in use at that moment at about 200, and other esti-

mates were even higher. Into the motives underlying the fateful decision taken by Germany to wage a ruthless submarine war and risking all consequences it is unnecessary to enter here. The avowed intention was to starve England by U-boat warfare, but while they had to put forward this view in public, and brought on themselves a good deal of political trouble, it probably did not represent their real calculation, which was to damage the whole war machine of the Allies as much as possible.

It was on January 31, 1917, that Herr Zimmermann informed the American Ambassador at Berlin that wide zones around Great Britain, France, and Italy, as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean, were to be considered blockaded areas, in which, without any further notice or warning, all sea traffic would be prevented by all available weapons as from the following day (February 1). The following were the salient points of the German Note, which was ostensibly issued in reply to the message of the President of the United States on January 22 on the subject of peace, and of a Memorandum appended to the Note:

The freedom of the seas as a preliminary condition for the free existence and the peaceful intercourse of nations as well as the open door for trade were always the guiding principles of German policy.

The attempt of the four Allied Powers to bring about peace failed on account of the lust of conquest of our adversaries, who want to dictate peace.

Thus a new situation has sprung up, which also forces Germany to new decisions.

For the past two years and a half England has misused the power of her Navy in a criminal attempt to force Germany by hunger into subjection.

The Imperial Government before its own conscience and before history is unable to assume responsibility if any one means to hasten the end of the war be still untried. Together with the President of the United States they had hoped to attain this aim by negotiations.

The attempts to establish an understanding between the adversaries having been answered by an announcement of intensified warfare, the Imperial Government, if in a higher sense it wants to serve humanity and not sin against the friends of its own nation, must now continue the war for existence once more forced upon her by means of using all weapons. The Imperial Government is, therefore, also forced to do away with restrictions which up to now it has imposed upon the use of its fighting means at sea.

From February 11, 1917, within the barred zones

around Great Britain, France, Italy and in the Eastern Mediterranean, all sea traffic will forthwith be opposed by all means.

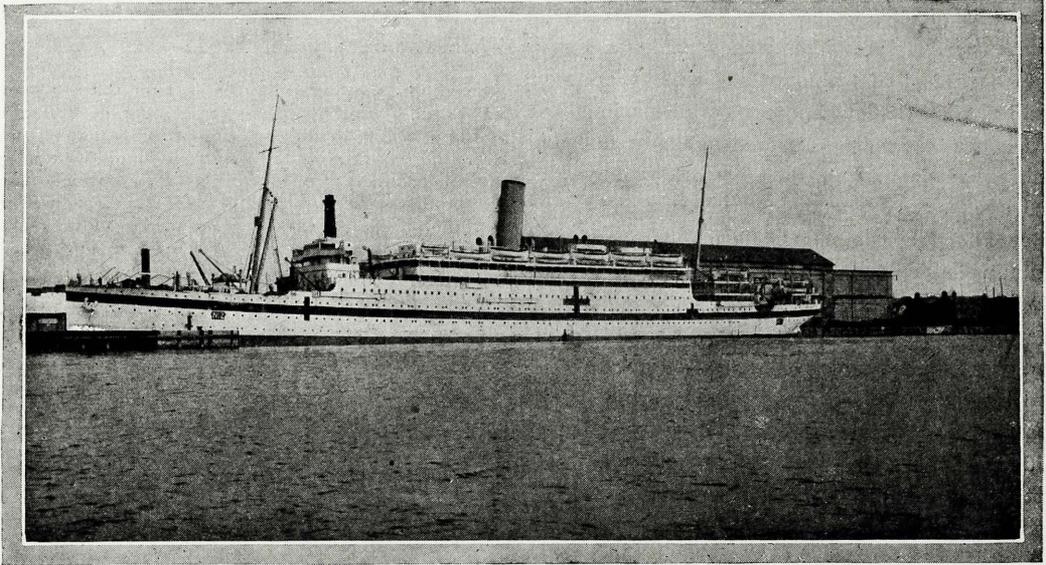
Neutral ships plying within the barred zones do so at their own risk.

Traffic of regular American passenger steamers may go on unmolested:

- (a) If Falmouth is taken as the port of destination.
- (b) If on the outward and return journeys the Scillies as well as a point 50 degrees north 20 degrees west are steered for. On this road (route) no German mines will be laid:
- (c) If steamers bear the following special signs which are allowed to them alone in American ports—viz., to be painted on the ship's hull and on the superstructure, three metres broad, vertical stripes alternating white and red. On every mast a large flag chequered white and red; on the stern the American national flag. During darkness the national flag and painted stripes to be easily recognizable as possible from far away and the ships to be completely and brightly illuminated.
- (d) If one steamer runs in each direction every week, arriving at Falmouth on Sundays, leaving Falmouth on Wednesdays.



THE AREA OF THE GERMAN "BARRED ZONES" OF FEBRUARY, 1917.



THE HOSPITAL SHIP "ASTURIAS," WHICH WAS SUNK WITHOUT WARNING.

(e) If guarantees are given by the American Government that these steamers carry no "contraband" according to the German list of "contraband."

\* \* \*

It is further stated that Germany is prepared, in view of the need for Continental passenger traffic, that every week-day a Dutch paddle steamer shall receive free and unobstructed right of passage in each direction between Flushing and Southwold, on condition that said paddle steamers only pass through the barred zones by daylight, and that they steer by the North Hinder Lightship both on the outward and homeward voyage. On this route no German mines will be laid. The marks on the ships making these voyages to be the same as those given regarding American passenger steamers.

\* \* \*

The Germans lost no time in putting their threats into execution. The Dutch steamship Gamma, the Danish steamer Lars Kruse (employed on Belgian relief work), the American steamer Housatonic, and other vessels fell victims during the first three days of the new campaign. As regards hospital ships, the Asturias was destroyed on the night of March 20-21, the Gloucester Castle on the night of March 30-31, and the Salta on April 10, 1917, among others. In the early days the newspapers of the country were allowed to give particulars of the sinkings of ships, and to tabulate lists, but a change of policy in this respect was introduced by Sir Edward Carson on February 28, 1917. He had stated in his speech in the House of Commons a week earlier that nothing could be worse than the inaccurate recording of submarine losses. Incomplete lists and accumulations of losses afforded no comparison with the actual volume of trade which was being done. From the week ending Sunday,

February 25, therefore, the Admiralty issued a weekly table showing the number of all vessels of over 100 tons using British ports, the number of British vessels sunk by mine or submarine, and also the number of British vessels attacked but not sunk. The form in which this weekly return was published was determined by the Government after consultation with the Allied Powers, who also adopted the plan and issued similar returns. The Admiralty considered that there were cogent naval reasons against publishing the tonnage figures, as thereby the enemy would obtain accurate information of considerable military value.

The official tables of losses were the subject of much criticism, especially in regard to the omission of the tonnage destroyed, but the system continued during the year. The high-water mark of the new campaign was reached in the week ending April 22, 1917, when 41 British vessels of over 1,600 tons were sunk by mines and submarines. In regard to the totals of losses, Mr. Lloyd George gave a number of figures in his speech on August 16, 1917. Later information on the important matter of the tonnage losses was given by Sir Eric Geddes in his first speech in Parliament as First Lord on November 1, 1917. He said that the Germans claimed to have destroyed 808,000 tons in August, but this was for all nationalities. In point of actual fact, they sank very little more than a third of that amount of British tonnage and a little more than half for all nationalities. For September their official

figures were 672,000 tons, a decrease on the previous month, but again they sank far less than a third of that amount of British tonnage and less than half that amount of all nationalities. The Germans explained the reduced sinkings on the ground that the world's tonnage had sunk so low that there were not enough ships to enable the submarine commanders to maintain their "bag," but in confuting this Sir Eric Geddes showed that during September the oversea sailings of all ships of 1,600 tons and over were higher by 20 per cent. in numbers and 30 per cent. in tonnage than in April, the heaviest month of sinkings. The First Lord added: "The net reduction in tonnage in the last four months is to-day 30 per cent. less than was anticipated in an estimate prepared by me for the Cabinet early in July." He also stated that during the past quarter the enemy had lost as many submarines as they lost during the whole of 1916, and since war began between 40 and 50 per cent. of the U-boats operating in the North Sea, Atlantic, and Arctic Ocean had been sunk.

A distinctly human touch was imparted by the First Lord to his survey of the submarine position when he was describing the measures, offensive and defensive, taken to deal with the menace. He showed that in the submarine warfare, as elsewhere, it was becoming a test of determination, grit, and ingenuity between the two contending forces, and for the present he came to the conclusion that the U-boat war was going well for us. He then made the following point, showing how priceless an asset Great Britain has in her trained and seasoned merchant seamen, and how the man in the end proves superior to the machine:—

We, of course, analyse in every possible way submarine sinkings, and although we may do, and are doing, a great deal by the use of science, by various kinds of weapons and appliances, to defeat the submarine, there is one thing which is almost the most potent protection against submarines that exists. It is not an appliance; it is a gift that God has given to men on the ships. It is their eyesight. It is a good look-out that is kept. I will give figures to the House which, I think, will interest it, and will tell those outside how they can help the Navy against the submarine. A good look-out kept by an experienced man, covering a great many attacks by submarines, has given us the following facts, that if a submarine is sighted by the look-out on a vessel, whether the vessel is armed or not, it makes no difference, taking it all over, it is seven to three on the ship in favour of it getting away. Out of every ten attacks when the submarine is sighted by the ship seven of them fail, but of every ten attacks when the submarine is not sighted eight ships go down. It is seven to three on the ship if the submarine is sighted, and four to one against it if it is not.

On this point the Naval Correspondent of *The Times* had already remarked:—

Something, however, may be said for the results of Sir Alfred Yarrow's public-spirited offer of a reward to those men who first see and report a submarine. Every now and again the presentation of the reward to some man or boy for sighting a submarine before his shipmates have seen it is noticed in the papers. But these isolated cases by no means indicate the stimulating effect upon the watch for periscopes which Sir Alfred's generous gifts have produced, nor their results in reducing the mercantile losses. Out of 172 cases in which Sir Alfred Yarrow's award was given for sighting submarines up to October 1 in this year, the number of vessels attacked and sunk by torpedo was 12; the number attacked and sunk by gunfire was five; the number attacked and damaged seriously, but not sunk, was five; the number attacked which escaped without serious damage was 65; and the number which observed submarines, but were not attacked, was 86. It is obvious that it is of the utmost importance to bring the vessels safely into port without damage of any kind, and over 85 per cent. of the vessels for which claims were made accomplished this successfully, while nearly one-half, or 49·7 per cent., got in without being attacked at all.

Before dealing further with the progress of the unlimited U-boat campaign, it must be recorded briefly how it brought about an epoch-making event from the naval standpoint in the progress of hostilities—the introduction of the United States into the war. The historic meeting of the American Cabinet held immediately on the receipt of the German Note of January 31, 1917, and other political and diplomatic events, will be found referred to in other chapters of this History. The American Navy was the first to feel the effect of, and to act upon, the change in the relations between the United States and Germany. The Atlantic Fleet at Guantanamo, Cuba, was advised of the possibility of a rupture as soon as a decision was come to by the Cabinet to break off all diplomatic relations, and the usual daily announcements of the movements of American men-of-war also ceased. On February 5, following a conference between the President and the Secretary of the Navy, it was announced that an understanding had been reached by which American merchant ships might carry guns, amidships as well as forward and aft, for their protection against submarines. With commendable pluck, however, several merchant captains put to sea after the declaration of the war zone without any guns to rely upon, but only trusting to their good fortune and skill to avoid destruction. Two such vessels the voyages of which attracted a good deal of attention were the *Orleans* and the *Rochester*, the one belonging to the Oriental Navigation Co.

and the other to the Kerr Line. Disregarding the German demands that any ships entering the war zone should be painted in red and white vertical stripes, these vessels left New York on February 10, and arrived at Bordeaux on February 27 and March 2 respectively. Their voyages were quite uneventful, and

vogue was afforded by the attack on a convoy of seven Dutch vessels on February 22, 1917. The ships had been lying at Falmouth a few days, and on the morning in question received instructions from the Dutch authorities to put to sea, three being inward and four outward bound. When only a few miles out they



BRITISH "SEA TANKS" (MONITORS) OFF ZEEBRUGGE.

neither of them saw any submarines. The captains and crews received a great public ovation. They modestly disclaimed, however, to have done anything beyond their duty, and indeed it was remarkable that the German threats, save only in the first day or two after they were made, when a state of partial paralysis existed in the neutral shipping industry, entirely failed to intimidate the merchant seamen into refusing to carry on the trade of the world.

An illustration of the arbitrary methods in

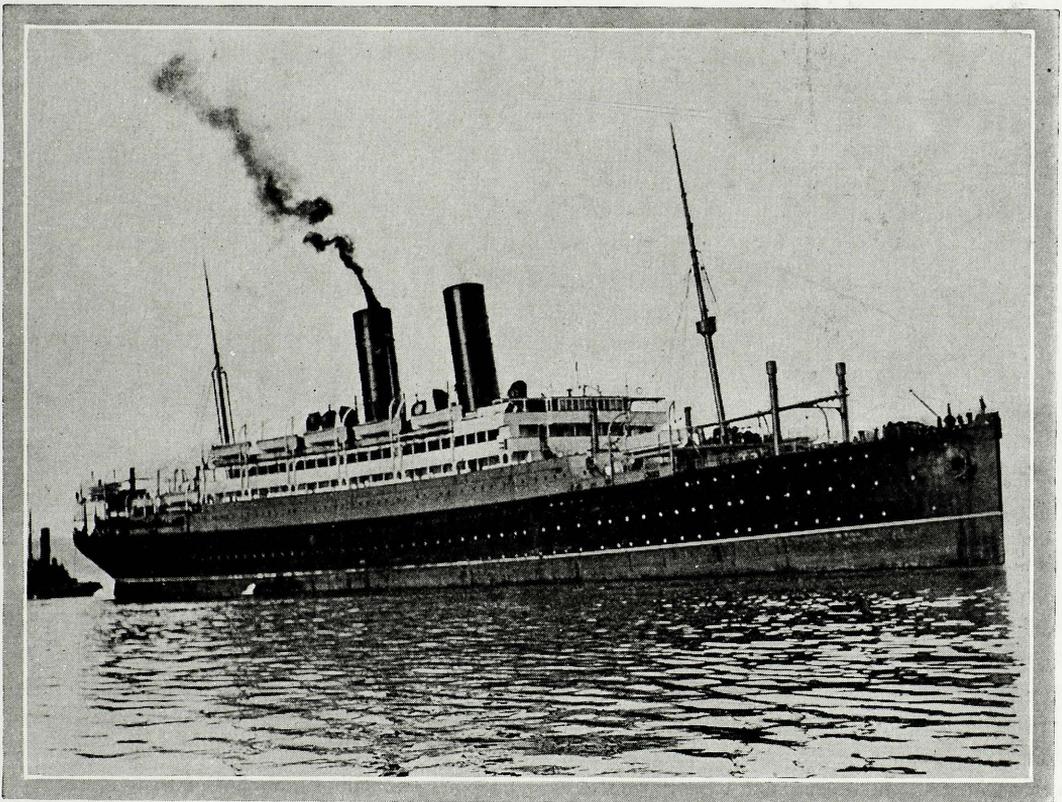
were met by a submarine, said to be U3, and six were sunk by torpedoes or bombs. Their crews were turned adrift in five minutes, and remained in boats for about fifteen hours before being rescued. It was officially announced from The Hague on February 24 that the German Government had declared its readiness to comply with a request made that none of the Dutch vessels *en route* to and from Dutch harbours at the time of the introduction of unlimited submarine war should be molested. It was owing to this promise that the seven

ships left Falmouth. No instructions as to routes were asked from, or given by, the British Admiralty, yet this did not prevent the German Legation at The Hague making an attempt to saddle the responsibility for the outrage upon England.

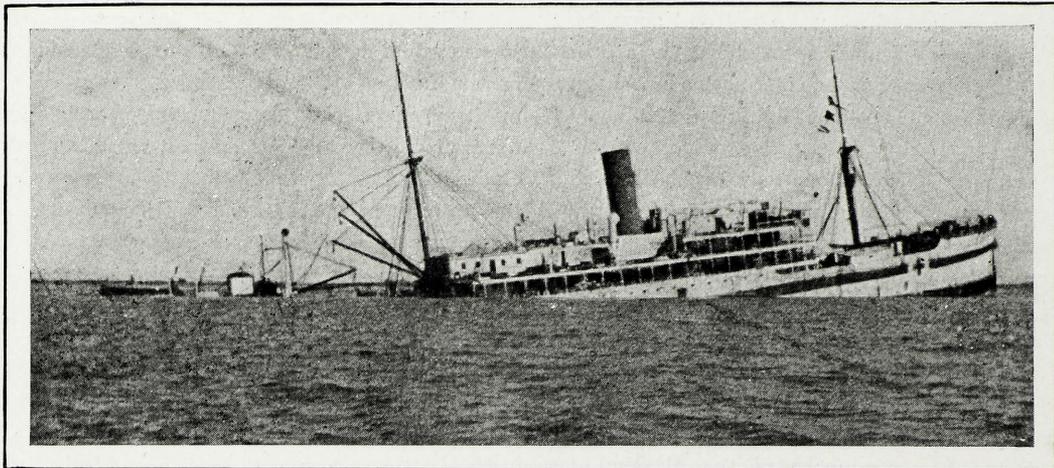
This onslaught on a Dutch convoy showed once more how futile it was to rely on any paper promises, or indeed on anything less than armed force, in dealing with the German raiders. It was for this reason that the advent of America into the war was of immediate advantage to the Allies, since she was able to place at the disposal of the naval commanders in European waters a destroyer force, in addition to relieving the Allies of certain patrol work in the Atlantic. In May the Admiralty announced that "a flotilla of United States destroyers has recently arrived in this country to co-operate with our naval forces in the prosecution of the war. Vice-Admiral W. G. Sims, U.S.N., is in general command of all United States naval forces that are sent to European waters, and he is in daily touch with the Chief of the Naval Staff. The services which the United States vessels are rendering to the Allied cause are of the greatest value, and are

deeply appreciated." During the absence on leave of Vice-Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, the British Commander-in-Chief on the coast of Ireland, in June, 1917, Vice-Admiral Sims temporarily took over the Irish naval command, and for the first time in the history of the naval affairs of the United Kingdom the Republican flag of a friendly and allied nation floated from the flagstaff of the British naval headquarters at Queenstown. In a speech on May 17, 1917, Sir Edward Carson expressed his appreciation of the first instalment of the assistance which the American Navy was giving to the Allies. "I have been told," he said, "and I have received the news with great pleasure, of the great efficiency of the flotilla which has been sent over. I am told that the construction of the ships is magnificent, their armament perfect, their officers and men also magnificent."

There was another striking demonstration about this time of the solidarity of the Allied navies by the action of the Japanese authorities in sending a number of destroyers to the Mediterranean. On June 11, 1917, the Japanese Naval Attaché in London announced that one of the Japanese flotillas attacked enemy



THE TRANSPORT "TRANSYLVANIA" (TORPEDOED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN).



THE "GLOUCESTER CASTLE" SINKING, SHOWING THE RED CROSS AT THE BOW.

submarines in the Mediterranean, but the result was not known. On this occasion the destroyer Sakaki, one of the new boats added to the Japanese Navy since the outbreak of war, received some damage by an enemy torpedo, with a loss of 55 lives, but she was towed safely into port. The British Admiralty supplemented this announcement by stating that the Sakaki was one of the destroyers which so gallantly aided in rescuing a large number of the troops and crew from the transport Transylvania, which was torpedoed on May 4, and from which 413 lives were lost. The destroyer's crew went to the aid of the transport at the imminent risk of themselves being torpedoed, and the handling of the boat won general admiration.

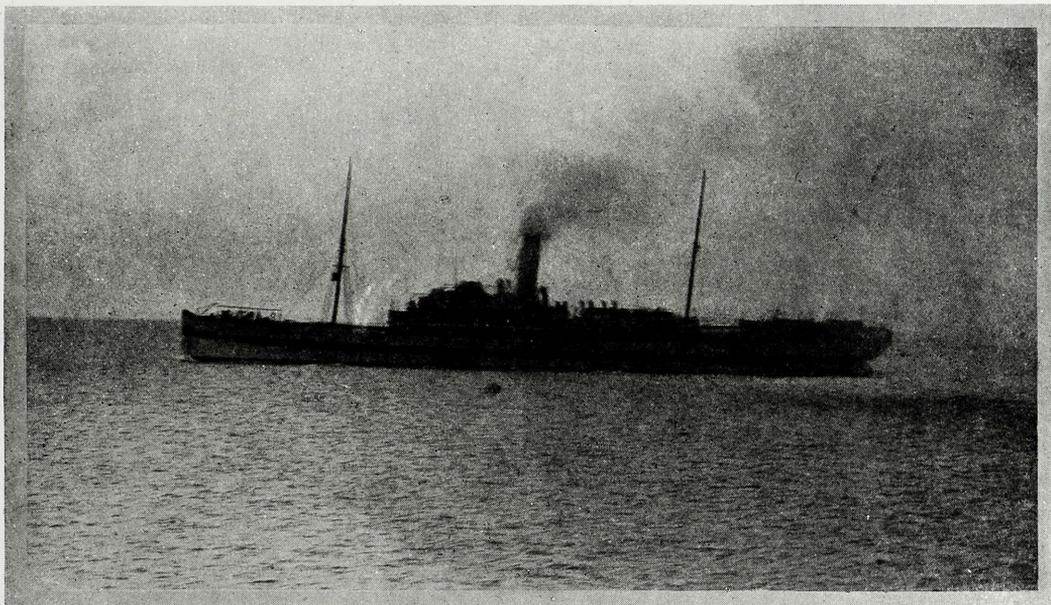
Perhaps the most diabolical part of Germany's programme of ruthlessness was the threat to sink hospital ships on the military routes for the forces in France and Belgium, *i.e.*, within a line drawn between Flamborough Head and Terschelling on the one hand, and from Ushant to Land's End on the other. It was alleged that the German Government had "conclusive proof" that in several instances enemy hospital ships had been misused for the transport of munitions and troops. The British Foreign Office promptly denied this assertion, and pointed out that under the Hague Convention belligerents had the right to search hospital ships, and the German Government had therefore an obvious remedy in case of suspicion—a remedy which they had never utilised. But the Germans persisted in their statement that the decision not to tolerate the traffic of hospital ships was taken on account of English abuse.

On the night of March 20-21 the *Asturias* was torpedoed without warning. She had discharged her cargo of wounded, but the casualties were, among the military, 11 dead, three missing, and 17 injured; and among the crew 20 dead, nine missing, and 22 injured. The missing included a military female nurse and a stewardess. On the night of March 30-31 the *Gloucester Castle* was torpedoed without warning in mid-Channel, and 52 were drowned or killed in consequence. All the wounded were successfully removed from the ship, including some German wounded. There was no doubt in regard to this outrage, because the German wireless on April 11 claimed that the ship had been torpedoed by a submarine. On April 10 the hospital ship *Salta* struck a mine in the Channel and sank. There were no wounded aboard, but 52 lives were lost from the R.A.M.C. personnel. On April 17 two hospital ships, the *Donegal* and *Lanfranc*, were destroyed with the loss of 41 and 34 lives respectively. From the *Lanfranc* 152 German wounded were saved. In announcing the loss of these two vessels the Admiralty stated on April 22, 1917, that owing to the fact that the distinctive marking and lighting of the hospital ships rendered them more conspicuous targets for German submarines it had become no longer possible to distinguish our hospital ships in the customary manner. The markings—white hull with a green band and red crosses, and also special flags and lights—which had been agreed upon in the Hague Convention, and which had guaranteed the immunity of hospital ships from attack, rendered them no longer inviolable. It was therefore decided that sick and wounded,

together with medical personnel and supplies, must in future be transported for their own safety in ships carrying no distinctive markings, and proceeding without lights in the same manner as ordinary mercantile traffic.

In coming to the above decision the British Government were doubtless influenced partly by the failure of their experiment in the policy of reprisals for hospital ship attacks. Immediately on the German threat of January 31 being made, the German Government was informed that if it were carried into effect reprisals would immediately be taken by the British authorities concerned. Accordingly, on April 14, in consequence of the attacks of German submarines on hospital ships, a large

upholding the principles of humanity and justice would not prove a deterrent to Germany in the future. Such reprisals could be only punitive in effect." Later, on May 26, the German Government issued another Note including the Mediterranean in the danger zone for hospital ships. On the same day as the Note was dated, the *Dover Castle* was twice torpedoed in the Mediterranean and sunk. The whole of the hospital patients and hospital staff were safely removed to other ships, and the crew was also saved, except six men missing, who were supposed to have been killed by the explosions. Previous to this Note, however, the hospital ship *Britannia*, in November, 1916, was sunk in the *Ægean* Sea,



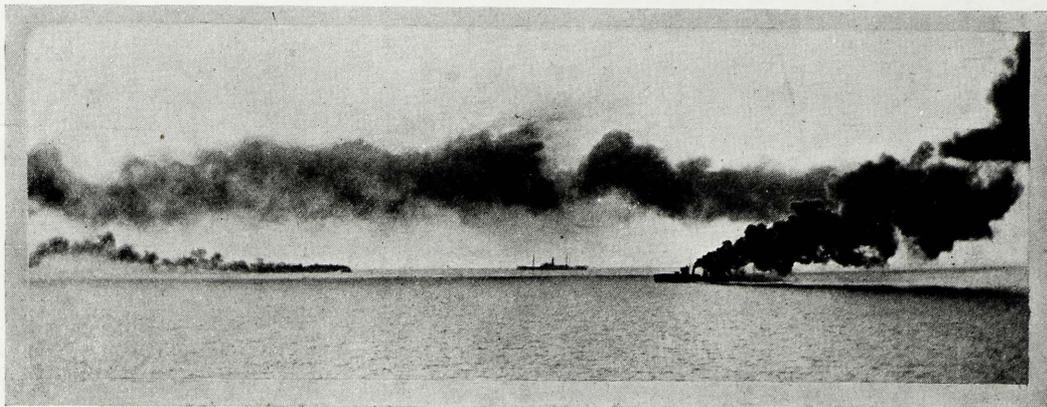
THE HOSPITAL SHIP "DOVER CASTLE," TWICE TORPEDOED WITHOUT WARNING.

The photograph was taken just after the second torpedo had struck the ship.

squadron, composed of British and French aeroplanes, carried out a reprisal bombardment of the town of Freiburg, many bombs being dropped with good results. The spirit in which the Allies exacted retribution was shown by the purely military character of the measures adopted. As the Admiralty pointed out, the airmen who executed this attack were exposed to, and did in fact incur, precisely the same dangers from the town defences as they would have been in the course of an ordinary action. Three machines failed to return after the expedition. However, on April 22, it was pointed out by the Admiralty that "any retaliatory measures open to a Government

and in the same month the *Braemar Castle* was also mined or torpedoed in the Mediterranean.

The hospital ship question was carried a satisfactory step further by the generous action of the King of Spain. Lord Robert Cecil announced on August 16 that in order to remove all suspicion the British and French Governments had agreed that all hospital ships should carry a neutral commissioner, to be appointed by the Spanish Government. Eleven Spanish naval officers were reported to have left Spain in that week for French ports, to take up their duties in conducting hospital ships. From September 10, it was announced in a French



### DESTROYERS RACING TO THE HELP OF THE "DOVER CASTLE,"

Which is seen in the centre of the photograph.

semi-official statement, the German naval forces would respect hospital ships in the Mediterranean, which would no longer have to be escorted by armed vessels, and from this date the German officer prisoners of war were landed from the French hospital ships on which they had been placed as hostages.

Turning to the measures taken to counter the enemy's plans, Lord Curzon referred to them as follows, on February 7, in the House of Lords:—

We are arming merchant vessels to an extent which, were your lordships aware of it, would give you lively satisfaction, but the figures of which I have not the slightest intention of stating. We are employing and developing scientific inventions for the discovery and destruction of submarines. We are exerting ourselves to protect neutral shipping from the dangers by which they are threatened. We are organizing the sea waters in the endeavour to provide lanes of safety through the danger zone. We are building at an accelerated rate of speed new vessels to replace those that have been or are likely to be lost.

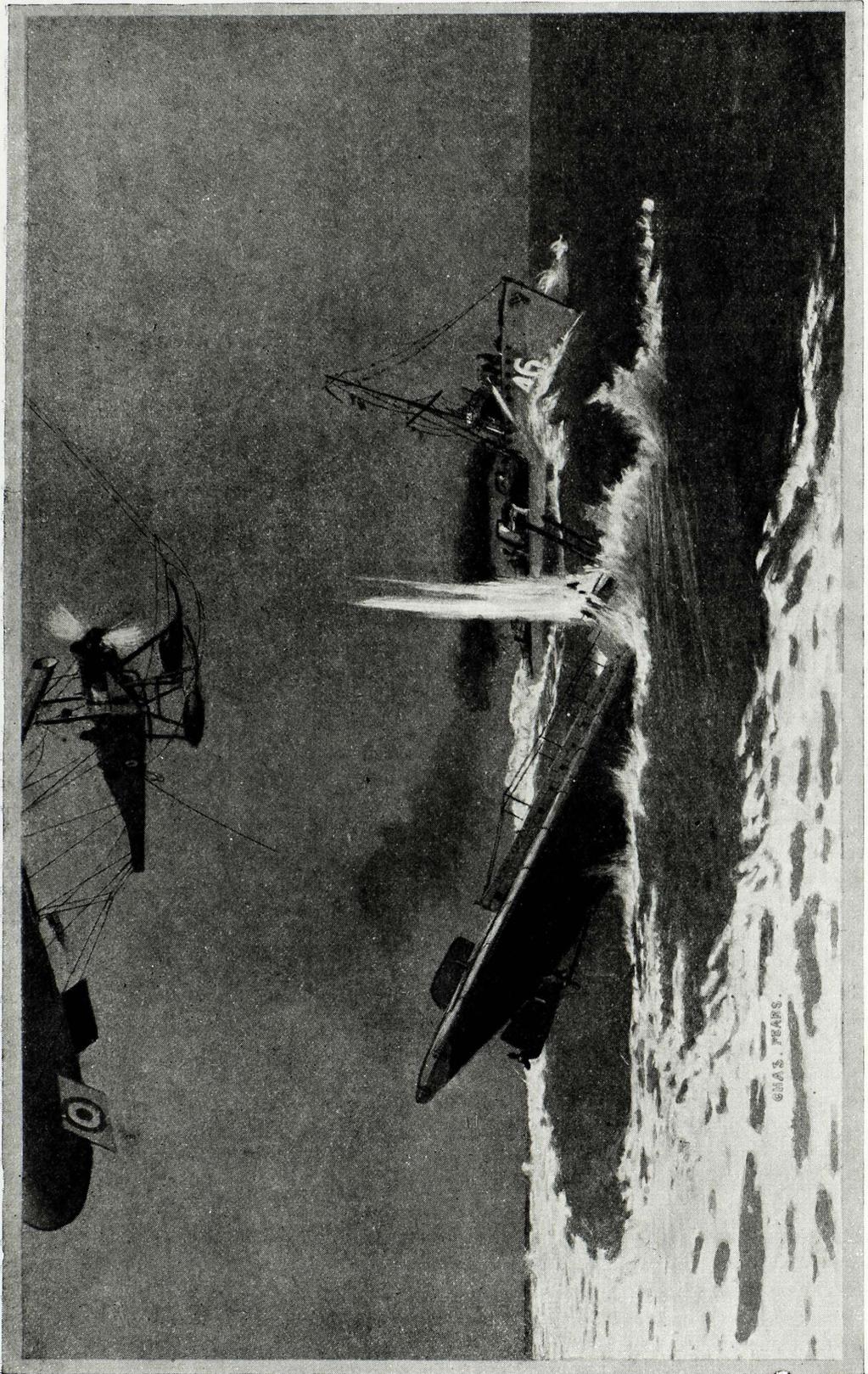
A fortnight later Sir Edward Carson, speaking on the Navy Estimates, said that there had been established at the Admiralty an Anti-Submarine Department, composed of the best and most experienced men who could be drawn upon for the purpose from among those serving at sea. Their whole time was devoted to working out the problem in connexion with this menace. The officer chosen to be the Director of this new Anti-Submarine Division of the Admiralty War Staff was Captain William W. Fisher, M.V.O., R.N., who when war broke out was commanding the battleship *St. Vincent* in the Grand Fleet and serving as Flag-Captain to Rear-Admiral Hugh Evan-Thomas. The official Navy List for July showed that he had two other naval captains—Claude Seymour, D.S.O., and H. T. Walwyn,

D.S.O.—as his Assistants, in addition to 17 other naval officers.

A factor of the greatest importance in the measures and methods taken to counteract the U-boat campaign was the skill and dexterity shown by the mercantile captains. Commodore Lionel Halsey, the Fourth Sea Lord, drew attention to this in a speech at the Imperial Merchant Service Guild at Liverpool on March 6. Quoting from an official paper containing an analysis of attacks by torpedo without warning, he showed that out of 32 attacks 27 succeeded, the ships being sunk in 22 cases, and beached in five. Of the five unsuccessful attacks, two torpedoes missed ahead, one missed astern, and in two cases the periscope was sighted and the torpedo avoided. Of the 27 successful attacks, in 21 cases the ships were not zigzagging. In one case a ship, through zigzagging, passed only two miles off an island where a submarine was waiting. Commodore Halsey, in expressing the hope that the information he had given would be circulated, so that every captain of a ship leaving the British Isles would be able to see what happened, said that the figures afforded a very good example of the importance of zigzagging with discretion.

The inventive resources of the Allies had full scope in being centred upon the means of dealing with the submarines. Lord Beresford referred to this phase of the matter in a speech at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on October 11, 1917. According to the report in *The Birmingham Daily Post*, the Admiral said:

Public mention had been made of the hydrophone, or listener, and mines, as well as the smoke-boxes now in use, but owing to our ineradicably dilatory methods these inventions, which were brought out a short time after the outbreak of war, were held up. If they had



DESTROYER SUMMONED BY A "BLIMP" SINKS A SUBMARINE.

been taken and pushed at once, the hydrophone would have saved the country many millions sterling, as the enormous barrages and obstacles which had been placed in the sea would have in many cases been quite unnecessary, and the smoke-boxes would have saved many a vessel from gun and torpedo attack.

In September and October the Admiralty to a certain extent lifted the veil which had hidden from the view of the public the daily drama at sea between the merchant vessels of all nations and their protecting units of the Allied navies on the one hand and the U-boats on the other. There were published extracts from official reports showing vividly how the submarines were being harassed and attacked night and day by various methods. Of special interest was the revelation that naval aircraft were playing a prominent part in these operations. The following was the official account of a fight between a seaplane and a German submarine: "A seaplane attacked an enemy submarine, which she had observed apparently manœuvring into position to fire a torpedo at a passing merchant ship. Before the seaplane arrived over the submarine, the latter submerged, but three bombs were dropped on the position where he had disappeared from sight. In five minutes' time a large upheaval was noticed where the bombs had been dropped; this could best be compared to a huge bubble, rising some distance above the level of the sea, and distinctly visible for a minute or more. There was no further sign of the submarine."

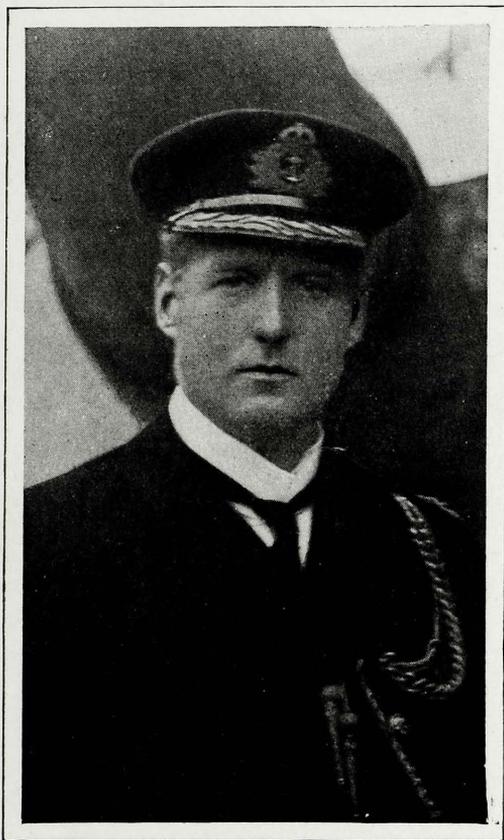
On another occasion a German submarine was torpedoed, and undoubtedly destroyed, by one of our submarines, as described in the following extract from an Admiralty report: "A certain British submarine on patrol sighted an enemy submarine. Both boats were on the surface, and a heavy sea was running at the time. The British boat dived, and a quarter of an hour later succeeded in picking up the enemy in her periscope. She fired at an estimated range of 800 yards, and after a pause of a minute heard the concussion of a violent explosion. She rose to the surface and sighted a patch of oil, with survivors swimming in it, who were taken prisoners. These stated that the torpedo had struck them just before the conning tower. The submarine rolled over and sank, the survivors being blown up through the conning tower."

Even more remarkable and exciting must have been the encounter between a British naval airship and a U-boat, described in the following passage from Admiralty records,

issued to the Press on October 22, 1917: "One of the coastal airships, of a type familiar to visitors at seaside resorts, was recently on patrol, and sighted a steamer in distress. On descending to investigate closer it was found that she had been torpedoed by an enemy submarine, but was capable of being towed into harbour. Accordingly the airship summoned assistance by wireless, and until it arrived hovered protectingly round the crippled merchantman. No signs of her late assailant were visible, and in due course the steamer was taken in tow by tugs and headed for harbour. The aerial escort accompanied the tow, and about an hour later sighted the conning tower of a submarine about five miles to the south-eastward of the convoy, apparently manœuvring for another shot. The airship instantly signalled by wireless the position of the submarine to all men-of-war in the vicinity, and swooped down to attack. The submarine saw her coming, and dived, but too late to avoid this glittering Nemesis from the skies. Two bombs were dropped simultaneously in front of the swirl of his descent; a violent explosion ensued, followed by oil and air bubbles in ominous quantities. Shortly after a destroyer arrived and investigated with sweeps. The airship, returning to her base for a further supply of bombs and petrol, was overtaken by the following aerial signal: 'You've undoubtedly bagged him.'"

Evidently anticipating Germany's development of her submarine warfare, the British Admiralty towards the end of January notified neutral Governments of an extension of mine-laying operations in the North Sea. A large area was declared dangerous to shipping, and it was described as follows by the American State Department from information supplied to them:—"The area comprising all the waters, except the Netherlands and Danish territorial waters, lying south-westward and eastward of a line commencing four miles from the coast of Jutland, in latitude 56 deg. N., longitude 8 deg. E., and passing through the following positions:—Latitude 56 deg. N., longitude 6 deg. E.; latitude 54 deg. N., longitude 0.45 min. E., thence to a position in latitude 53.37 deg. N., longitude 5 deg. E., seven miles off the coast of the Netherlands." Thus from a point off Ringkøbing, Denmark, the danger area extended across the North Sea, north of the Horn Reef, thence slanting south-

ward, but including the Dogger Bank in its area, to a point off the Yorkshire coast, south of Flamborough Head. This area was subsequently extended on more than one occasion, both on its west side and closer to the limit of the Dutch territorial waters on the east side.



**CAPTAIN W. W. FISHER, M.V.O.,**  
Director of the Anti-Submarine Division of the  
Admiralty War Staff.

On July 4, 1917, the Admiralty published a "Notice to Mariners," headed "North Sea Caution with regard to Dangerous Areas," in which it was pointed out that, in view of the unrestricted warfare carried on by Germany at sea by means of mines and submarines, not only against the Allied Powers but also against neutral shipping, and the fact that merchant ships were constantly sunk without regard to life and the safety of their crew, the Government gave notice that the area in the North Sea rendered dangerous to all shipping by operations against the enemy would be further extended, and should be avoided. The positions given in this notice showed that the danger area had been considerably enlarged.

We may now turn to certain phases of the

work of the British Navy in the North Sea not already dealt with in these pages. In the course of the interview, already quoted, which he gave on April 12, 1917, to an American journalist, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe said that it could not be denied that naval strategy had undergone a vast change as the result of the illegal use by Germany of submarines. Their advent as a fighting weapon had made a blockade of an enemy's coast impossible, and had added to the difficulties we had to face on account of the natural features of the German coast line for either attack or defence. The First Sea Lord went on to show that the most striking feature of the change in our historic naval policy resulting from the illegal use of submarines, and from the fact that the enemy surface ships had been driven from the sea, was that we had been compelled to abandon a definite offensive policy for one which might be called an offensive-defensive, since our only active enemy was the submarine engaged in piracy and murder. We had to give our Mercantile Marine a measure of protection which would not be dreamed of if the Germans merely used their U-boats for legitimate naval warfare, and so many of the smaller warships had to be used for this purpose that the "tip-and-run" raid became a possibility, while our own blockade efforts suffered.

How this new offensive-defensive line of policy worked out in practice was illustrated by several events during the year. During the weeks immediately following Sir John Jellicoe's remarks there were undoubtedly signs of increased activity, if not of greater vigilance, on the part of the patrols. A scrap which occurred on August 16, 1917, indicated that the British outposts were pushed right up into the enemy's home waters. On this day, some of our light naval forces, scouting in the German Bight, sighted an enemy destroyer at 9.45 a.m. Fire was opened and the destroyer was chased. She was seen to be repeatedly hit and on fire, but she escaped through the mist over a minefield. Enemy mine-sweepers were sighted shortly after the destroyer and heavy fire opened on them, at least two being observed to be very severely damaged. But, as with the destroyer, our ships were unable to follow them owing to the proximity of minefields. During the engagement the British vessels were attacked by a submarine, and after the action a second submarine attacked, but in both cases the U-boats were unsuccessful. In

the German account of this affair, their forces were described as a guard patrol, which had encountered British cruisers and destroyers "on the fringe of the English barred zone." British light forces presumably patrolled regularly in the neighbourhood of the outside edge of the German triangle from Sylt to Borkum, for the double purpose of watching the enemy's exits and enforcing the British danger area, the limits of which, as is shown elsewhere, were in close proximity to the German mine fields. In these circumstances, it was remarkable that an encounter with German units did not occur more frequently.

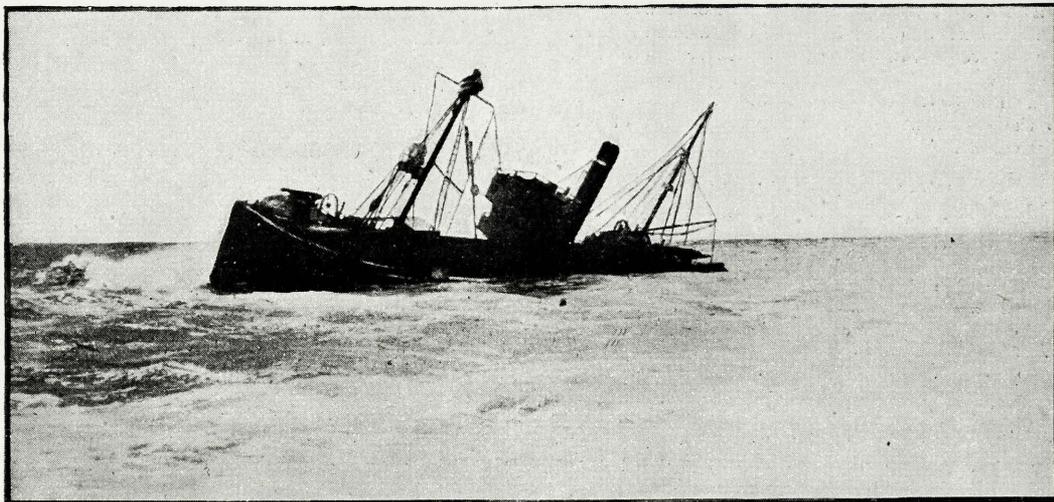
A little further to the northward, off the Danish coast, west of Ringkøbing Firth, there was an action on September 1 between British light forces and four enemy mine-sweeping vessels, the latter being all destroyed. Unofficially, it was stated that two submarines and two seaplanes assisted the German vessels, and that one of the seaplanes was destroyed. Finding themselves attacked by superior forces, the mine-sweepers ran for the shelter of the Danish territorial waters, and some of them ran aground on the coast of Jutland. About 100 German sailors gained the shore on rafts or by swimming. Arising out of this fight, the Danish Legation in London received later in September a Note from the British Government on the violation of Danish neutrality alleged to have been committed by British naval forces in pursuing the German mine-sweepers. The British Government expressed its sincere regret, and offered indemnification for any damage which might have been caused.

It was in this locality a few days earlier—on

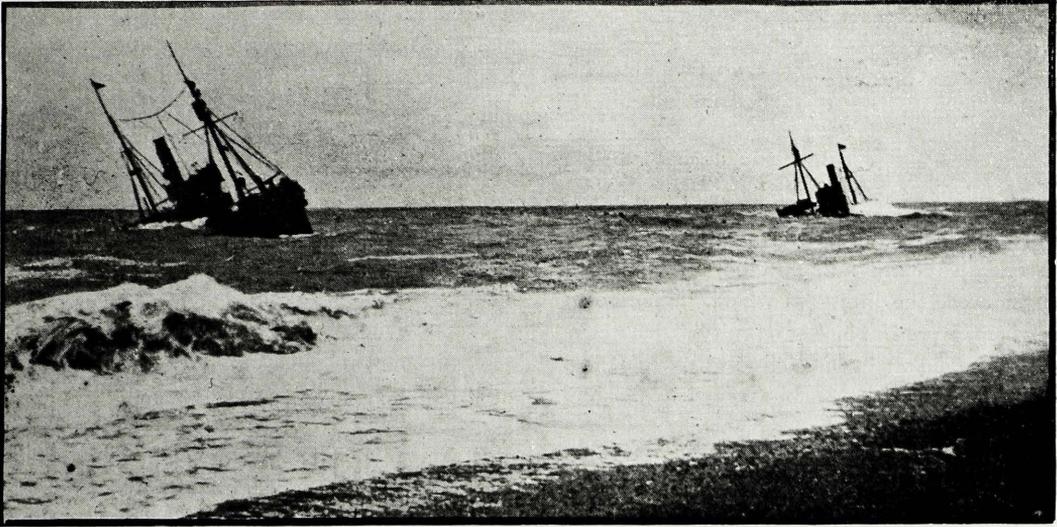
August 21—that a portion of the British light forces on patrol brought down an enemy Zeppelin, from which there were no survivors. This was the third Zeppelin reported to have been destroyed at sea by British naval forces during 1917, the others being L22, on May 14, and L43, on June 15. These losses all went to show that the advantage ascribed to the German Navy in its possession of a fleet of scouting airships was somewhat at a discount.

Naturally, in spite of all that the British seamen could do in keeping their watch and guard off the approaches to the German naval bases, isolated raiders were bound to sneak through, especially submarine raiders. One such vessel appeared off Scarborough about 6.45 p.m. on the evening of September 4, at a time when thousands of holiday makers thronged the beaches and promenades, and fired thirty rounds at the town, about half of which fell on land. The material damage was slight, but three persons were killed and five injured.

A raid of a more serious nature was that which resulted in the destruction of two British destroyers and nine Scandinavian merchant ships under convoy on October 17. The Admiralty report of this misfortune stated that two very fast and heavily armed German raiders attacked the convoy in the North Sea about midway between the Shetland Islands and the Norwegian coast. The destroyers, *Mary Rose*, Lieutenant-Commander Charles L. Fox, and *Strongbow*, Lieutenant-Commander Edward Brooke, which formed the anti-submarine escort, at once engaged the enemy vessels, and fought until sunk after a short and unequal engagement. Their gallant action



GERMAN MINE-SWEEPER DRIVEN ASHORE ON THE DANISH COAST, SEPT. 1, 1917.



TWO MORE GERMAN MINE-SWEEPERS DRIVEN ASHORE ON THE DANISH COAST, SEPTEMBER 1.

held the German raiders sufficiently long to enable three of the merchant vessels to effect their escape, but five Norwegian, one Danish, and three Swedish vessels—all unarmed—were thereafter sunk by gunfire without examination or warning of any kind, and regardless of the lives of their crews and passengers. The following remarks were made in the Admiralty *communiqué* :—

Lengthy comment on the action of the Germans is unnecessary, but it adds another example to the long list of criminally inhuman deeds of the German navy. Anxious to make good their escape before British forces could intercept them, no effort was made to rescue the crews of the sunk British destroyers, and the Germans left the doomed merchant ships while still sinking, thus enabling British patrol craft, which arrived shortly afterwards, to rescue some thirty Norwegians and others of whom details are not yet known. The German navy by this act has once more and further degraded itself by this disregard of the historic chivalry of the sea. The German official *communiqué* on this subject states that the attack took place within the territorial waters in the neighbourhood of the Shetland Islands, and that all the escort vessels, including the destroyers, were sunk with the exception of one escort fishing steamer. The statement as to the locality of the attack is untrue, as is also the statement regarding the destruction of the escort vessels.

Replying to questions in Parliament, Sir Eric Geddes said that a court-martial into the loss of the destroyers and the circumstances attending the attack on the convoy would be ordered by the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet immediately the survivors were fit to attend, and the Commander-in-Chief would appoint the members of the Court and frame the charges. A naval inquiry presided over by Sir Eric Geddes was also held immediately, to deal with the general question of convoy, and all relevant matters. On

October 29, Sir Eric Geddes announced that the inquiry was attended by the members of the Board concerned, together with the officers dealing with the matter in question. The Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet, also attended. So far as the feeling aroused by the brutality of the Germans was concerned, this was well illustrated by the Note from the Norwegian Government to the German Government on November 1, which included the following passages :—

This conduct on the part of the German warships was the cause of a great number of Norwegian sailors being killed and wounded by shell-fire or losing their lives by drowning. The Norwegian Government will not again state its views, as it has already done so on several occasions, as to the violation of the principle of the freedom of the high seas incurred by the proclamation of large tracts of ocean as a war zone, and by the sinking of neutral ships not carrying contraband. It is owing to various measures of this kind that Norwegian ships, as well as those of other neutral countries, have been compelled, in order to procure for Norway her essential imports, to seek protection in the past, as they will in the future, by allowing themselves to be convoyed by warships belonging to Germany's enemies.

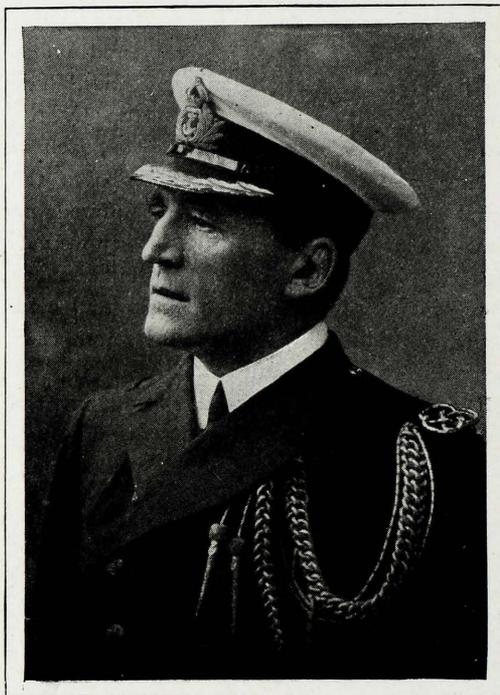
Similarly, on October 23, it was announced from Copenhagen that Captain Roald Amundsen, the famous Norwegian Arctic and Antarctic explorer, and discoverer of the South Pole, had returned his German decorations to the German Legation at Christiania, with the following letter :—

As a Norwegian sailor, I permit myself to return my German decorations, the Prussian Order of the Crown First Class, the Bavarian Order of Luitpold, and the Emperor Wilhelm's gold medal for art and science, as a personal protest against the German murders of peaceful Norwegian sailors, the latest being in the North Sea on October 17, 1917.

Captain Otto Sverdrup, the Arctic explorer, followed Amundsen's lead in handing back his German decorations on October 25. In the course of his speech in Parliament on November 1, Sir Eric Geddes entered at length into certain professional aspects of the loss of the convoy. The ships were attacked about 6 a.m., just as day was breaking, and the enemy's first shot wrecked the wireless room of the *Strongbow* and did other damage. In spite of the great gallantry with which she was fought, the *Strongbow* was sunk, and the two raiders then attacked the *Mary Rose*, which was blown up by a shot in her magazine. Next the convoy was sunk. There was a third armed British vessel, fitted with wireless, in company, but owing to the fact that this ship had been detached to screen one of the merchantmen which was stopped owing to the shifting of her cargo, no message reached the Admiral Commanding the Orkneys, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, or the Admiralty, that the convoy had been attacked until the surviving ships arrived at Lerwick. The Admiralty did not receive the information until 7 p.m. The First Lord, replying to the question of why the enemy raiders were not intercepted before they attacked the convoy, reminded the House that the area of the North Sea was 140,000 square nautical miles, that the coast from Cape Wrath to Dover subject to attack by raiders was 566 nautical miles in length, and that the area of vision for a light cruiser squadron, with its attendant destroyers at night, was well under five square miles. The Scandinavian convoy system was started in April, 1917, and more than 4,500 vessels had been convoyed by the British Navy in that convoy alone, none having been lost by surface attack until this raid of October 17. Referring also to the ceaseless patrol of the North Sea from north to south and east to west, day and night, the First Lord said that during a recent month the mileage steamed by His Majesty's battleships, cruisers, and destroyers alone amounted to 1,000,000 ship-miles in home waters, in addition to which there was the ceaseless patrol of the Naval auxiliary forces, amounting to well over 6,000,000 ship-miles in home waters in the same month.

In a few days after the loss of the *Strongbow* and *Mary Rose*, the Navy had given demonstration of its alertness and enterprise by the destruction of several German vessels in the Kattegat. The British forces operating in this

locality on November 2 destroyed a German auxiliary cruiser, armed with 6-in. guns, and also ten armed patrol craft. Sixty-four German prisoners were rescued, and there were no British losses. The German vessel was reported to be the *Maria Flensburg*, and was probably a potential raider similar in type to the *Möwe*. In such an event, the action was very timely in nipping a commerce-destroying enterprise in the bud. The fight was also welcome as showing the extent to which the British patrols



[Russell.]

**COMMODORE SIR REGINALD TYRWHITT,  
K.C.B.**

**In command of destroyer flotillas in the North Sea.**

and advanced scouts had been pushed well into waters adjoining the enemy's bases of operations.

There were, in fact, about the time Sir Eric Geddes was speaking of the incessant and arduous patrol work of the Navy, several incidents exemplifying the force of his words. In the first few days of November, in addition to the scrap in the Kattegat already mentioned, there were others in the southern area of the North Sea, and also well into the Heligoland Bight. On November 12, as officially announced two days later, some German destroyers came out from under the protection of their shore batteries along the Flanders coast and fired a few rounds at our patrol vessels, none of which was hit. The fire was promptly returned, and

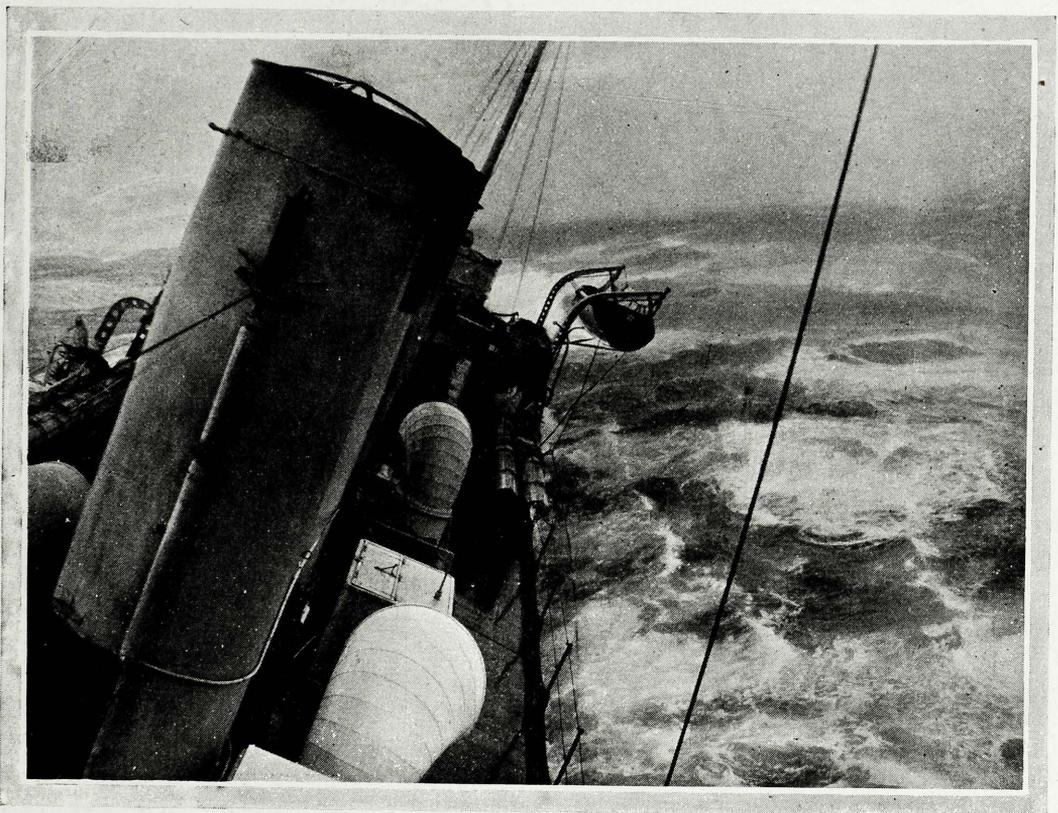
the Germans immediately retired under the protection of their shore batteries, and the patrol was resumed. The Admiralty made the following comment on this brief skirmish: "Incidents of this nature occur daily, and in no way interfere with the maintenance and efficiency of our patrol, and they are therefore not reported." About a fortnight earlier, on the afternoon of October 27, six British and French destroyers patrolling off the Belgian coast sighted and attacked three German destroyers and 17 aeroplanes. Two direct hits were obtained on the enemy's destroyers, which immediately retired under the protection of their land batteries. The aeroplane formation was broken up by the anti-aircraft gunfire of our destroyers, each of the aeroplanes dropping three bombs in the vicinity of our vessels, which suffered no damage beyond two men being slightly wounded. These and other incidents all went to show that there was no more busy and alert section of our naval forces in home waters than those from Dover and Dunkirk.

It was from the Belgian coast that the Germans sent out to attack our patrol vessels on November 3 an electrically-controlled high-

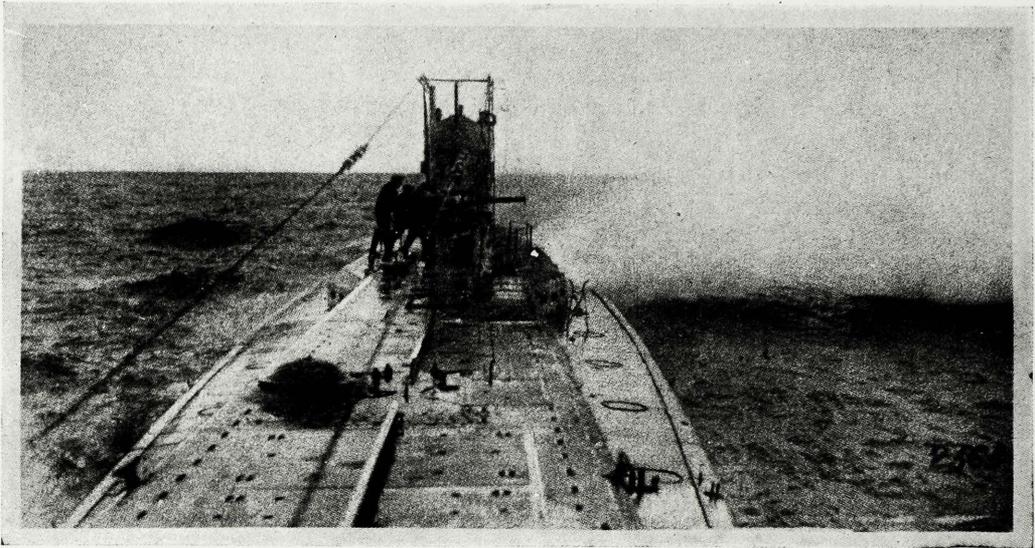
speed boat. The attack was defeated and the boat destroyed. This was the fourth boat of its kind—regarded by the Admiralty as freak vessels—to be destroyed. The first was reported to have come to grief by running into a pier on the German coast. Two others were destroyed in September, 1917, although the fact that they were electrically-operated craft was not disclosed. On November 12, the Admiralty issued the following particulars of these new boats:—

The electrically-controlled motor-boats used on the Belgian coast are twin petrol-engined vessels, partially closed in, and travel at a high speed. They carry a drum with between thirty and fifty miles of insulated single-core cable, through which the boat is controlled electrically. The fore part carries a considerable charge of high explosive, probably from 300–500 lb. in weight. After the engine has been started the crew leave the boat. A seaplane, protected by a strong fighting patrol, then accompanies the vessel at a distance of three to five miles, and signals to the shore operator the helm to give the vessel. These signals need only be starboard, port, or steady. The boat is zigzagged while running; this may be either intentional or unintentional. On being steered into a ship the charge is exploded automatically. The device is a very old one. A boat similarly controlled was used in H.M.S. *Vernon* (the torpedo experimental ship) as far back as 1885. The only new features in the German boats are petrol engines and W/T. signals, neither of which existed then.

Further to the north, some fighting took



A DESTROYER ROLLING IN A ROUGH SEA.



[From a German photograph.]

A GERMAN SUBMARINE FIRING WHAT THE GERMAN PHOTOGRAPHER CLAIMS TO BE A "WARNING SHOT."

place in the Heligoland Bight on November 17, when the British patrols chased some German light cruisers, destroyers, and patrol boats to within 30 miles of Heligoland, until the enemy got within the protection of their Battle Fleet and minefields. The Germans stated that "for the first time since the early months of the war strong English naval forces sought to penetrate into the German Bight on the morning of November 17. They were discovered by German naval patrols as soon as they had reached the Riff-Terschelling line, and by counter-operations, which were begun immediately by our advanced post forces, were repulsed without difficulty and without loss to ourselves." It will be noticed that this account admits that the British took the initiative. A later British official report stated that :—

From the report of the vessels engaged in the action on Saturday, November 17, in the Heligoland Bight, it appears that shortly before 8 a.m. our forces sighted four light cruisers on a northerly course, accompanied by destroyers and minesweepers or patrol vessels. The minesweepers or patrol vessels made off to the north-east, and one of them was sunk by gunfire from destroyers, a number of survivors being rescued, among whom were a naval lieutenant and five naval ratings. The enemy light cruisers and destroyers turned off towards Heligoland, and were pursued by our advanced forces through the minefields. A running engagement took place under a heavy smoke screen until four enemy battleships and battle cruisers were sighted. Our advanced forces broke off the engagement, and turned back to meet their supports outside the minefields. Owing to the presence of minefields it was necessary for our vessels to keep to the line taken by the enemy's ships, and consequently this area was too restricted for the supporting ships to manoeuvre in. The enemy did not follow our vessels outside the minefields. Our vessels report that during the action they scored a number of hits on the enemy. One light

cruiser was seen to be on fire, a heavy explosion was seen on another, while a third was dropping behind, evidently damaged, at the time the action was broken off. The destruction of these ships was prevented by the presence of the enemy's large vessels and by the proximity of Heligoland. The damage done to our vessels was slight, but some casualties were caused to officers and men in exposed positions.

From the foregoing it will be obvious that it was only because the Germans feared to come out with their larger ships that this encounter did not develop into a much bigger affair. In this respect, the incidents in the Bight and the Kattegat always had an importance, and differed from those off the Belgian coast, which could never lead to anything more than patrol encounters, because there was no stronger enemy force behind them. All along the enemy coastline, however, there was in process of execution that "offensive-defensive" line of strategy spoken of by Sir John Jellicoe, and once again the British seamen were demonstrating the truth of the old maxim that the frontiers of England are the coasts of the enemy.

The affair in the Kattegat on November 2, to which reference has already been made, brought to light two German raiding captains of earlier days. The captain of the *Maria Flensburg*, the sunken auxiliary cruiser, was Captain Lauterbach, whom the *Weser Zeitung* described as "one of the heroes of the *Emden*." He appears to have commanded one of the colliers attached to that famous raider, and when the *Emden* was lost he succeeded in

reaching the Malay Archipelago. Captured by the British and interned at Singapore, he escaped with nine companions, and returned home via the Philippines, Japan, and America. The second officer of the *Maria Flensburg* was Lieutenant Christiansen, who was killed on the bridge during the *Kattegat* fight by a shell. Early in the war he ran the British blockade and reached the German African colonies with a shipload of much-needed provisions and war material. It was probable from the presence of these two officers in the vessel destroyed on November 2 that she was attempting to reach the open sea to begin a raiding career such as the *Möwe* had entered upon eleven months earlier. This ship was first sighted in the North Atlantic on December 4, 1916, and was reported to be "a German armed and disguised vessel of mercantile type." Nothing was revealed about her movements officially until January 17, 1917, when she was announced to have captured ten Allied merchant vessels in the space of one month. In addition, the British steamer *St. Theodore* was captured and a prize crew put on board, evidently to assist in raiding, and the steamer *Yarrowdale* was sent back to Germany with a number of captive British crews and stores from the prizes. The *Yarrowdale* reached *Swinemunde* on January 20, 1917, under the command of Lieutenant *Badewitz*, who was also in the *Möwe* on her first cruise, when he distinguished himself by taking the captured British steamer *Westburn* into *Teneriffe* with captive crews, landing them, sinking the steamer outside the harbour, getting himself interned in Spain, and escaping back to Germany.

On March 23, an official Berlin telegram announced the return home of the *Möwe*, under Commander *Count Dohna-Schlodien*, from her second cruise in the Atlantic, during which she made prizes of 22 steamers and five sailing vessels, with a total of 123,100 tons gross register. The *Möwe* also took to Germany 93 prisoners, in addition to the 469 conveyed in the *Yarrowdale*. The tonnage destroyed by the raider was about 107,600, or nearly twice the amount sunk during her first cruise early in 1916. The *White Star* liner *Georgic*, of 10,077 tons, was her largest victim.

Even more romantic in some respects was the cruise of another German raider, the *Seeadler* (Captain *Count von Luckner*), which was found to be at work in the Atlantic towards

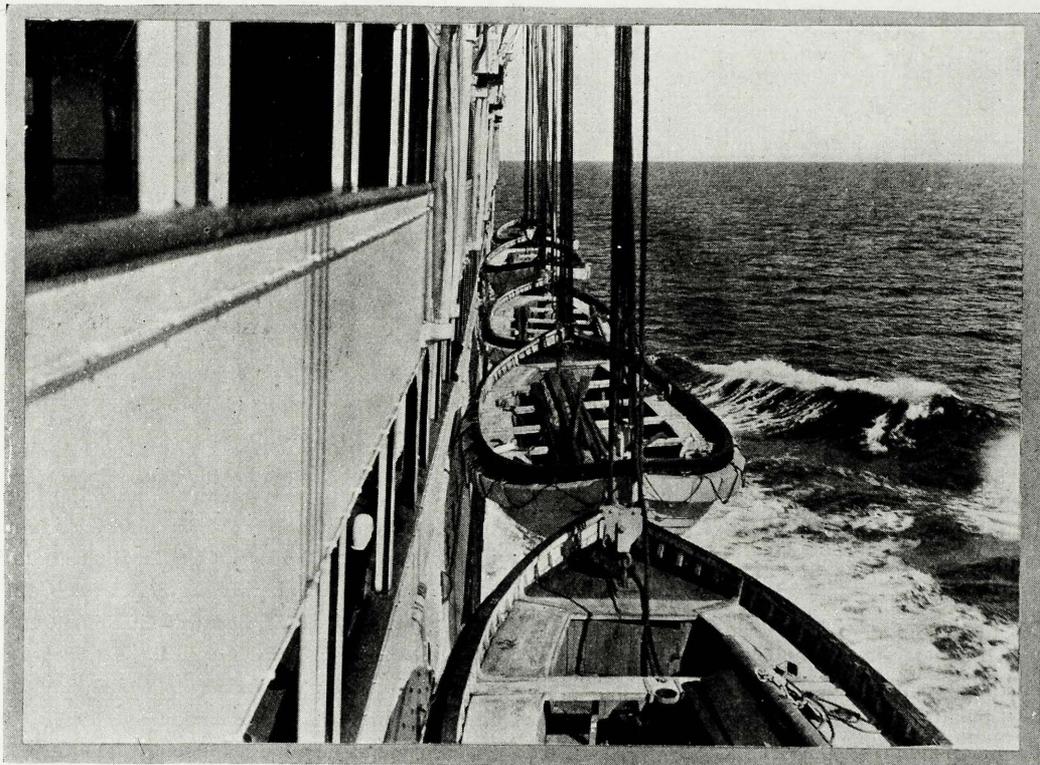
the end of March, 1917. This vessel was reported to have been the captured American barque *Pass of Balmaha*, of 1,571 tons, belonging to the *Harris-Irby Cotton Company*, of Boston, U.S.A., and captured in 1915 while on a voyage to *Archangel* with cotton. Having been fitted with oil engines, and armed, she left Germany on December 22, 1916, as a raider, and from January 9 to March 11, 1917, destroyed 11 Allied merchant ships. Not until October, 1917, did the fate of the *Seeadler* become known. She had been heard of as a minelayer off the coast of Brazil. Later, at the end of March, the French barque *Cambrenne* arrived at *Rio de Janeiro* with over 200 survivors of 11 ships sunk by this raider off *Trinidad*. The *Seeadler's* practice was to show Norwegian colours until the victim had come within range of her guns, and then quickly to hoist the German ensign. During October a dispatch to the American Navy Department from *Tutuila*, *Samoa*, announced the fact that an open boat had arrived there with the master of the American schooner *R. C. Slade*, who stated that the German raider *Seeadler* had run ashore, and was abandoned on *Mopalia*, *Lord Howe Island*, on August 2. She had been beached for cleaning, but a storm embedded her in the sand. The captain and some of the officers in a motor sloop and the remainder of the crew in the French schooner *Lutece*, put to sea on August 21 and September 5, presumably to carry on raiding. Before stranding, the *Seeadler* had sunk the American schooners *R. C. Slade*, *A. B. Johnson*, and *Manila*. She left 47 prisoners on the island. Later on, the boat containing the captain of the raider was captured off the *Fiji Islands*. The fate of the *Lutece* was still in doubt at this time.

Although dealing in the main with the work of the British Navy, this chapter would not be complete without some reference to the services of the Allied Fleets, more especially as the British seamen were so closely connected with the latter in many different spheres of operations. Indeed, there were no waters except those of the Black Sea in which the British seamen were not represented during the fighting in 1917. Even into the Baltic, in spite of all that the Germans could do with their superiority of force and the use of obstructions, a British submarine penetrated, and on September 20, 1917, was reported to have attacked German warships off the *Island of Oesel*. A British

submarine was also reported to have assisted the Russians in the fighting for the possession of the Gulf of Riga. The events which led to the loss of those waters to the enemy will be chronicled elsewhere, but it is timely to note in passing that they arose directly out of the political conditions obtaining in Russia on account of the Revolution. The discipline of the Fleet being broken, and its *personnel* demoralised, the command of the Baltic, from having been in dispute since the beginning of

bouching from the Great Belt—the only possible passage—in a necessarily deep formation on a very narrow front, would have found the whole German Fleet deployed against them. Moreover, the question of keeping open communications to such a fleet when every supply ship would have had to travel within thirty miles of Kiel would have proved insuperable.

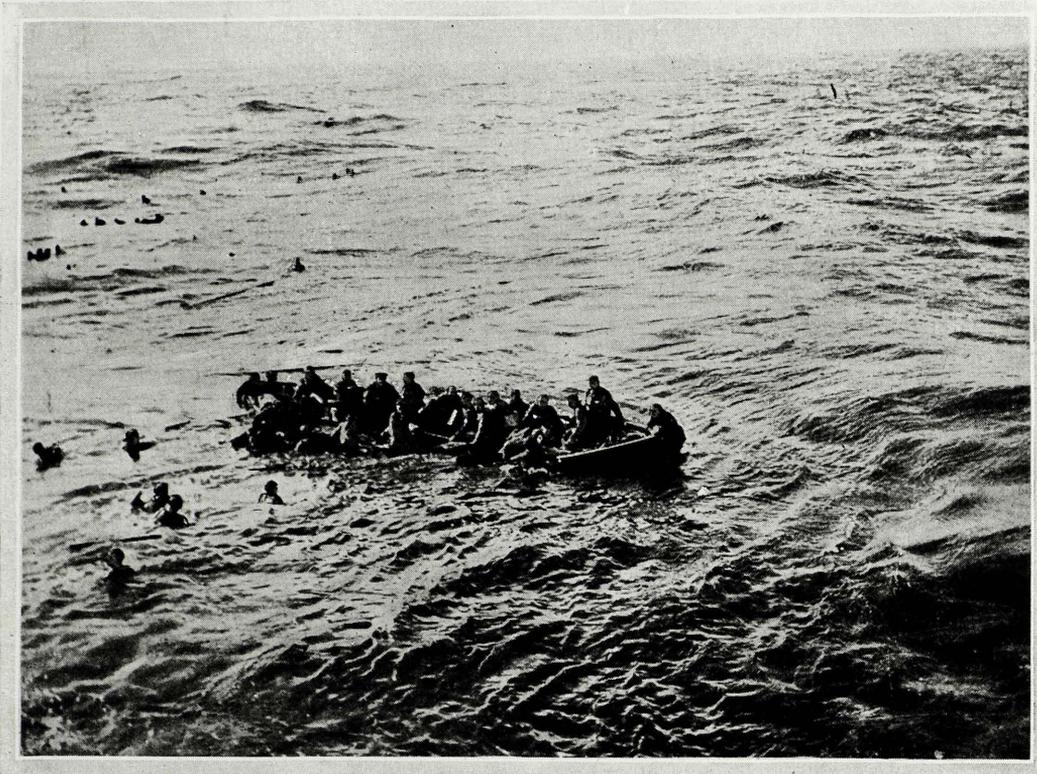
In the Mediterranean, the British Navy had a round of duties to perform as arduous as it was varied. At the opening of the period



A TRANSPORT STEAMING WITH BOATS SLUNG OUT READY FOR EMERGENCIES.

the war, passed absolutely into German hands, and without adequate naval protection the islands fell. It had been suggested that when the German Fleet issued forth in the Baltic convoying transports and the like, the British Fleet should have entered that sea and forced a fleet engagement, with the double object of destroying the enemy fleet and bringing aid and relief to the Russians. Sir Eric Geddes, however, set forth the official view in his speech on November 1. The operation of passing through into the Baltic would have been a protracted one, as he showed, and apart from the question of the neutrality of the Danish islands, there were extensive minefields to be cleared. The leading vessels of a fleet de-

under survey, the Allied Fleet was off the Piræus, and carrying out a blockade of Old Greece to enforce the demands of the Entente. There was also considerable work in progress for the suppression of the submarines, the depredations of the latter being shown in the destruction of the Arabia on November 6, 1916, the hospital ships Braemar Castle and Britannic on November 14 and 21, the transport Ivernia on January 1, 1917, the French battleship Gaulois on December 27, 1916, the British battleship Cornwallis on January 9, 1917, and the French battleship Danton on March 19, 1917. The British seamen also lent active support to the military undertakings at Salonika, in Egypt, and in Palestine, and the



ONE OF "IVERNIA'S" OVERLOADED BOATS SINKING.

work of the naval airmen was also distinguished. Particularly brilliant was a raid on Constantinople made by the R.N.A.S. on the night of July 9, 1917, when the Turco-German Fleet lying off the city in the Golden Horn was bombed. When the battle-cruiser Goeben, surrounded by warships, including submarines, had been located, the attack was made from a height of 800 ft. Direct hits were obtained on the Goeben and the other enemy ships near her, big explosions being caused and several fires observed. The War Office was also attacked and a direct hit obtained. The enemy appeared to have been completely surprised, as, until the bombs had been dropped, no anti-aircraft batteries opened fire. The airmen returned safely without any casualties.

Turning to the situation in the Adriatic, the part played by the British seamen in the operations in this theatre of the war was both dramatic and creditable. The most striking incident was perhaps the gallantry shown by the crews of the drifters on patrol in the Straits of Otranto when a descent was made upon them by an Austrian force of light cruisers and destroyers. This occurred on the morning of May 15, 1917, and as a result of the raid 14 British drifters were sunk, from which, accord-

ing to the Austrian *communiqué*, 72 prisoners were taken. The British cruisers Dartmouth, Captain A. P. Addison, R.N., with the Italian rear-admiral on board, and Bristol, Captain G. J. Todd, R.N., immediately chased the enemy off, assisted by French and Italian destroyers. The chase was continued with the enemy under heavy and continuous fire till near Cattaro, when, some enemy battleships coming out in support of their cruisers, our vessels drew off. During her passage back, the Dartmouth was struck by a torpedo from an enemy submarine, but returned into port with three men killed and one officer and four men missing—believed dead—and seven wounded. The whole country was thrilled a few days after this affair to learn of the gallant conduct of the men in the trawlers and drifters, whose behaviour was worthy of the highest naval traditions. To one of the skippers the Victoria Cross was awarded—the first occasion on which the distinction had been gained by a member of that hardy and valuable section of the Royal Naval Reserve. The heroism of Skipper Joseph Watt, R.N.R., commanding the drifter Gowan Lea, will be found fully recorded elsewhere in this History. In addition to this officer, others whose conduct called for commendation or

reward were Sub-Lieutenant Barling, R.N.R., commanding a group of drifters, who, when attacked by an enemy cruiser, bravely replied to the shots of his formidable assailant with his one light gun, and was killed at his post. A brother officer, Skipper D. J. Nicholls, R.N.R., took command on the death of Sub-Lieutenant Barling, and continued the struggle with his one light gun. After being three times wounded and with four killed and three wounded out of a crew of 10, he succeeded by his energy in saving his ship, which was seriously damaged. Mention must also be made of the devotion to duty shown by the wireless operator of the drifter Floandi, Douglas M. Harris, A.B., R.N.V.R., who was found dead in his chair at the conclusion of the action, collapsed over the wireless log in which he was writing at the moment of his death.

It was satisfactory that the Bristol and Dartmouth were able to inflict a certain amount of punishment upon the Austrian raiders before the latter gained the shelter of their fortified base. Captain Todd, of the Bristol, was awarded the D.S.O. for his services during the action, while Captain Addison received the C.M.G. for his conduct, and especially for his excellent judgment and work in bringing his

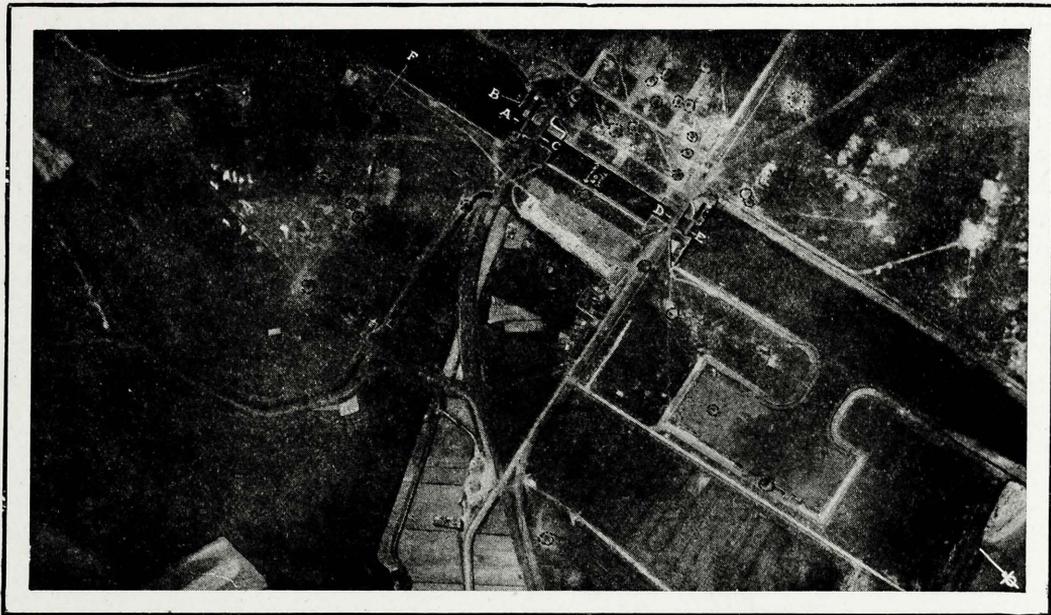
ship safely into port, when she had been torpedoed by an enemy submarine on her passage back, after the cruiser action was over.

Very effective also was the help rendered to the Italian forces by the British monitors sent to operate in the Adriatic. It was revealed in May that these monitors, operating from the Gulf of Trieste, were bombarding the Austrian positions and lines of communication, and enfilading the Hermada ridge. They came into action at daybreak on May 24, 1917, and bombarded with visible effect the railway near Nabresina, the fortifications at Presecco, a village with a high belfry which formed a conspicuous landmark, and Opcina Railway junction. Profiting by the fact that the Austrians evidently did not expect to be attacked from the sea, the range of their coast batteries not being long, the monitors approached near enough to the coast to be able to bombard the south-western slopes of Mount Hermada.

Three months later, on August 19, 1917, the monitors were reported to be again effectively co-operating with the Italian Royal Navy in bombarding the enemy communications and positions on the Lower Isonzo. Similarly, in the retreating movement of the Italian troops



SOME OF "IVERNIA'S" CREW ON A RAFT.



NAVAL AIR PHOTOGRAPH OF ZEEBRUGGE AFTER NAVAL BOMBARDMENT.

A, E, caissons of lock; B, spare caisson; D, E, bridge; F, storehouse damaged.

Shell holes can be seen all about the locks.

which began towards the end of October, 1917, the monitors were able to delay the Austrian advance by shelling from the sea off the mouth of the Piave.

Although at times, as has been indicated, questions of Admiralty methods or of Government policy were subjected to criticism, there was a general appreciation all the world over of the vital part which the British Navy continued to play in the conduct of the war on the side of the Allies. The burden upon the

British seamen was increased rather than decreased by the events of the year under review. Sir Eric Geddes, in his important speech on November 1, 1917, said :—

There are great and ever-greater calls upon the shipping of the world. The huge army that our ally the United States, is preparing has to be transported and maintained. Our French, Italian, Russian and other Allies require sea-borne help, and that help can only be given to the full extent which this country would wish if the nation is prepared strictly and rigorously to curtail its needs, to develop home resources and to conserve its present and potential maritime strength.

