

## CHAPTER CXX.

# THE WORK OF THE MERCANTILE MARINE.

WAR TRADITIONS OF THE MERCHANT SERVICE—SHIPS "TAKEN UP" BY THE NAVY—AUXILIARIES AND TRANSPORTS—THE RISK OF CAPTURE—MAURETANIA AND LUSITANIA—THE CARMANIA IN ACTION—ENCOUNTERS WITH GERMAN SUBMARINES—THE BRIXHAM SMACK PROVIDENCE—THE WAYFARER—THE LUSITANIA—THE SOUTHLAND—MERCHANT SHIPS AT THE DARDANELLES—THE EXPLOITS OF THE GERMAN RAIDER MOWE—CAPTURE OF THE APPAM—THE CLAN MACTAVISH—THE GREIF AND THE ALCANTARA—THE PATROL SERVICE.

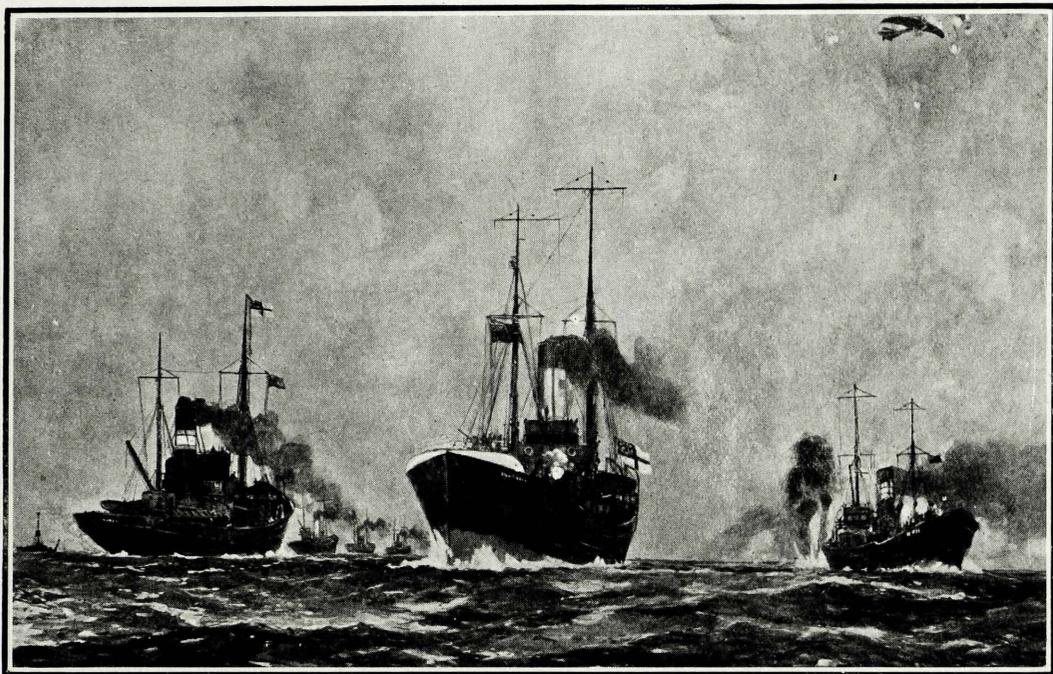
**A**MONG all the unpredicted developments of the Great War none perhaps was more remarkable than the part taken in it by our Mercantile Marine. There are, of course, as is known to everybody, two branches of the seagoing profession, one military and the other mercantile. A fusion of the two was far from the thoughts of most people. And yet history tells us that Nelson learnt seamanship on board a merchant vessel, and that the merchant seamen of Great Britain in all ages were always ready to take their share in the fighting whenever the cause of their country was involved. Perhaps the best known instance of the sheer audacity of the British Mercantile Marine was when fierce old Commodore Dance, of the Honourable East India Company's Service, ranged his merchant ships in line of battle and beat off the attack of Admiral Linois, who had under his command a line-of-battle ship, three heavy frigates, and a brig, in the Indian Ocean in 1804. From the beginnings of our Island story, deeply interwoven as they are in adventure and enterprise by sea; in all the centuries of battle during which the foundations of our Island Empire have been well and truly laid, the officers and men of our merchant navy have ever been the country's staunch defenders and loyal protectors when danger threatened. And be this also remembered: always they came as volunteers; they invariably flung their weight into the scale "for the fun of the thing."

Vol. VII.—Part 90.

It is true that they were not fighters by profession, but they have always shown an amazing aptitude for mastering the science of sea warfare, and an eagerness to engage in it, which has placed them in line with those to whom they held out a helping and a generous hand.

In all the wars in which England has been engaged there has inevitably occurred much loss of mercantile tonnage. But the Great War was totally unlike any other in which we had ever been engaged before; for although many ships were sunk by the enemy, and we by no means underestimated his capacity for mischief, still the fact remained that the reduction of our commercial carrying capacity was due principally to our naval and military commitments in the war overseas.

The Admiralty Transport Department gradually took up from one-third to one-half of the entire tonnage of our Mercantile Marine; and when we read the category into which the different ships fell we are tolerably certain that this is not an over-statement of the case. Ships were required as mine carriers and layers; troop transports; observation ships; ammunition ships; hospital ships; oilers; store ships; water ships; horse transports; colliers; balloon ships; meat carriers; and for a variety of other services too numerous to recapitulate. To officer these ships recourse was had to the Imperial Merchant Service Guild, and it was stated in one of the reports of that body that it had been instrumental in procuring for



#### AIRCRAFT v. SEACRAFT.

Auxiliary vessel of the Navy attacked by a bomb-dropping German aeroplane.

the service of the country no less than 2,500 captains and officers. The activities of these gentlemen were widely distributed, as they were employed in Royal Naval Reserve (general service); Royal Naval Reserve (patrol service); Royal Naval Reserve (boom defence); Royal Naval Reserve (mine sweeping); Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (mine-sweeping service); Royal Naval Reserve (special service); the Government Transport Service; Royal Naval Reserve (salvage service); Special Service Squadron (R.N.R.); Royal Naval Air Service; Trawler Reserve (R.N.R.); Royal Engineers (Inland Water Transport Section); appointments for service under Government on Suez Canal and Nile; Royal Indian Marine (commissions for active service in the East); Royal Indian Marine (transport service); Pilotage Appointments (Trinity House); Royal Fleet Auxiliary (under Government); and Merchant Fleet Auxiliary (under Government).

The officers employed in the various services enumerated were, of course, all directly under the Government, no matter in which branch they were serving. But there remained still the great bulk of the Mercantile Marine, carrying on its ordinary business, fetching and carrying from the uttermost ends of the earth to the wharves and the warehouses of London, Glasgow, Liverpool, and all the minor ports with which the United Kingdom is

ringed. The result is that we have to regard the Mercantile Marine in war from a dual standpoint: first as auxiliary to the Royal Navy in all those services enumerated above; secondly in its ordinary capacity for the transport of commodities to and from our shores. Nevertheless it stood one and indivisible; whether it was employed in actual warlike operations, or in the ordinary avocations of commerce, it deserved the recognition of all inhabitants of our Empire for the coolness and dogged courage that it displayed. Nothing could bring home better to the mind of the land folk how imperturbable was the quality of our merchant sailors than the study of the advertisements that figured in the front pages of our great shipping newspapers. Did you desire to cross the Western Ocean, to proceed "up the Straits," to visit the Far East, South America, the Pacific, Australia, or the Scandinavian ports, you could take your choice among the regular steamship lines that plied for your convenience:

Swift shuttles of an Empire's loom  
That bind us main to main

have never ceased to connect Great Britain with the uttermost ends of the earth. The sea is a jealous mistress, and year in year out never ceases to take toll of the ships that use the sea; wreck, collision, fire, grounding, hazards innumerable, encircle the calling of the

mariner in the piping times of peace ; the war risks that were added would have tried the temper and the nerves of any men less constitutionally fearless.

The King, ever sympathetic where his seamen were concerned, early in the war placed his appreciation in words in a letter through his secretary to Lord Muskerry :

“The King realises what magnificent work has been done by the brave officers and crews of his Merchant Service during the past months of war.”

Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, in a letter to the Secretary of the Imperial Merchant Service Guild, said :

The promptitude with which the country's call on their merchant officers and seamen has been met is invaluable. The wonderful facility with which they have learnt to carry out their duties as part of a trained fighting force is extraordinary. The Allied nations owe them a deep debt of gratitude for these responses, as well as for their indomitable pluck and endurance.

Admiral Sir John Jellicoe wrote as follows :

I beg to assure you that no one could possibly appreciate more than myself the services of the officers and men of the Mercantile Marine, as I know so well their work during the war, and how splendidly it has been carried out.

Admiral Lord Beresford wrote :

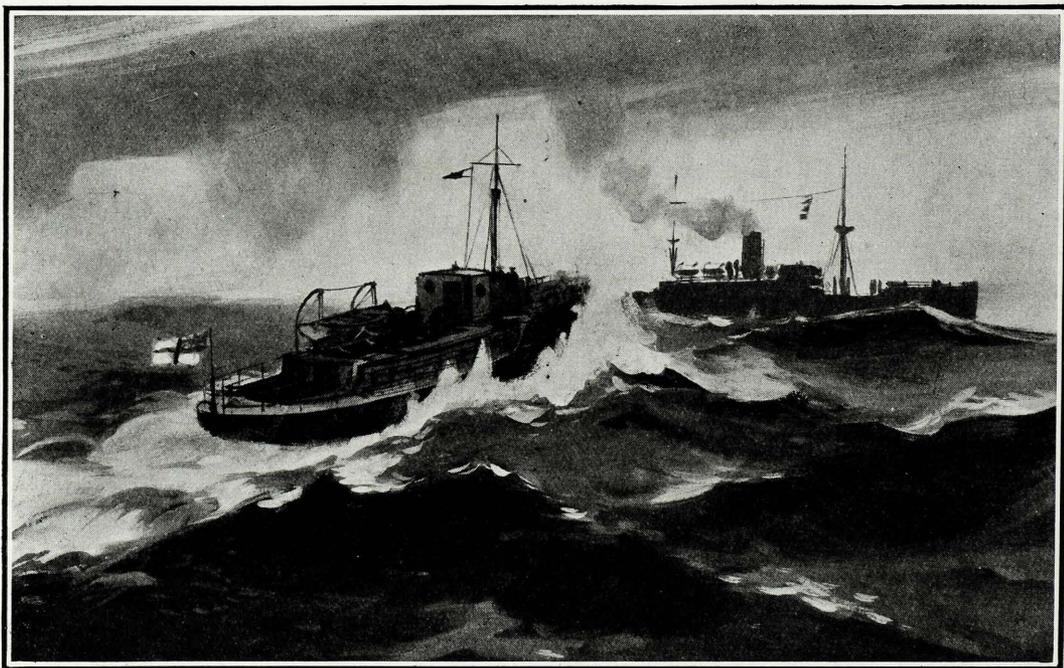
The country never really appreciates what it owes to the officers and men of the Mercantile Marine. During peace, their loyalty to duty and hardihood in encountering the endless difficulties connected with the sea ensures the punctual and certain delivery of food and raw material. Now in war their readiness of resource and

gallantry has been exhibited on many occasions. The German pirates have discovered that an unarmed British merchant ship can tackle a submarine by skill of seamanship and the art of handling a vessel. I believe we have now some 2,500 vessels, not men-of-war—namely merchant ships, trawlers, drifters, yachts, etc., employed doing men-of-war work, half of them undertaking patrols. The British Mercantile Marine have well maintained their splendid traditions during the war.

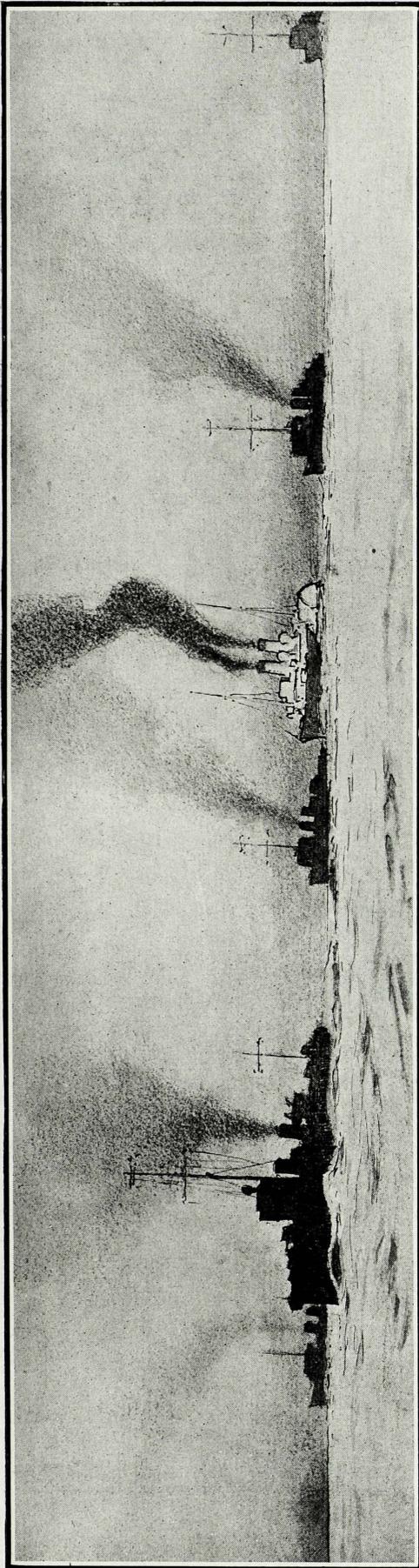
It would be possible to quote many similar opinions of other distinguished and representative men.

As far as the Mercantile Marine is concerned the war divided itself into two periods : first, from the declaration of war on August 4, 1914 ; and second, from the declaration by Germany that from February 18, 1915, she would torpedo at sight all vessels found in what she was pleased to denominate “the war area.”

Naturally the question in the minds of all persons interested in shipping when the war began was : Supposing German men-of-war capture British merchant vessels, what procedure will they adopt, there being no ports into which prizes can be taken ? This query was answered by that ingenious officer, the Captain of the Emden, in no uncertain fashion. Between September 10 and 14, 1914, he captured no less than seven vessels ; of these six were sunk, and the captured crews transferred to the seventh. Again, on September 30, he captured six ships, when the same procedure was adopted, five being sunk, and one released. The ancient



MOTOR-BOAT RESERVE IN ATTENDANCE ON TRANSPORTS.



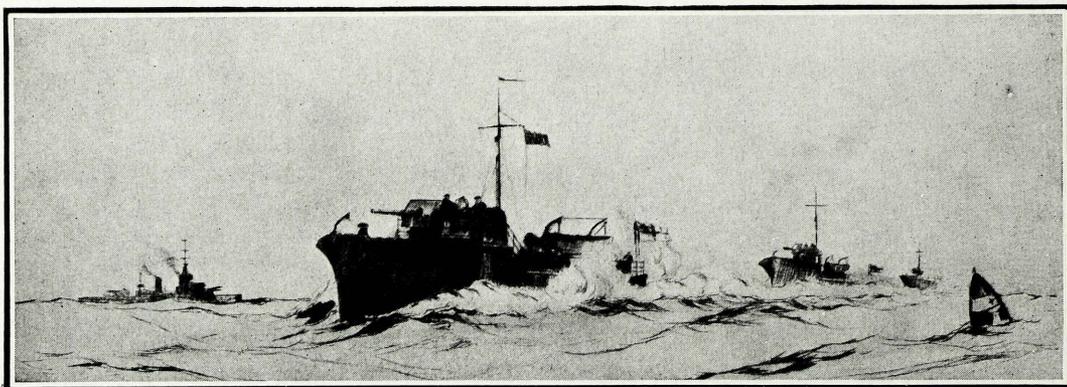
THE BRITISH MAIL BOATS' ESCORT: KEEPING THE ROAD OPEN TO FRIENDLY AND NEUTRAL SHIPPING.

rules of warfare were set at naught, and our foes showed that by sea, as by land, they would be bound by no restrictions of law or of humanity.

In the first phase of the war our merchant seamen were confronted with the fact that a number of enemy warships were distributed about the ocean, and the risk of capture from them was considerable. They knew that a certain class of neutral would be only too ready to serve as ocean spies, and that they would have to use their wits to avoid the dangers with which they were threatened. Those who knew our merchant captains knew also that in any emergency they might be relied upon to display that courage, resourcefulness, and aptitude which is the heritage of their profession. Some cases may be cited which show how this confidence was not misplaced.

The *Mauretania*, the splendid 32,000-ton ocean flyer belonging to the Cunard Company, sailed from Liverpool on August 1, 1914, with a large complement of saloon, second cabin and third-class passengers, and war was declared when she was in mid-Atlantic. During the night of August 5 she received information by wireless that a German cruiser was on her track. Captain Charles, C.B., R.N.R., hesitated not an instant; he screened all lights on board, altered course to the northward, and made the British port of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in record time. We can well imagine the excitement that reigned on board, but this excitement was translated into action by the toiling firemen at the furnaces below. The safety of all on board, the escape of a ship, the value of which was nearer two millions than one and a half, rested principally with the men who handled the shovel and the slice. When Halifax Harbour was won a deputation of passengers waited on Captain Charles to compliment him upon the manner in which he had manœuvred his ship and saved all hands from a watery grave or a German prison.

The sister ship of the *Mauretania*, the *Lusitania*, the ship whose name afterwards branded the German name with eternal infamy, left New York for Liverpool on August 4, the day that war was declared. Shortly after leaving the Ambrose Channel she encountered an unknown cruiser, which signalled to her to consider herself captured, and at the same time steered so as to cut her off. But Captain Dow, of the *Lusitania*, was of a different opinion to the German commander; he altered course to the northward of the usual



#### FULL SPEED AHEAD.

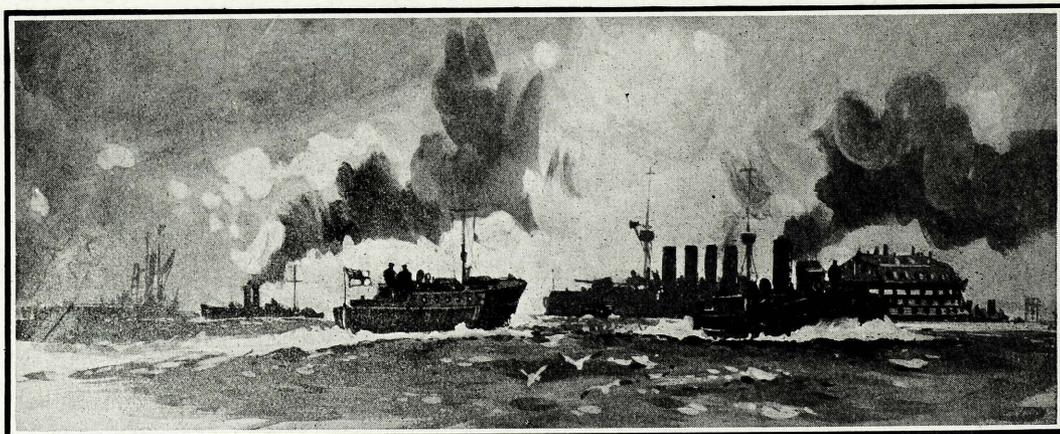
Craft of the Motor-boat Reserve on active service.

track, telling his engine-room staff that there was hurry toward. Fortune favoured the brave on this occasion, and the *Lusitania* ran into a fog which sheltered her from her pursuer, whom she never saw again, and she arrived in Liverpool without encountering any other enemy craft.

On another occasion, on February 10, 1915, Captain Dow, when off the Irish coast, deceived enemy vessels by hoisting the American flag: this action caused a good deal of comment in the United States of America, but no complaint was made by the Government of the United States. The stratagem is of course perfectly legitimate and as old as the time when first ships went to sea flying the banner of the countries to which they belonged.

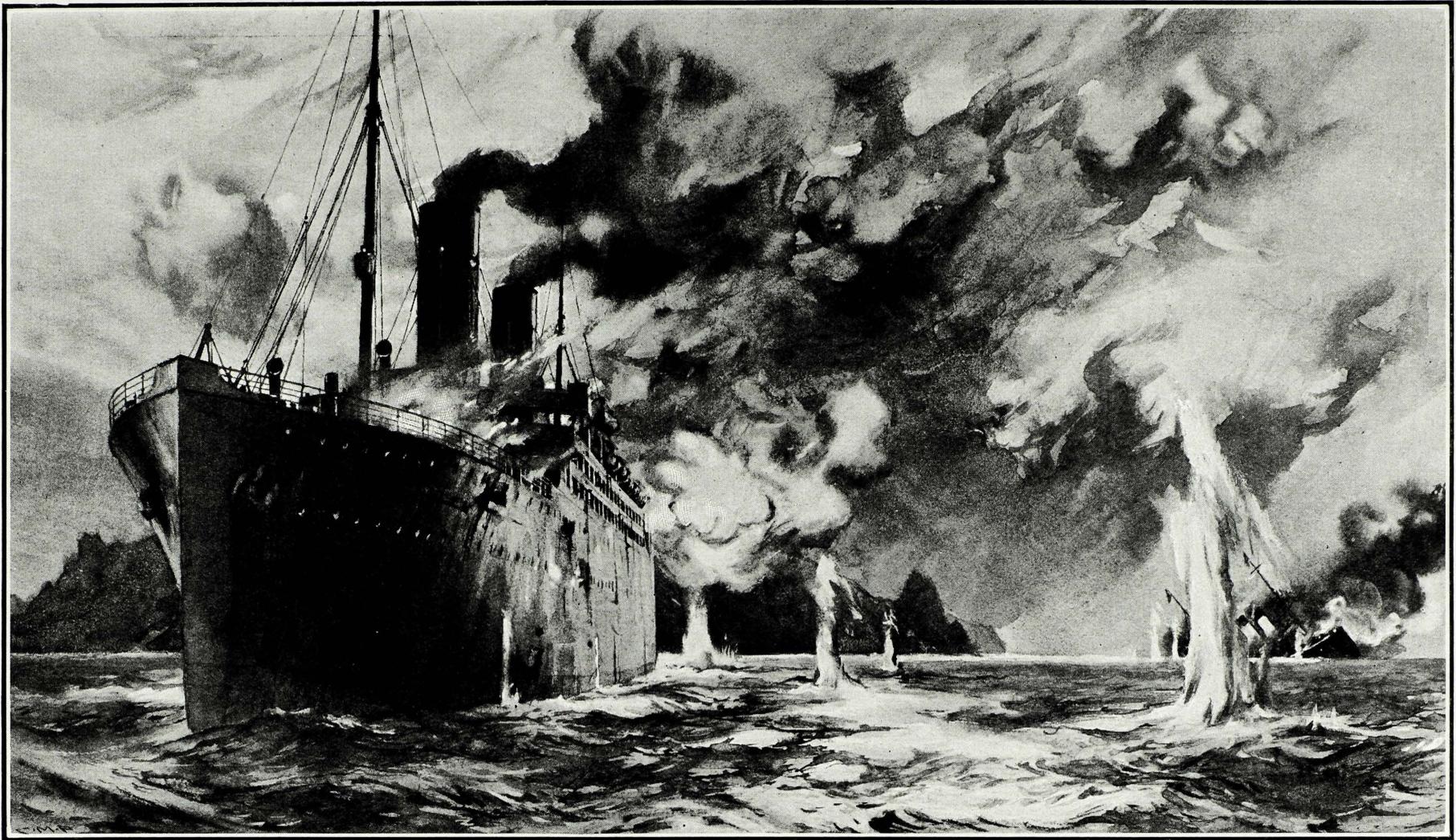
It is, of course, well known that a large number of merchant vessels were taken up by the Admiralty at the beginning of the war to act as auxiliary cruisers to protect our trade routes; the work that they did was of incal-

culable value. In this provision of commissioned merchant cruisers we were copied by the enemy, and it so happened that a British mercantile cruiser, H.M.S. *Carmania*, met with a German vessel of similar type on the coast of South America, on September 14, 1914. The *Carmania* was just a month from home, having left Liverpool on August 15. Shortly after land was sighted a ship was made out ahead, a liner somewhat similar to the *Carmania*. This vessel was the German armed merchantman *Cap Trafalgar*, mounting eight 4-inch guns and pom-poms. When first made out by the *Carmania* she had two colliers alongside from which she was taking in coal. On sighting the *Carmania* the colliers were cast off from the *Cap Trafalgar*, and the two departed in different directions. The *Cap Trafalgar* after apparently trying to make her escape, thought better of it and headed for the English ship. The weather was fine and sunny with a moderate breeze from north-east. At 8,500 yards Captain Noel



#### THE BRITISH MOTOR-BOAT RESERVE.

Arrival at the dépôt ship for orders.



THE SINKING OF THE "CAP TRAFALGAR," SEPTEMBER 14th, 1914.  
The German armed merchantman taking a list to starboard after a twenty-five minute fight with H.M.S. "Carmania."  
*Specially drawn for "The Times History of the War."*

Grant, R N., of the *Carmania*, fired a shot across the bows of the German ship. She replied by firing at the *Carmania* from her starboard-after gun. The battle thus begun soon became animated, but Captain Grant reported that most of the German shots were aimed too high: in consequence rigging, masts, funnels, ventilators, and derricks, suffered the most damage at first. Whether the German gunners were flurried or not it is difficult to say, but one who was present at the action said that at first the *Cap Trafalgar* was firing five shots to the *Carmania*'s one. One German shell passed through the cabin under the fore bridge of the *Carmania* and started a fire which was rather a serious matter, as the chemical fire extinguishers proved of very little use, and the *Carmania*'s fire main (used for the extinguishing of fire on board ship) had been shot through. So firm a hold did the fire obtain that the fore bridge had to be abandoned and the ship coned from aft. At the beginning of the action the range was closing, and at one period the ships were as close as 3,200 yards. Captain Grant, however, finding himself annoyed by pom-pom fire at the shorter ranges, opened out the distance, and always handled his ship with the greatest ability and discretion. She was a huge target; in consequence he manoeuvred to keep her bows on, in which position he could use four guns, or again, stern on, he could use four guns.

In this duel the ships were very evenly matched, as both were magnificent vessels, the *Cap Trafalgar* being an almost brand new liner of 18,170 tons. Such being the case, it was a question of handling; and here we will let one speak who was aboard the *Carmania*.

After about twenty-five minutes there was only one ship in it, and that was not her (*sic*). She broke out in flames forward, and the fire seemed to spread like lightning. Smoke was coming from her from end to end. She, however, continued firing, although we noticed she was not firing so many guns. About this time she decided to run away, but this was useless, as she had taken a slight list to starboard in the first quarter of an hour, and this had continued to increase. Consequently, when she decided to run she could hardly budge. The list continued, and we still kept on showing her no mercy. It was then noticeable that only one gun was firing, the starboard after; the list had increased to such an extent by this time that she seemed as if she was going to turn turtle. We had practically ceased firing at her by now, watching her, when the gunlayer at the after gun must have elevated his gun and fired at us in his last effort, for we saw the gun flash and the projectiles dropped about what appeared to us 20 yards from his own ship, but I expect it was three or four hundred yards. She then began to settle—you could see her propellers.

The captain seeing that she had not hauled down her



**CAPTAIN NOEL GRANT,**  
Of H.M.S. "*Carmania*," leaving the Admiralty Court after the award of the prize bounty to the officers and crew of the "*Carmania*," for the destruction of the "*Cap Trafalgar*."

flag ordered three rounds to be fired into her, which was done on the port side. She then gradually heaved over until you could see right in her funnels, which were level with the water. There was then a sort of explosion and her bows disappeared, bringing her stern out of the water. Then there seemed a second explosion and she disappeared altogether, leaving five boats full, which were picked up by one of the colliers.

The official report gives the time of the action as one hour and forty minutes. The *Carmania* was unable to pick up the survivors as the ship had to be put in front of the wind at once in order to deal with the fire beneath the fore bridge: she was hit by seventy-nine projectiles which made 304 holes; the ship had been rendered unseaworthy and practically all communications and navigational instruments were destroyed. She was escorted into harbour by H.M.S. *Cornwall*, and there effected temporary repairs. Nine men were killed and twenty-six wounded on board the ship. How many lost their lives on board the *Cap Trafalgar* is not known, but the collier landed 279 officers and men of the German ship at Buenos Aires.

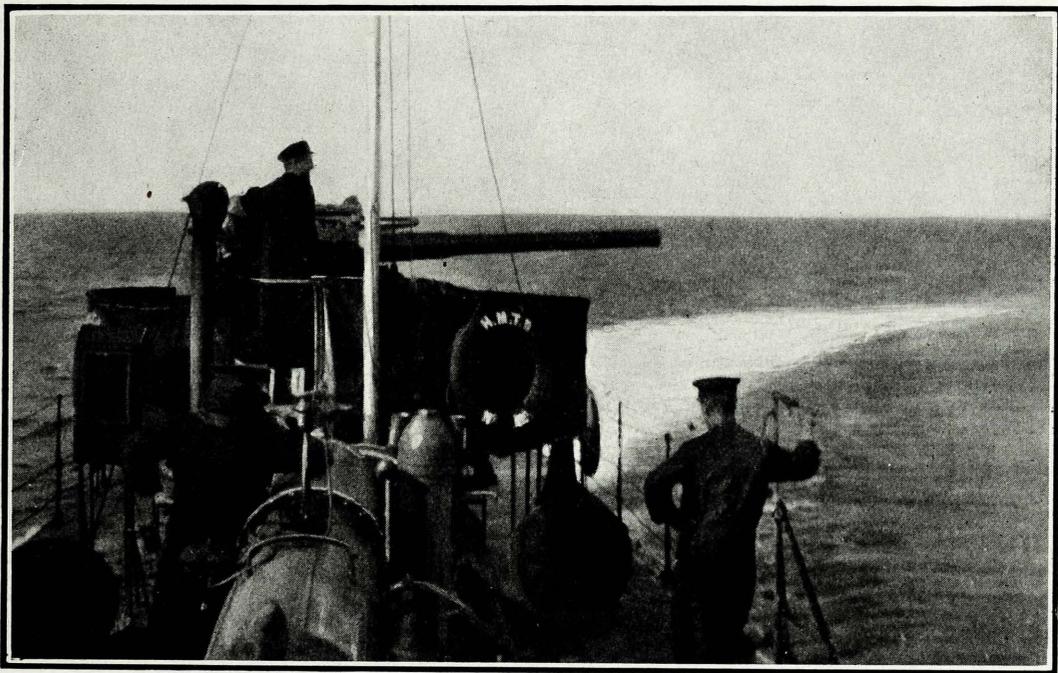
Under the Naval Prize Act the *Carmania* was awarded prize bounty of £2,115 for the destruction of the *Cap Trafalgar*.

In November, 1914, the Admiralty decided that the whole of the North Sea must henceforward be considered as a military area. They were led to this decision by the fact that the Germans had been scattering mines indiscriminately in the open sea on the main trade routes from America to Liverpool via the North of Ireland. Already merchant ships had been blown up and sunk by these engines of destruction, and the toll would have been far greater had it not been for the warnings of British cruisers. It was pointed out that these mines had been laid by merchant vessels flying a neutral flag, the watch on the trade routes having been far too close for the laying of mines by German warships. Further, that mine laying under a neutral flag and reconnaissance conducted by trawlers, hospital ships, and neutral vessels, were the ordinary features of German naval warfare. Accordingly, as guardians of the seas, the Admiralty felt it incumbent upon them to take exceptional measures, and gave the notice spoken of above. Within the area of the North Sea merchant shipping of all kinds, traders of all countries, and fishing craft, were exposed to the gravest dangers from the mines that we on our side had been

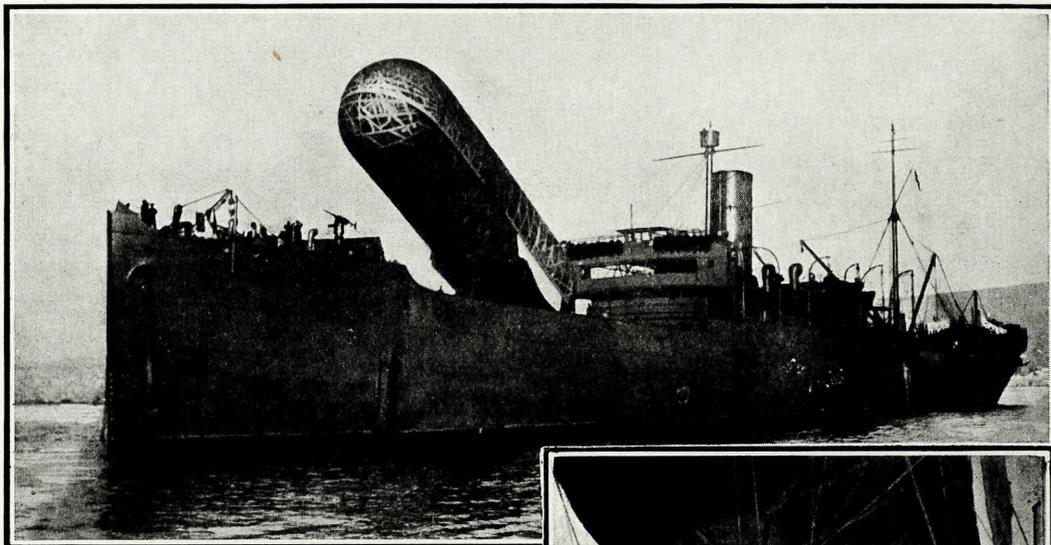
obliged to lay, and from warships searching diligently by night and day for suspicious craft.

All merchant ships and fishing vessels were accordingly warned of the dangers they encountered by entering this area save in strict accordance with Admiralty directions. Every effort was made to convey the warning to neutral countries and vessels at sea, but from November 5 onwards the Admiralty announced that all ships passing a line drawn from the northern point of the Hebrides through the Faroe Islands to Iceland did so at their own peril. Routes were given for ships to follow in order that they might reach their destinations in safety.

This scattering of mines broadcast, in the manner indicated, was the first indication of the German policy of frightfulness upon the high seas. By it they intended so to frighten the mariner of the British Mercantile Marine that he would refuse to put to sea in so dangerous an area. In this the Teuton showed his constitutional incapacity to understand the dauntless courage of the men against whom this danger was directed. While one section of the sailors of England swept diligently for mines, the other section pursued their ordinary business upon the seas as unconcernedly as if no such persons as Germans existed, and as if



ON BOARD A BRITISH TORPEDO BOAT.  
Gun practice in the North Sea.



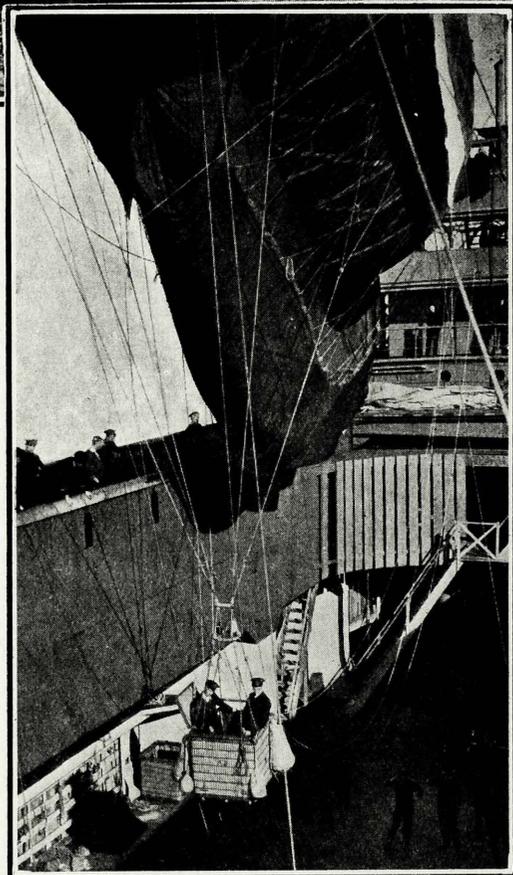
ON BOARD THE KITE BALLOON SHIP  
H.M.S. "CANNING."

The balloon about to make an ascent.  
Smaller picture: Balloon observers above the hold.

no such contrivances as mines had ever been invented. It is true that ships were sunk, and that the mine sweepers were exposed to the most dreadful peril. One of the men engaged in mine sweeping expressed the opinion "that this 'ere *is* a bit thick," on the third occasion on which he was blown up, and when the trawler's winch weighing three-quarters of a ton whizzed past his head as he stood at the tiller. This, however, did not prevent him from shipping in a fourth mine sweeper after he had been picked up and taken back to an East Coast port.

On April 12, 1915, there limped into Hampton Roads, U.S.A., the Kronprinz Wilhelm. She was a deplorable spectacle, with her sides streaming red rust and carrying a very perceptible list: yet she had done an extraordinary amount of damage to her enemy, which is best told in the words of her own commander:—

Our work is not yet finished. We are going back to sea. This ship is unkempt inside and out, I admit, but that is because we had to coal at sea, and the only way that could be done was by taking coal on deck and carrying it down through the saloons to the bunkers. We had no guns when we left New York, but we knew what we were about. Our original intention was to get armament from the Karlsruhe, but we ran into the British steamer La Correntina, which was armed, but without ammunition. We took her guns. We had no ammunition to waste, and most of the ships that we took we sank by opening the seacocks. We rammed the Nova Scotian, a schooner, and took off her crew. We took more than 1,000 prisoners from various craft, and kept most of them for two months. We found this expensive, and got into communication with the collier Holgar, which landed the prisoners at Buenos Aires. . . .



The biggest prize of our entire trip was the British steamer La Correntina. We came upon her in the South Atlantic. She showed no fight. We boarded her, took two 3-inch guns and five million pounds of beef, and then opened her seacocks. The Indian Prince, which was captured on September 7, did not prove a rich prize. On November 11 we secured 3,100 tons of coal from the French barque Union. We stored the coal in the saloon and first-class cabins. After that our ship never looked clean. On December 23 we captured the Hemisphere and took 500 tons of coal. On January 10 we ran into the British steamer Potaro in ballast. We opened her seacocks. On January 14 we secured the Royal Mail steamship Highland Brae; she carried 51 passengers and a crew of 94. We took these aboard and large quantities of provisions. Later on the same day we got the British steamer Wilfred loaded with

fish and potatoes. The only neutral ship we sank was the Norwegian sailing vessel *Sonantha*, with a cargo of wheat bound for Liverpool. On February 22 we overtook the British freighter *Chase Hill* . . . instead of sinking him I transferred 400 men and women to his vessel, and told him to take them ashore.

This raider also sank the French steamer *Guadaloupe* and the British s.s. *Tamar* with 68,000 sacks of coffee on March 24. Four days later the *Coleby*, laden with wheat, met the same fate. Although the career of the *Kronprinz Wilhelm* was neither so meteoric nor so destructive as was that of the *Emden*, it is perhaps even more remarkable; there must also be much left to tell.

One by one, however, the raiders were captured or driven off the seas to be interned in the ports of neutrals. The oversea commerce of Germany, strangled from the outset of the war, had not been redeemed by any specially dashing exploits by the High Sea Fleet. But the German naval authorities felt that something must be done. Accordingly on February 18, 1915, was published the infamous decree that Germany had declared all the coasts of the United Kingdom "a war area," and within that area all ships were to be torpedoed at sight and without warning. At first, civilized humanity would not believe that even Germany would go to such lengths as this; but they found that they were entirely mistaken. The system of sea murder began. Passenger liners, refugee ships, hospital ships, coasters, freighters, trawlers and drifters, all were to (and all did) fall a prey to these cowardly assassins. Thereafter, to risk of floating mine and of prowling German cruiser was added the terror that stalked beneath the sea for our ships and our men. Once more they rose to the occasion. Deep sea long-voyage sailors and firemen, the men who man our coasters, the fishermen, or rather such of them as were left who were not fishing for mines, continued "to go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters," and, not only did they do this, but they applied for and got guns with which to defend themselves. This latter proceeding caused genuine annoyance to the Germans. To paraphrase a famous saying, they described the average British merchant vessel as "a treacherous animal that defends itself when attacked."

Examples of the manner in which the merchant ships resisted their assailants were given by the Germans themselves. On February 10, 1916, the representatives of the neutral Powers

at Berlin were handed a memorandum in which the German Government announced its decision to treat all armed merchantmen as warships on and from March 1, thus rendering them liable to be sunk at sight. In annexe No. 4 of this memorandum, which was transmitted by wireless to the German Embassy at Washington on February 26, a list of eighteen cases was given in which merchant vessels opened fire when attacked by German or Austrian submarines. In fifteen instances the defence of the merchant ships was successful, and they escaped destruction, illustrating the great advantage of a gun armament in such circumstances. The following were typical cases in the German compilation:

*September 10, 1915.*—In the Western Mediterranean an unknown steamer was asked to show her flag, and thereupon she opened fire with about 10-centimetre guns from her stern. The submarine escaped by submerging quickly.

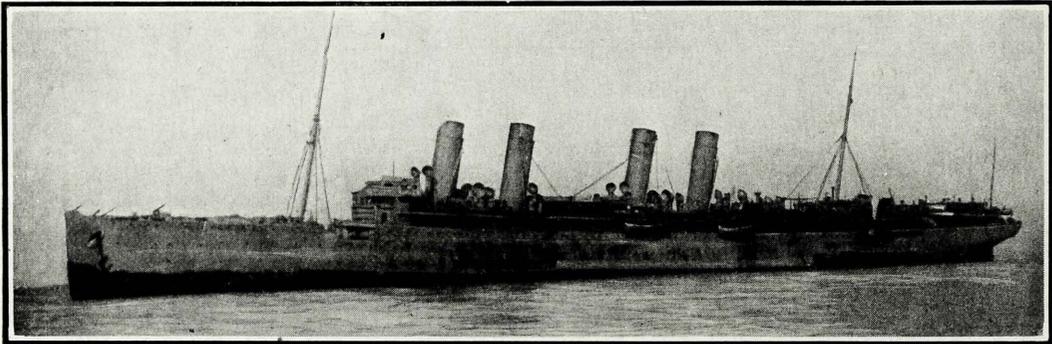
*November 23, 1915.*—In the Western Mediterranean the British steamer, *City of Marseilles*, was fired at by a submarine as a warning. A large freight steamer without flag turned round, and by artillery fire from ten cannon of about 10 centimetre calibre opened fire. The submarine had to abandon the pursuit and the steamer escaped. A newspaper telegram from Bombay of January 14, 1916, corroborated details of the event, and the steamer stated that it had sunk the submarine.

This German list of encounters between merchantmen and submarines was naturally confined to episodes from which the submarines returned unharmed. From other sources it was known that on certain occasions the submarines never returned at all, but were sunk by their mercantile opponents. The facts revealed the determination of the British merchant seamen to defend their ships to the utmost when attacked, and showed that the men in those vessels which had been provided with guns of small calibre for their protection knew how to use them. Owing to the action of the submarines there had come about a return to the practice of olden days, when every ship had to carry guns for defence or else sail under the protection of a convoying squadron. In those days it was the privateers and pirates who constituted the menace to the sea trader; in this war, means of defence were needed against the submarine pirates. The psychological processes of the Teuton are hard to fathom. He gloried in the most cowardly system of sea murder that had ever been invented. By processes of logic, which seemed to him irrefutable, he set the seal of his approval on this new form of frightfulness; but that submarines should, if possible, be sunk on sight by a merchantman that had had the effrontery to

arm herself with a gun, called forth from him the strongest reprobation.

On January 1, at 3 a.m., H.M.S. Formidable was torpedoed by a German submarine in the Channel, some 15 miles from Berry Head. The tale of this tragedy has been told elsewhere; it is referred to here to bring into prominence once again the part taken in the rescue of 68 men of the ill-fated battleship by the Brixham fishing smack Providence, owned and skippered by William Pillar. This little craft was running for shelter before the gale then blowing for Brixham, but when off the Start had to heave to owing to the violence of the wind and the tremendous run of the sea. Those who know the fisherman are aware that it is no trifle that causes him to heave to, especially when he has his home port close under his lee. Presently the third hand of the smack noticed, to his

was accomplished is nothing short of miraculous. But the iron nerve of William Pillar at the helm, the alertness of his little handful of a crew, never failed for an instant: it was one of those tense and wonderful moments in which the British seaman rises to heights of achievement seemingly impossible, when nerve and brain and hand and muscle, subordinated to the will of one master mind, work together for the accomplishment of the incredible. Four times did the smack approach close enough to heave a rope to the boat—and four times she failed; each failure meant a fresh manœuvre for position, a renewed chance of the sinking of the boat by collision in seas that ran thirty feet from trough to crest, topped with breaking foam that showed a wan yellow in the fitful moonlight. At last a light warp was passed on board the man-of-war boat, brought to the



THE GERMAN RAIDER "KRONPRINZ WILHELM."

At anchor at Hampton Roads, U.S.A.

amazement, a small boat to leeward driving through the sea with one oar upended, to which was attached a sailor's scarf. There was no hesitation on board the smack. In some miraculous fashion they managed to put another reef in the mainsail and to bend and hoist the storm jib. The Providence had then to manœuvre to get the boat alongside, and to do this she had to gybe—which means passing her stern to the wind. Nothing but most desperate and urgent necessity would have caused that fine seaman in command of the smack to have done this, as he risked dismasting his craft. Having accomplished the manœuvre he had to run down to the boat and get her alongside; to do this he had to round to and bring the head of the smack up to the wind again. Further, there was imminent risk when the boat was approached that she might be run down and sunk. How in the darkness, the shouting gale, and the monstrous sea that was running, this

capstan of the smack, and, with infinite precaution, the one craft was warped up close enough astern of the other for a transference to begin and for the sailors in the small boat to jump on board the smack. True to the traditions of the great service to which he belonged, Torpedo Gunner Hurrigan, the senior officer in the cutter, was the last man to leave; then the warp was cut, the cutter drifted astern, and the smack headed for Brixham. They arrived safely and the shipwrecked mariners were tenderly cared for, while, during the passage, all the available food in the smack had been served out to the rescued men. This is the story of that well-named Brixham fishing vessel Providence: and no man or woman who reads it can fail in passionate admiration for the rescuers of that sorely tried remnant of the crew of the Formidable, who were adrift in a small, overcrowded boat in that terrible January gale; a boat, moreover, that had been stove and was kept



WAR-PAINT IN A LONDON DOCK.  
Armed British Liners being painted "Man-o'-war grey."

afloat by a pair of trousers stuffed into the hole.

From the very beginning of the submarine campaign by the Germans there appears to have been only one pronounced determination among our merchant seamen, and that was to assume the offensive on every possible occasion. One and all seem to have been animated by the same spirit. Thus Captain H. Gibson, of the steam tug *Homer*, belonging to South Shields, was awarded a gold watch and a letter on vellum from the Admiralty expressing their admiration of his conduct.

The *Homer* was towing the French barque *General de Sonis* when she was hailed by a German submarine and told to surrender. Captain Gibson's method of surrender was to slip the tow rope and steer straight for the submarine, in spite of a shower of bullets from a machine gun. Unfortunately, the *Homer* missed the stern of the submarine by a few feet, whereupon the U boat turned and chased the tug. She even went so far as to fire a torpedo at her contemptuous opponent, which was, when one considers it, a high compliment. However, the torpedo missed its mark, and Captain Gibson brought the *Homer* triumphantly into Bembridge, Isle of Wight, with his

vessel peppered and scarred with bullet marks.

Captain J. W. Bell was the fortunate officer to win the sum of £500 offered by the paper *Syren and Shipping* for the first merchant service captain to sink an enemy submarine; other awards totalled up the sum he received to £1,160. This is the entry from the ship's official log:

About 9.30 this morning, while proceeding from Blyth towards Plymouth, Beachy Head, distant 8 to 10 miles, observed the periscope of a submarine on the starboard bow. Ordered all hands on deck in case of emergency. Then observed the submarine to pass across our bow on to the port beam, where it took up a position 30 to 40 yards off. Shortly after noticed the wake of a torpedo on the starboard beam; put the helm hard over to starboard and ran over the periscope, when I and the crew heard and felt the crash under our bottom. Did not see the submarine after, but saw oil floating on the water.

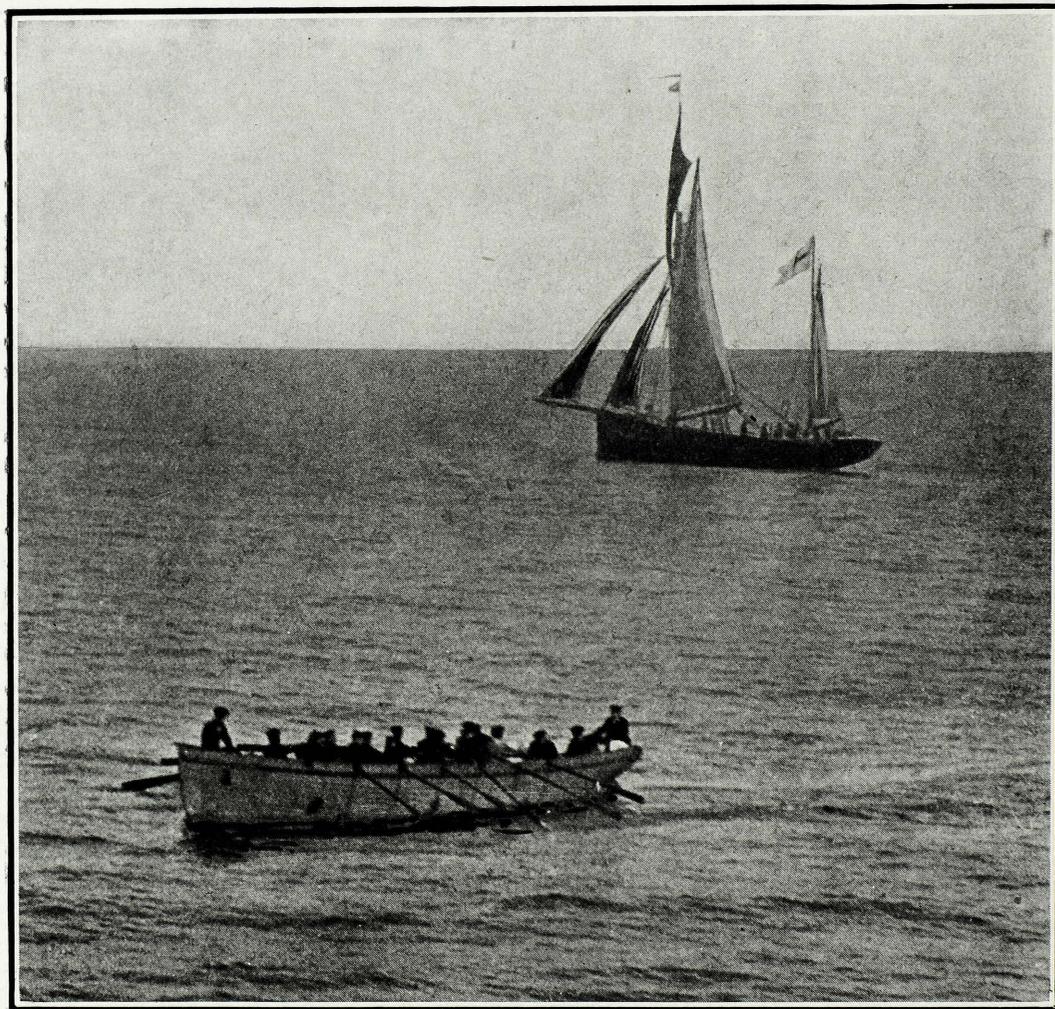
(Signed) J. W. BELL, *Master*.  
JOHN PEGG, *Mate*.

The ship was docked for examination and the statement of Captain Bell was fully borne out by the marks on the bottom; and not only did this fortunate mariner reap the reward that has been mentioned, but he was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross and granted a temporary Lieutenant's commission in the Royal Naval Reserve.

When Captain T. Atkinson of the s.s. *Oceola* was proceeding down Channel he sighted the ss. *Western Coast* and *Rio Parana*, both of which had been torpedoed, and also another ship making in towards the land as fast as she could steam. Prudence would have dictated a course in the opposite direction to the torpedoed vessels, but Captain Atkinson was not one of the prudent breed. He accordingly approached the torpedoed ships on a zig-zag course, picked up the boats of the *Western Coast* and brought them safely into port; while the people of the *Parana* were being attended to by a British destroyer that had arrived upon the scene. On a later occasion Captain Atkinson was followed by a submarine, from which he escaped by running into thick weather; and he also had the experience of having bombs dropped at him by two enemy Taube aeroplanes; from which attentions he

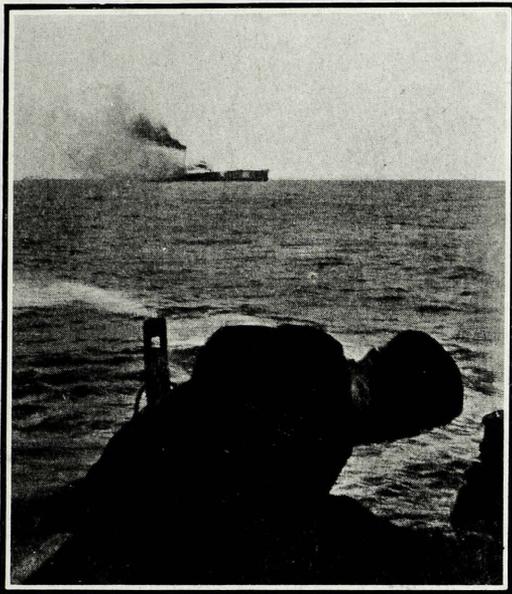
escaped by the skilful handling of his ship.

When the transport *Wayfarer* was torpedoed in the Atlantic on April 11, 1915, she had on board 700 horses and a yeomanry detachment. After the explosion the ship was abandoned by the crew and the troops in boats, and they proceeded to the s.s. *Framfield*, which fortunately happened to be in the vicinity. Finding that the *Wayfarer* did not sink, the captain, Captain D. G. Cownie, called for volunteers to return. Accompanied by all his officers, some of the crew, and a proportion of the yeomanry, headed by the Major in command and the two subalterns, Captain Cownie returned to the damaged vessel. Captain Bain of the *Framfield*, with 35 of the crew and 169 of the yeomanry on board, then made fast a wire hawser and towed the *Wayfarer* to within 16 miles of Queenstown, from which port she was 108



**BOARDING AND EXAMINING A SUSPICIOUS VESSEL.**  
British sailors leaving the ship after examination.

miles distant when torpedoed, and there handed her over to two Government tugs. Lord Derby, at the Liverpool Town Hall, at the request of the Admiralty, presented inscribed gold watches to Captain Cownie; Mr. H. L. Pritchard, Chief Officer; Mr. E. R. Bury, Second Officer; Mr. E. Davies, Third Officer; and also to the engineers. Seeing that she had a hole in her side thirty-five feet by twenty-five, and one interior bulkhead entirely destroyed, we can appreciate the courage and determination of Captain Cownie, his officers and crew, and those gallant yeomen who stood by the ship and her lading of dumb



NORWEGIAN STEAMER  
"TRONDHJEMAJORD."

Torpedoed by a German submarine.

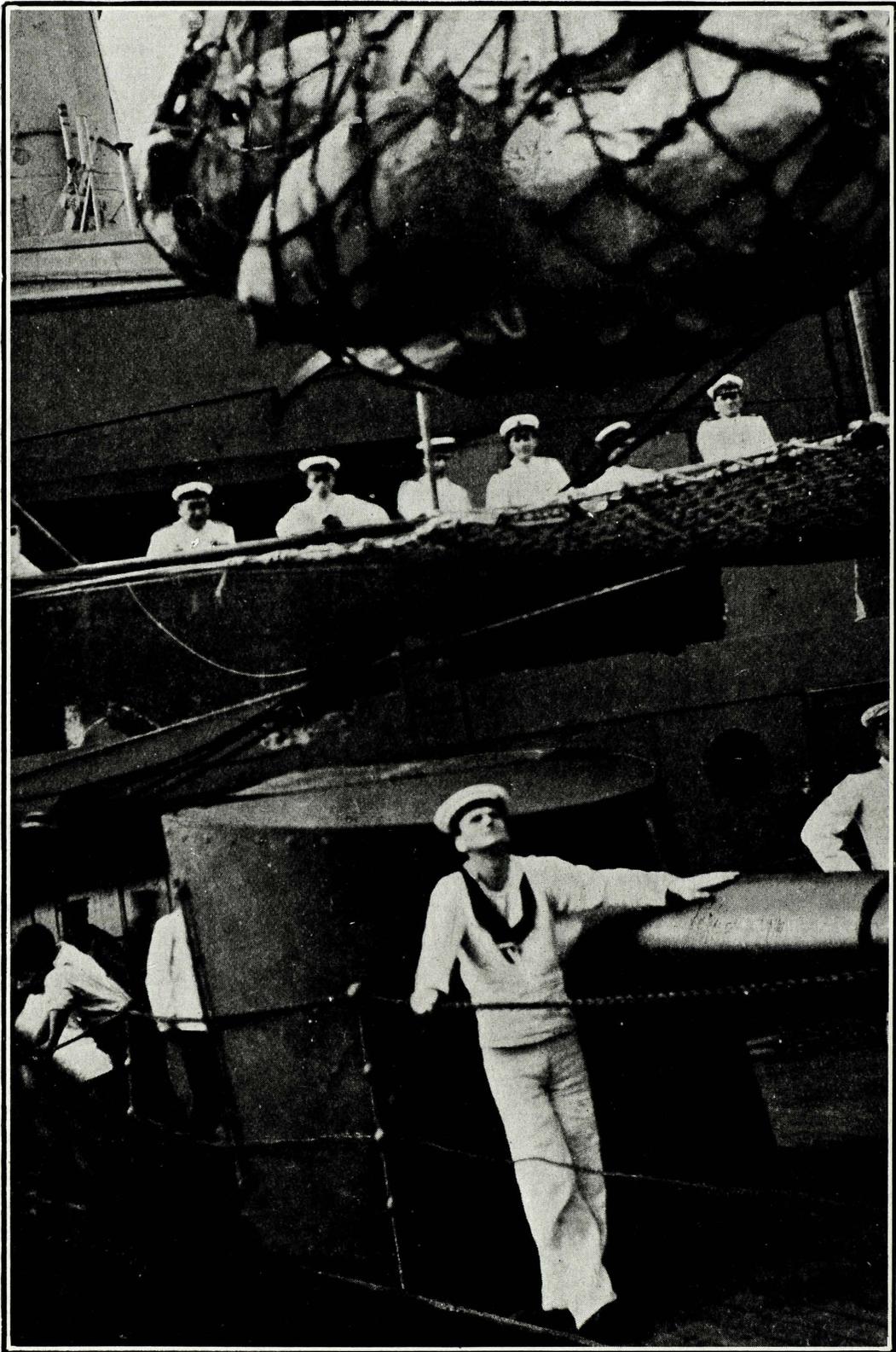
animals in that perilous voyage back to Queens-town.

But Germany's crowning deed of shame was the torpedoing of the Cunard Liner *Lusitania* on May 6, 1915. In this wholesale massacre twelve hundred and twenty-five persons, men, women and children, lost their lives. This outrage was received with shouts of joy in Germany; but even so an attempt was made to palliate the deed. Instantly the German Press began to explain. It was stated that the *Lusitania* was an armed cruiser that was laden with munitions of war, and in consequence of this the submarines were quite justified in sinking the ship. That this was a deliberate and calculated lie is known to all the world. To reinforce the lies told in print, pictures were produced in the illustrated newspapers depicting the sinking of the

*Lusitania*, and showing guns mounted both forward and aft. At the time of the disaster there was a good deal of discussion as to why the *Lusitania* was allowed to enter the danger zone in the Irish Sea unaccompanied by an escort; but nothing transpired at the inquest on the bodies of the victims of the outrage, or subsequently, to account for this apparent neglect. According to the evidence of Captain Turner, the master of the *Lusitania*, the ship remained afloat only some eighteen minutes after being struck; and it was only owing to the fact that the sea was dead smooth at the time of the explosion that even the minority who were saved escaped with their lives.

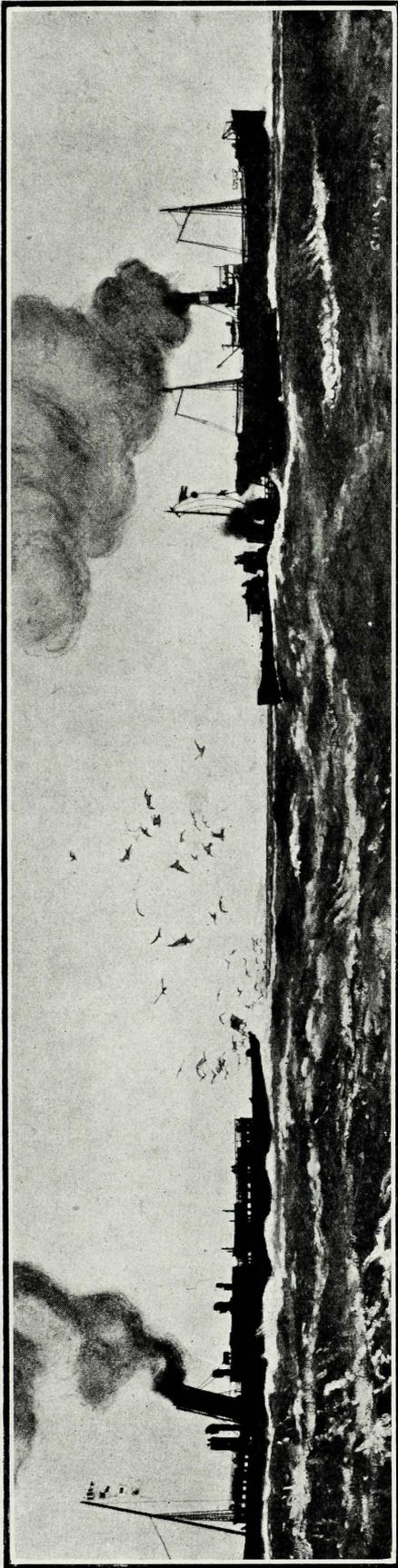
The contention that the *Lusitania* was carrying munitions of war, and was torpedoed on this account, was not borne out even by the actions of the German submarines. The next ship to leave New York after the *Lusitania* was the passenger liner *Transylvania*, and the Germans were boasting that she also would be sunk. The captain of that vessel declared that an attempt was made to sink his command, but that he escaped by skilful manœuvring. Not even the German Press pretended that the *Transylvania* was armed; yet it was thanks to the mercy of Providence and the skill of her captain that she did not share the fate of the *Lusitania*. The only consolation for the tragedy of the *Lusitania* was the splendid behaviour of those on board. Doomed to certain death, as they with good cause believed themselves to be, no man or woman flinched; all, according to the evidence of the captain, behaved with that coolness which is the hallmark of the race to which they belonged.

As time went on the activities of the submarines were not confined to the sea that washes our coasts, and what happened to the *Southland* occurred in the Mediterranean. She was a British transport conveying Australian troops to the scene of hostilities, and some forty miles from Mudros she was torpedoed abaft the foremast and two of her forward compartments were blown into one. The ship was crowded with men, and with a gaping rent in her 30 feet in length might be expected to founder at any moment. "Fall in," was the order, and, even as the men of the *Birkenhead* fell in sixty-six years before, so did the Australians line up—to die if so ordained—but to die as became men of British birth and blood. Fortunately it was fine weather and not much sea was running. The boats were



A BRITISH CAPTURE ON THE HIGH SEAS.

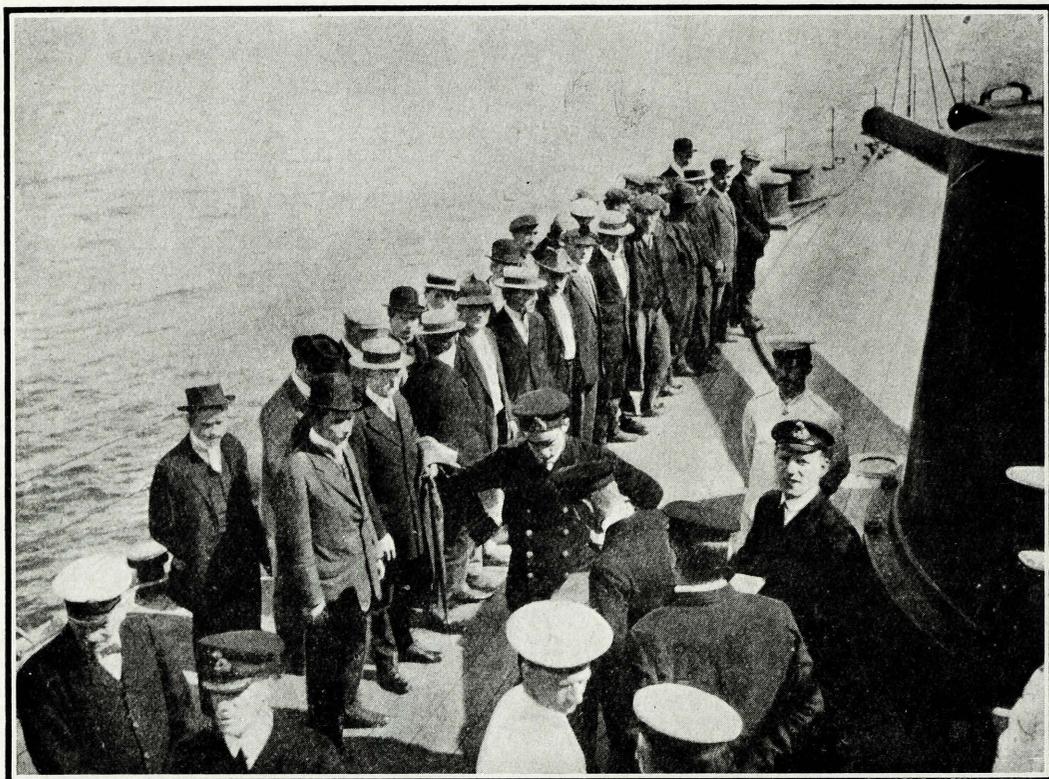
The "Presidente Mitre," of the Hamburg-South American Line, was captured by H.M.S. "Orama" in November, 1915. The picture shows the mails being slung from the captured vessel on board the "Orama."



A BRITISH PATROL-VESSEL ESCORTING A TROOPSHIP AND SIGNALLING TO A PASSING OUTWARD-BOUND STEAMER—  
 "ENEMY SUBMARINE IN THE VICINITY."

swung out in orderly methodical fashion, they were lowered, and the men embarked. But no man moved until he got the order to do so from his officer. Across the sea the S.O.S. signal was picked up by the British India s.s. *Neuralia* employed as a hospital ship. Quickly she was on the scene, and some 470 men were transferred to her in her own boats, that were got into the water as soon as she arrived on the scene. The *Neuralia* carried a Lascar crew; seamen and firemen of these Eastern fellow-subjects of ours almost came to blows in their desperate anxiety to man the boats and assist in the saving of life from what appeared to be a sinking ship. To the last the men of the damaged *Southland* maintained their coolness, their instinct to do the right thing. As the boats of the *Neuralia* approached the boats of the transport these parted right and left to give them passage, to enable them the more quickly to arrive at the scene of the disaster. Unfortunately 22 deaths resulted. Three men were killed outright by the explosion, the remainder being lost by the capsizing of one of the life rafts. The *Southland* got into Mudros, whence, after temporary repairs, she was able to proceed to England.

In any account of the work of the Mercantile Marine notice should be taken of the part played by our merchant seamen in the Mediterranean, and particularly in the wonderful and agonizing drama of Gallipoli. Few people have any idea of the size of the fleet of transports necessary for the conveyance of troops and stores to this distant scene of action; and if it were only to record the seamanlike competence of our brethren of the merchant service notice should be taken of the feat that they performed. From ocean-going leviathans, like the *Aquitania*, of 46,000 tons, and the *Mauretania*, of 33,000 tons, down to tugs and small coasters, the operations confided to their extremely competent hands were carried out without a hitch. Gallipoli was not only a supreme test for the men officially registered as combatants, it also called for qualities of the highest description among those not so catalogued. The functions of the merchant ship in wartime are, and always have been, necessarily hazardous; that is to say, when these vessels are carrying out their ordinary commercial avocations. The danger to which they are exposed is, of course, vastly increased when they are "taken up" to be used for warlike purposes by the Government. Ships that are



PRISONERS OF WAR FROM A GERMAN MERCHANT SHIP.

After being searched on board a British cruiser, the prisoners were put under guard.

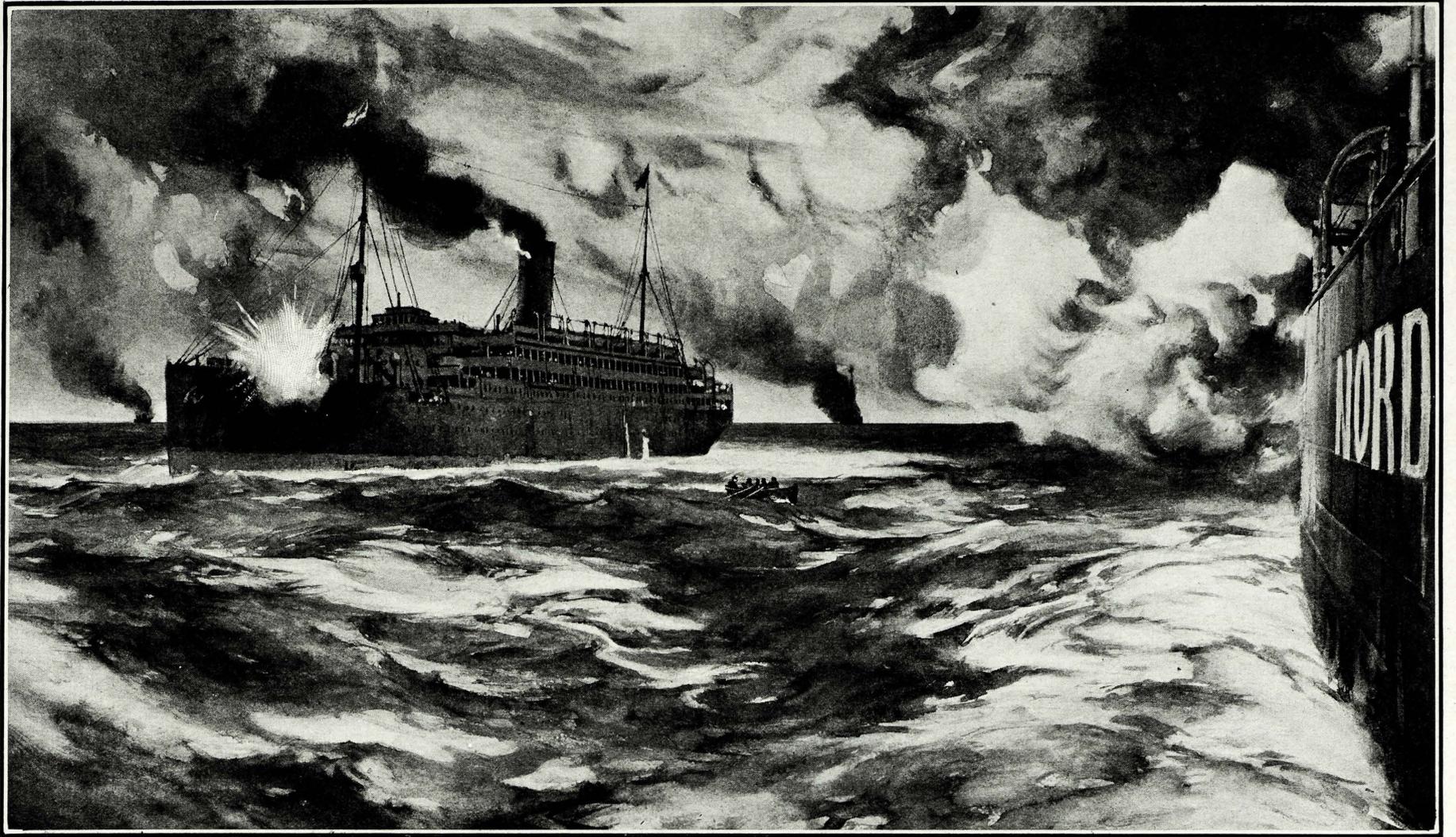
transporting an army overseas are liable to be sunk at sight by enemy warships, and yet in the case of the Gallipoli Expedition this was only the beginning of the troubles that had to be incurred.

Even from the first the transports had to run in so close to land their cargoes that they came under the direct fire of the Turkish batteries. There was no possible means of avoiding this obligation: thousands upon thousands of tons of stores had to be landed, and this not merely upon one day, but on every day of the week for months on end. A big merchant ship returned from this scene of action with her upper works riddled. The mate explained that this had been all one day's work landing stores on "the beaches." "Oh yes," he said, "they had got it pretty hot on that occasion, but then that was the usual thing when old Johnny Turko got the range of you. It was true that the cook made a bitter complaint about his oven being perforated, but then he was always a chap a bit inclined to grouse." This attitude of taking shrapnel fire as all in the day's work seems to be characteristic of the Mercantile Marine in this war.

Subsequently came the danger to the trans-

ports of the attack by submarine. That fine ship the Royal Edward was lost with some hundreds of lives; nor was she the only victim, and we may instance the Middleton, sunk between Alexandria and Mudros, when several of her crew were killed by shell fire. So it will be seen that these "non-combatants" entered the danger zone as soon as they left Alexandria for Mudros, and, after their arrival at this latter port, sailed for Suvla, Anzac, and Cape Helles, where they became the unresisting targets of the Turkish batteries. Considering the exceptional circumstances of this act of war, it may be said with justice that for this there was no help; yet too much recognition cannot be paid to the services rendered by the Mercantile Marine and the complete disregard of danger shown by them on all occasions when duty called ships and men into the firing line.

In January, 1916, there occurred what had long been expected, a fresh attempt to interfere with the commercial activities of the Allies by the attacks of armed merchant cruisers on the ocean trade routes. At the end of the month the Elder Dempster liner Appam, from West Africa, was much overdue, and grave anxiety was felt for this and some half dozen other



#### SINKING OF A GERMAN RAIDER.

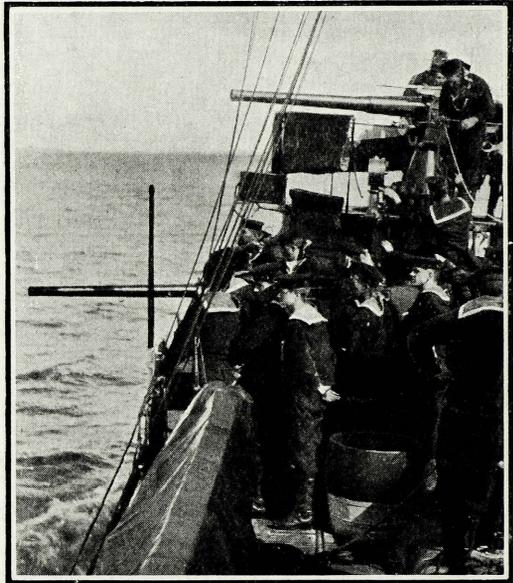
[Specially drawn for "The Times History of the War."]

The fight between the armed German raider "Greif," disguised as a Norwegian merchant vessel, and H.M. armed merchant cruiser "Alcantara" in the North Sea, February 29, 1916. The engagement resulted in the loss of both vessels, the German raider being sunk by gunfire, and the "Alcantara" by a torpedo.

important vessels. The Appam should have arrived at Plymouth on January 20, but the only sign or sound of her was a broken boat which was picked up between Madeira and Gibraltar on the 16th. When her loss was considered certain, and had been attributed either to bad weather or to a submarine attack, the ship made a dramatic appearance at Norfolk, U.S.A., on February 1. She had been taken there by a prize crew from a German raider which had stopped her on January 16, and had on board a number of prisoners from other merchant ships which were sunk about the same time. By this it became known that an attempt to break through the British North Sea guard had at length succeeded. The vessel making it was called the *Möwe*, but in reality was understood to be a fruit trader named the *Ponga*, converted into an auxiliary cruiser. She was stated to have left a German base in December, and, taking advantage of a snowstorm, had managed to elude the cordon of watching British cruisers. Her first captures were made in the neighbourhood of the Canary Islands. During January and February she held up fifteen Allied vessels, including one French and one Belgian. Their aggregate value exceeded that of the loss inflicted by any other German raider, even the *Emden*. On March 4 the German Admiralty announced her safe return to a German port, and gave the name of her commander as Captain Count von und zu Dohna-Schlodien. The principal interest in her raid was the encounter between the German ship and the British steamer *Clan Mactavish*. When summoned to stop, this vessel refused, being suspicious of the appearance of her questioner, and when the *Möwe's* canvas screens fell away and disclosed her battery of guns, which opened fire, the *Clan Mactavish* still held on her course, and replied from a two-pounder gun mounted in her stern as a protection against submarines. This unequal combat illustrated the pluck and daring of the personnel of the Mercantile Marine in a striking manner. The *Clan Mactavish* kept up her fire until it became evident that further resistance was useless. Her action was commended by the British people, and aroused great enthusiasm. In a telegram to the owners of the vessel, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe said that the fight put up by the *Clan Mactavish* filled the seamen in the Grand Fleet with admiration.

The measure of success which attended the *Möwe's* adventure led to an early attempt at

repetition. On February 29, 1916, the *Alcantara* was carrying out her ordinary patrolling duties in the North Sea when she sighted a large steamer flying Norwegian colours and with Norwegian colours painted on her side. The *Alcantara* ran down to the stranger, and, as is usual in such cases, the crew went to their quarters. Exactly what distance separated the vessels when the *Alcantara* stopped is not known, but the range must have been extremely short, as she asked the name and destination of the supposed Norwegian. The answers being apparently satisfactory, the British cruiser lowered a boat to board the ship and verify the information supplied. As soon as the boat



#### ON THE LOOK-OUT.

A British destroyer out on patrol duty.

shoved off and was pulling towards the stranger her true character was revealed. She dropped her false bulwarks, displayed a formidable array of guns, and opened fire on the boat and the ship to which she belonged. But the *Alcantara* was ready for her—which perhaps she did not expect—and action was joined at once. Both were very large ships, the *Alcantara* being well over 15,000 tons, and presented such targets that to miss was almost impossible at the short range. It appears that the Germans fired one, if not two, torpedoes at once and missed, showing very poor marksmanship. They then had a remarkable stroke of luck as one of their shells struck the rudder of the *Alcantara*, rendering her unmanageable. The German ship was then able so to manœuvre as to get in a torpedo on the side of her foe, thus

reducing that vessel to a sinking condition. Had it not been for the proximity of the Andes, another of our large armed merchantmen, the raider might have got away with the honours of war, although she had been badly mauled by the *Alcantara*, and was on fire in several places. As soon as the Andes was sighted the Greif, for such was the name of the raider, made off at full speed, the Andes in hot pursuit. A stern chase is a long one, and the Greif, doubling like a hare, fired several torpedoes at her pursuer, but without effect.

The practice from the Andes seems to have been very pretty; she wrecked the top hamper of the Greif, driving the men away from the guns. Her shooting must have been remarkably good, as not only was the range altering rapidly, but to avoid torpedoes the ship must have been swinging on her helm from side to side. Just as the end was inevitable a light cruiser appeared, apparently from nowhere, and joined in the fray. At some very extreme distance her gunlayers picked up the range. But there was no occasion for the participation of the cruiser. Already the German was on fire fore and aft, and presently she blew up with a terrific explosion. It is related, though for the truth of the story no guarantee can be given,

that as the cruiser ramped up to the Andes, travelling at the rate of an express train, she made the signal, "Sorry, your bird." It is thought that the Greif was laden with mines, and this it was that caused the violence of the explosion.

When we think of our merchant seamen it is well to think of the patrol service. From Archangel to the Line, from the Line to the Horn, in bitter biting cold, in roasting torrid heat, in shouting gales that whirl the snow wreaths mast high; in latitudes where the pampero, the cyclone and the mistral reign, the merchant service was at work. Stark men of their hands are they, rough in speech, instant in action. Auxiliary to the fighting sea service they proved that the breed has not deteriorated. The seed of Drake, of Frobisher, of John Hawkins, and of stout Sir Richard Grenville, he who lay "at Flores in the Azores" and fought the fight of "the one and the fifty-three," still survived. It may have been that in the days, the drowsy days, of peace, there were misgivings as to our reserves of seamen; but such apprehensions passed when all the sailors of Britain and the Empire proved themselves a company one and indivisible.

