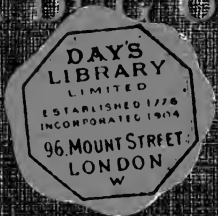


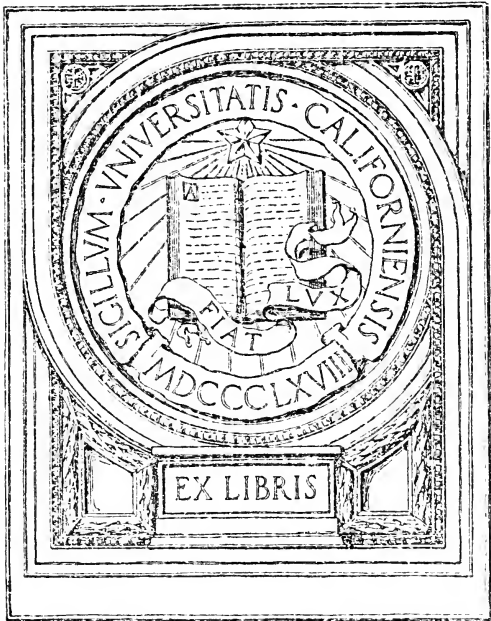


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DOVER DURING  
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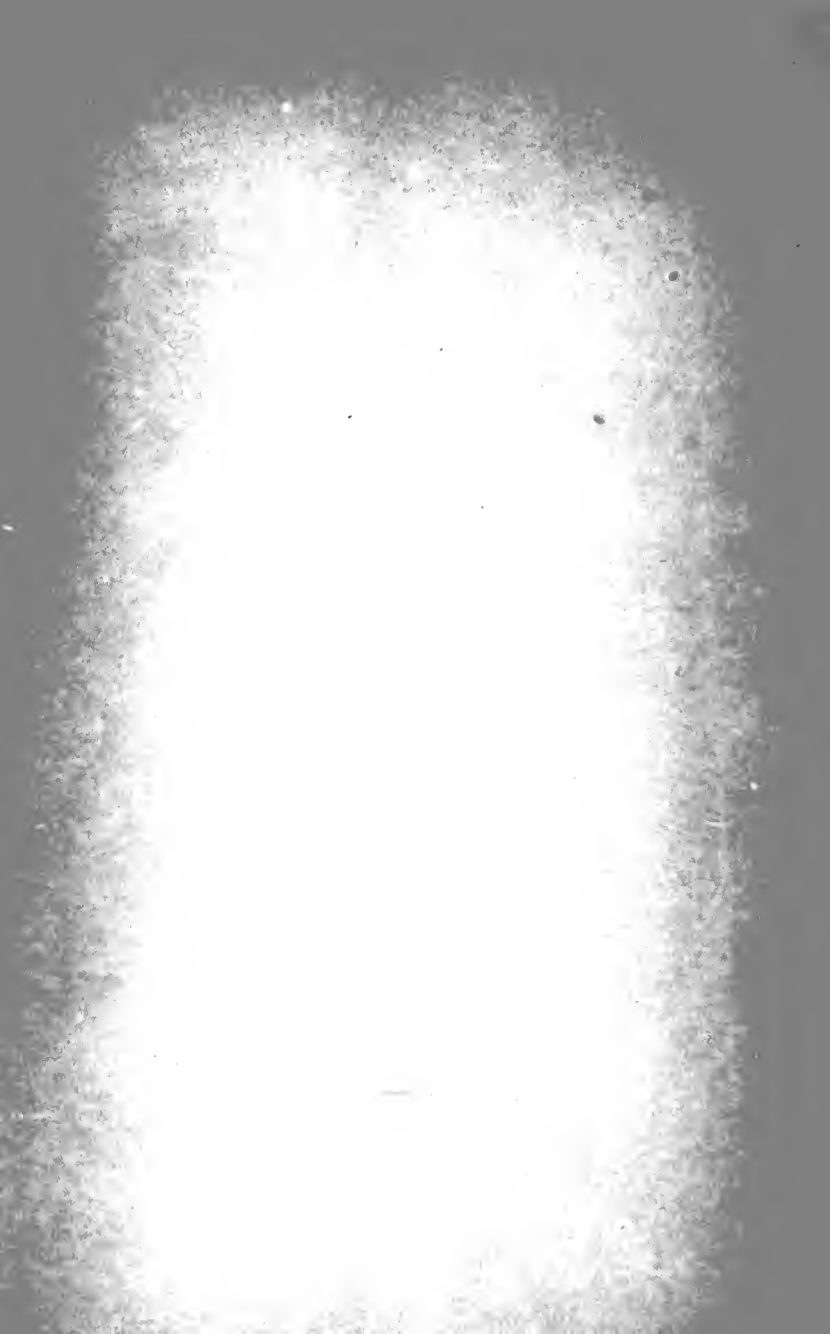
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On Active Service Series.

DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

**AND THAT REMINDS  
ME.** Being incidents of a life  
spent at sea, and in the Andaman  
Islands, Burma, Australia, and India.

**THE BODLEY HEAD**





*Photo by J. Russell & Son*

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR ROGER JOHN BROWNLOW KEYES, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., C.M.G., D.S.O.



# DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

BY A "DUG-OUT" (LIEUT.-

COMMANDER STANLEY W. COXON, R.N.V.R.)

With Contributions by other officers of the  
DOVER PATROL

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY MCMXIX

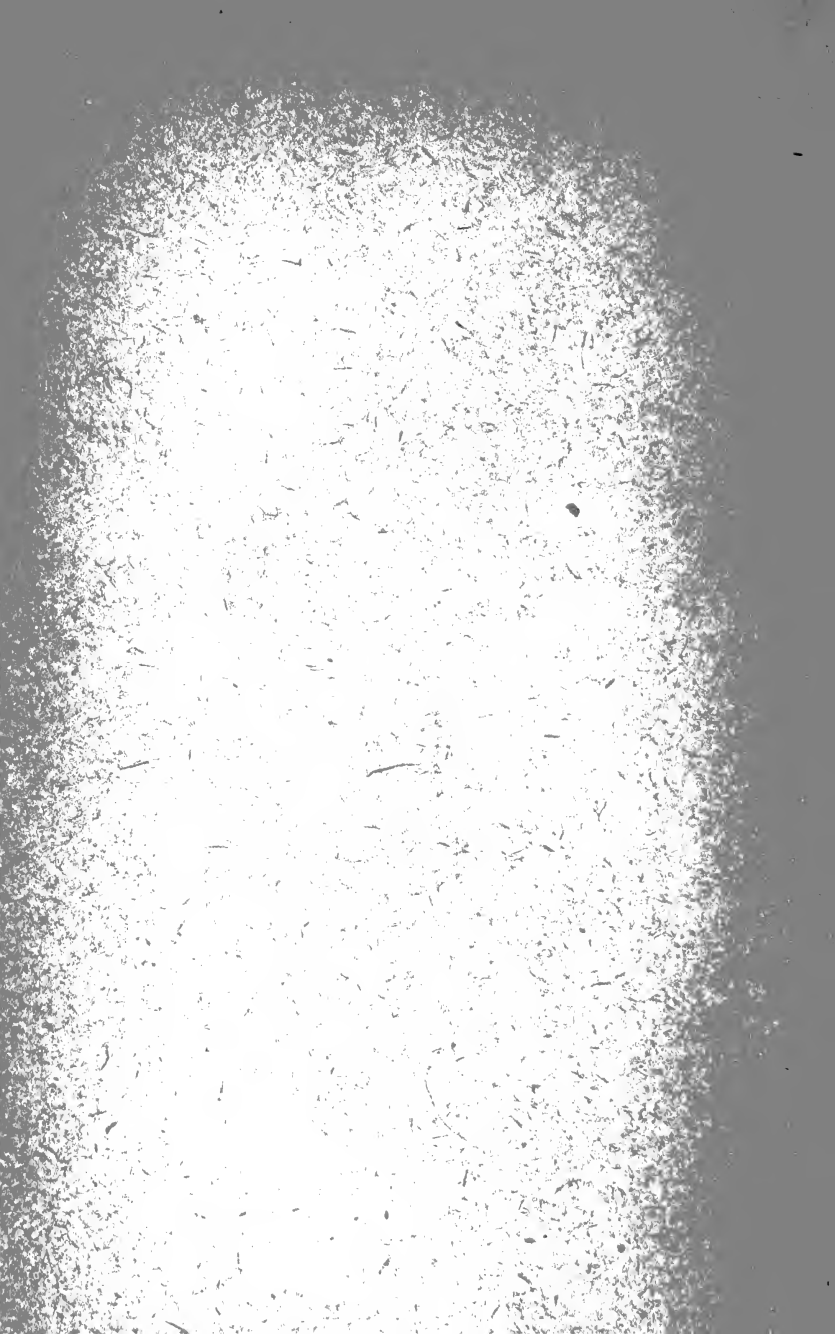
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TO THE  
MAGAZINE

WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES, ENGLAND

TO  
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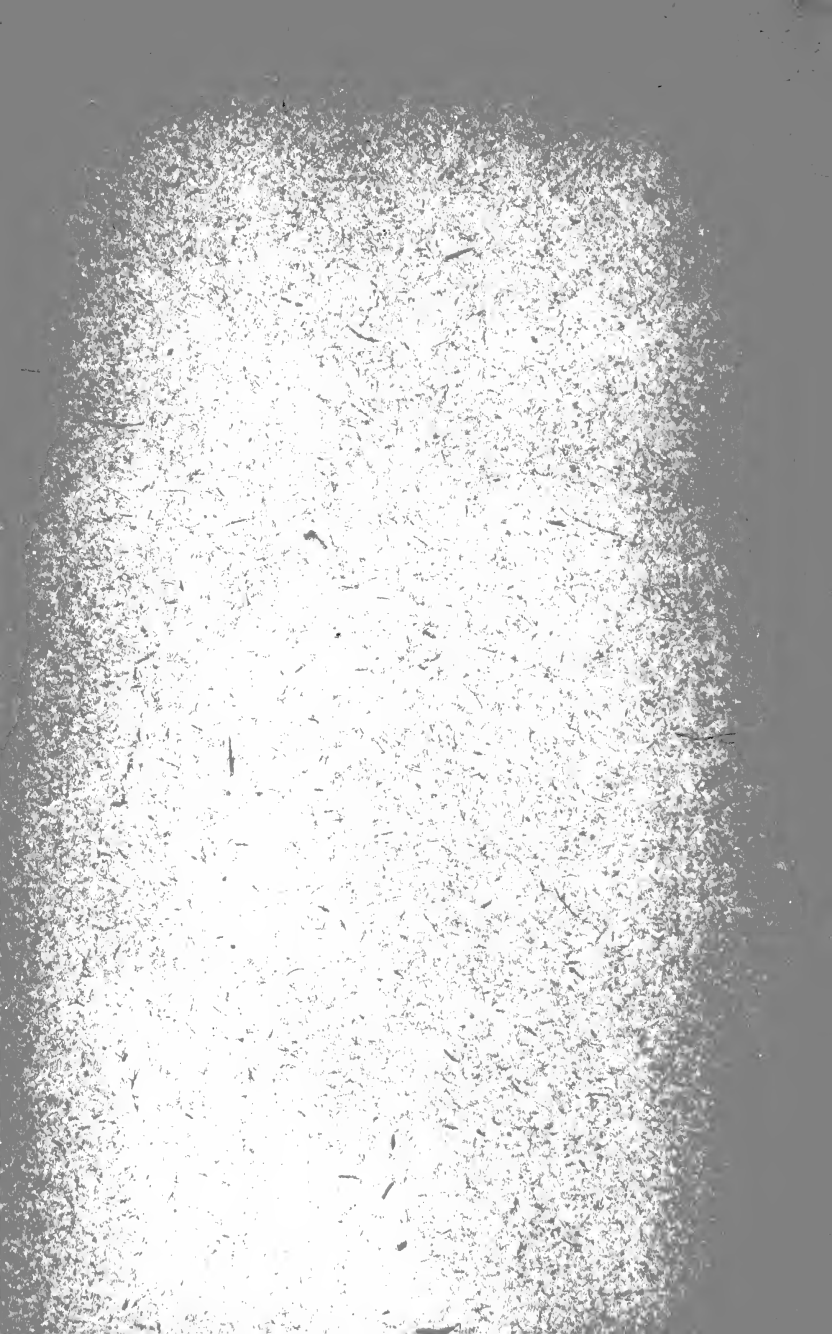
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## FOREWORD

**A** WORD in explanation as to the writing of this book.

To begin with. I have been asked why the title? My reply is, what other? The alliteration is good, it sounds well, and it is true. For when the Hun declared war from the air, Dover certainly had more than its fair share of dark days. Owing to the frequency of air raids, and the impossibility of getting early warning of the enemy's arrival, all the lights in the town had to be reduced to a minimum, and special constables, with their constant demands for covering up crevices and keyholes, were the bane of Dover's existence. In fact, it may be said that for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four all was dark. Dark in any other sense of the word we certainly were not. We were never dismal nor doleful; on the contrary, we were always merry and bright.

## FOREWORD

In Dover we relied implicitly on our Navy, and the Navy was never caught napping. Being *of* the Navy, yet not *in* it, it is my privilege not only to say what I think, but also to dedicate my book to that portion of it with which I was so closely associated during four years of War—the Dover Patrol. And included in the Dover Patrol are not only all our naval ships, but our auxiliaries, our mercantile transports, and last, but not least, our colliers. In short, the book is dedicated to every man and boy who served under any of the three Admirals who commanded it—from that gallant little gentleman, the late Rear-Admiral Horace Hood, C.B., who initiated it, to Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, who continued the good work, and lastly, to its glorious finish in the capture of Zeebrugge and Ostend by its present Commander, Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, K.C.B.

And now as to the book itself. For the first eighteen months of my service at Dover, I lived at the Lord Warden Hotel. I saw a great deal, and met many notabilities and important personages; but with the exception of going once a week to my home in Folke-

## FOREWORD

stone, my time was occupied between the hotel and the pier, and back from the pier to the hotel. I was exceedingly comfortable the whole time, but I regretted my stay there. Why? Because during those eighteen months I lost the close companionship of some of the best fellows that ever breathed. When, on the closing down of the Lord Warden, I transferred to the Burlington Hotel, I found myself amongst them, got to know them and to love them, ascertained a great deal of what was going on, and what was being done silently by this Silent Service. The thought then came to me of trying, in some inadequate way, to bring to the notice of the public something of the great work that was daily taking place in the Straits of Dover. My friends, Captain E. R. Evans, of the *Broke*, and Captain G. W. Venn, of the Drifter Patrol, both promised me assistance, but both, unfortunately, left Dover when Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon left, and I then realized that, unless I got further assistance from the Patrol, no efforts of mine would be of any interest to anybody.

Just after the *Botha* and *Morris* scrap on the Belgian coast, I was sitting in the Yacht

## FOREWORD

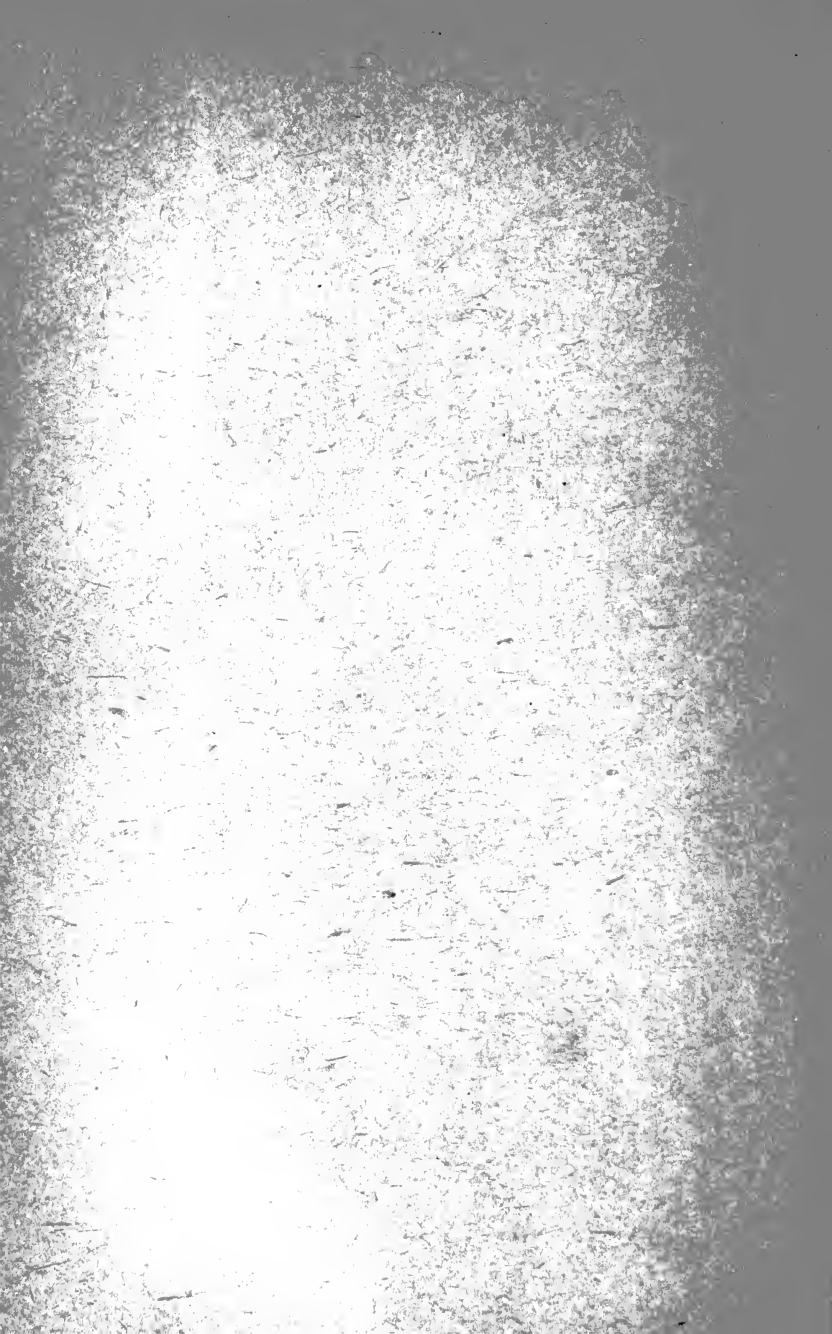
Club one day, when my friend, Engineer Captain L. Stephens, introduced me to Captain H. Douglas, C.M.G., who was on the Admiral's staff, and who had been on board the *Botha* during the fight. To my intense delight, Captain Douglas consented to write me an account of this, and, if what follows in this book is of any interest to my readers, it is entirely due to Captain Douglas and to my other contributors, to whom, my thanks. From that moment onwards, I started my spade work; went and interviewed officers whom I hardly knew; worried them in their offices; wrote them and phoned them, and made myself generally obnoxious to them; until I can safely say that in the making of this book the most difficult part was in getting other fellows to write it. Many a time on entering the Yacht Club, I have seen my quarry leaving by the back door; but knowing the course he would probably take I have doubled on my tracks, caught him and accompanied him to his destination; and, in the end, my importunity and his good nature won through.

Owing to the unexpected cessation of hostilities the chapters in Volume I. had to

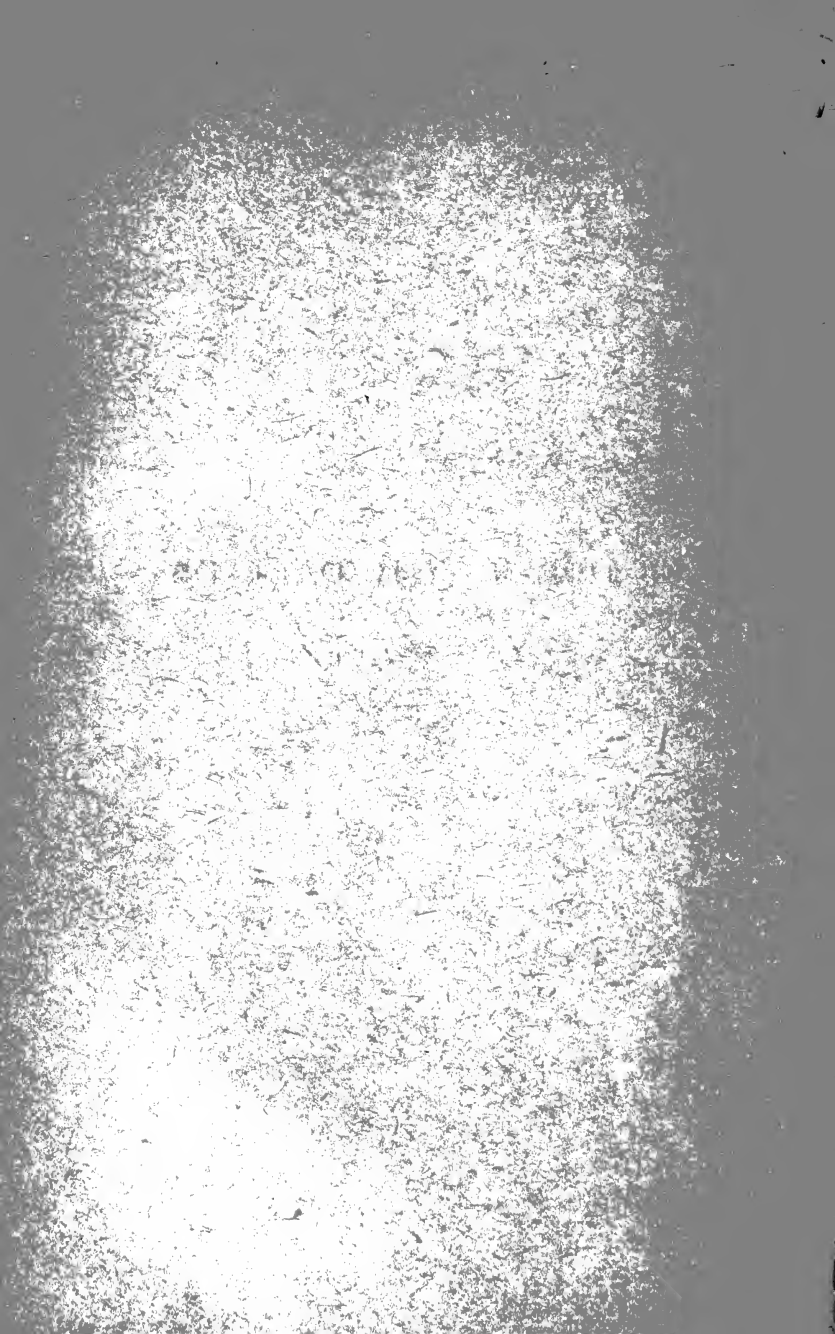
## FOREWORD

be thrown together in a more or less haphazard manner ; but Volume II. will, with the kind assistance of my contributors, review the excellent work done during the war by the Monitors, the Trawler Patrol, the Drifter Patrol, the Motor Launches, the Coastal Motor Boats, the "Blimps," the R.A.F., and the Hospital and Troop Ship Services.

In conclusion, I may say I am delighted at the suggestion of the Mayor of Dover, Mr. E. W. T. Farley, to perpetuate the memory of those lost in the Dover Patrol during the Great War, and I hope, if this book succeeds in bringing in any grist to the mill, to be able to devote some portion of it to the memorials to be erected on either side of the Channel.



**DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS**





## CHAPTER I

### HOW I JOINED THE NAVY

**I**F anybody had told me when I was retiring from foreign service in India that it would not only fall to my lot to write a book of my life's experiences, but that I would also find some one sufficiently venturesome to give birth to it in print, I should have dubbed him by a name not generally used in polite society. But it happened; I not only wrote a book, but I found a publisher to print it, and in the mystical letters "A.T.R.M." I have had occasion to refer to it in these pages. And now it is happening again; but this time with more excuse, for it is not my own experiences which count, but the experiences of better men. My part of the book can be read, skipped, or left out, just as you please.

Some few days before war broke out I was reading an account of the Prussians, published

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

In 1757, I have it in front of me as I write, here is an extract :

“ In Lusatia the Prussians compelled the inhabitants of the low country to bring in their ploughs, their flails, and other implements of agriculture, which they burnt before their eyes, saying, ‘ Now, you Saxon sons of bitches, you shall die with hunger.’ ”

It made me think, with war hanging over our heads. If one hundred and sixty years ago the pretty, gentle Prussian wanted to see all the Saxon sons of bitches die of hunger, what would he want now ? Strangely enough, he wanted the same thing—some day, perhaps, we shall know how nearly he succeeded—but what kept him from success ?

The sailor-man, helped—and God alone knows how he was helped—by the soldier-man ; but the sailor-man did more than prevent the starvation of the Entente Powers, he turned the tables.

“ Now, you Prussian sons of bitches, you are going to die of hunger,” and they nearly did.

The extract I have quoted made a deep impression on me, and I knew then that, if war did come, every man jack of us would

## HOW I JOINED THE NAVY

have to do something. At any rate, I thought I would have a shot in some direction, though I never thought that I should again become a sailor-man, but I did, and this is how it came about.

On the outbreak of war I found myself and my family occupying a small house in Buckinghamshire which we had rented for the children's holidays. Being—as readers of “A.T.R.M.” will remember—a retired Government servant, I at once, like thousands of others, applied to my own particular Government Department, offering my services for what they might be worth, and, like thousands of others, I suppose, got the same stereotyped and printed reply. It emanated from the Under-Secretary, expressing His Excellency's the Secretary of State's appreciation of Mr. Blank's loyalty in the offer of his services but regretting that, as at present advised, he could not see his opportunity to avail himself of them. Should, however, occasion arise, he would not fail to take advantage of the offer. In the meantime the Under-Secretary of State would beg to invite Mr. Blank's attention to the attached list of Associations from which the U.S. was

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

commanded to express the hope that congenial employment might be found, etc., etc., etc. In this list of Associations—as far as my memory serves me—“Sister Susie’s Specially Selected Society for Sewing Any Old Sorts of Socks on Soldiers’ Shirts” was conspicuous. But whether it was or was not, matters little, for there is worse to follow. Finding later that two retired military officers, both friends of my own, and younger than myself, had been dug out for employment in the Military Prisons Department—and this, mind you, at a time when Lord Kitchener was demanding the services of every available soldier for the purpose of training his New Army—I ventured again to approach H.E. the Secretary of State. I pointed out the absurdity of employing soldiers on anything but strictly military duty at such a national crisis, and suggested that, as for ten years of my life I had held charge of a District in a portion of His Majesty’s Dominions which contained its own District jail, I might, perhaps, be found competent to take over charge of one of the home jails and thereby relieve a soldier for soldier’s work. But no, it was not to be. I was not even accorded

## HOW I JOINED THE NAVY

the civility of an acknowledgment to this letter, and for all I know to the contrary it was immediately and ignominiously consigned to the Under-Secretary's waste-paper basket.

And yet I was only one of thousands of Government officials who might have been employed usefully from the very beginning of the war. Subsequently, and very many months after I had taken up my present appointment, I received a printed form inquiring whether I had obtained "suitable employment," and if so, through what agency? Was it not but human nature on my part to reply "Yes" to the former question, and with reference to the latter adding, with an inward chuckle, "No thanks to the India Office"?

Failing to get any sense out of anyone pertaining to my particular branch of the Service, and possessing, as I did in the happy pre-war days, a useful 30 H.P. Clement Talbot car, I got another move on. I wrote to (1) the War Office; (2) the Admiralty; (3) the General Officer Commanding Shorncliffe Camp (my home being in Kent); (4) the Automobile Association, offering my car

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

and my services for any duty which might be required of them, either on this side or the other, demanding no pay, merely the running expenses of the car, these being beyond my means to proffer gratis. No, again nothing doing. I filled in all sorts of forms for all sorts of schemes, under the agency of one at least of the two Automobile Clubs, but apparently the one insuperable objection was the demand for running expenses. Eventually in January, 1915, I received a wire from the R.A.C. stating that if I elected to enlist as a Petty Officer in the R.N. and place my car with myself as driver at the disposal of the Anti-Aircraft Corps at Dover, my services would be accepted. This suggestion was acted upon at once, and the car, at their request, sent to Dover for trial.

The only result of this second attempt to serve my country was the return of the car on the grounds that it was too big for the job required, and a bill for £10 from my garage for repairing damage done at the hands of the Anti-Aircraft experts. They had actually run the car over the Dover Hill and back without taking the trouble to see that the oil-feed was in proper working

## HOW I JOINED THE NAVY

order. But it was through making this application in person that I eventually found—as the Secretary of State hoped would be the case—congenial employment. I lunched that day in Dover with Commander de Berry, an old brother officer in the Royal Indian Marine, who had been appointed Commander in the Royal Navy and posted as a Naval Transport Officer to Dover. It happened that at the time they were in need of another officer, and I was introduced then and there to the local Head of the Department.

I offered, and he accepted, the loan of my book, and need it be added that I at once obtained the appointment !

I suppose all this may be taken for a grouse at all and sundry, but it is not so intended. For how can any one throw mud at anybody else when we realize the happy-go-lucky, wait-and-see, head-in-the-sand sort of policy we had been taught to follow ever since I can remember anything ? One of the most pathetic incidents of the last days of peace is the remembrance of how that gallant little soldier, the late Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, after a service of forty-five

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

years in India, devoted the remaining years of his life to stumping the country from one end to the other in the vain effort to awaken us to our danger. We not only shut our ears to his voice, but there were actually some, and those chiefly in high places, who had the temerity to treat him not only as an alarmist, but even to jeer at him. "Der Tag" arrived just as those who knew warned us it would; the tocsin was sounded, and instead of being ready we were found wallowing in our sports, our luxuries and our laziness, all bewildered and utterly unable to grasp what was required of us. Slowly but surely, and at an enormous cost of blood and treasure, we have learnt our lesson, and, deep down though we have had to dive, we have at last got to the bed-rock of our salvation, the Briton with his back to the wall.

However, if we failed to listen to one great soldier, let it be taken unto us for righteousness that we had sense enough to follow the lead of another upon whom the mantle of the late Lord Roberts had fallen, and I say without fear of contradiction that it was Lord Kitchener, and Lord Kitchener alone, who saved not only England—and the Empire—



## HOW I JOINED THE NAVY

but Europe and the world. After sending over that incomparable and "contemptible" little Army of ours, whose deeds will one day be writ in letters of gold, he turned to us and told us the truth: that the war would last at least three years, and before it was over we should probably require an army of 3,000,000 of men. Would anybody then living but Lord Kitchener have secured those men? Looking back to those days when all was chaos and confusion, he seemed to me to be the one shining light and guiding star, and much as I disliked many of the posters plastered about the country, I except one reproducing a fairly faithful photograph of Lord Kitchener in his younger days, and telling all and sundry that they were wanted. During my service in the East I had the honour of a slight personal acquaintance with Lord Kitchener, and I have been a guest of his in his beautiful house "Snowdon" at Simla. Since the war started and until his untimely and ever-regrettable loss, he was a constant passenger in one or other of our ships to the other side, and no man worked harder or more conscientiously for his country.

Nothing ever stopped him and, though

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

none too good a sailor, weather conditions were never even considered, and anybody who has had the pleasure of crossing the Channel in a gale of wind on a thirty-knot destroyer, as he did over and over again, can appreciate what these journeys were like to a man of his years and disposition. Though admittedly a man of moods, he was invariably agreeable and affable to those whose duty it was to attend upon him, and he was absolutely devoid of anything like ostentation or swank. He sometimes came down to us by train and sometimes by motor from his beautiful home close by. But he never lost any time. He arrived: a shake of the hand to anybody who met him, a parting word or two to anybody who had accompanied him on his journey, then good-bye, on to his vessel and away. While he was alive, and even since, I have heard men, and soldiers at that, who ought to know better, say that he was a much over-rated man, and that he made great and serious mistakes. No doubt he did, and he possibly took too much on his own shoulders; but, in face of what he has preserved the world from, let there be nothing from this day on to cast a shadow

## HOW I JOINED THE NAVY

on his glorious reputation as a soldier, an organizer, and a man. To any who may think differently, let me implore of them to act up to that well-known motto : *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

And before finally parting with this great national hero, let me just relate a pi ce of interesting and at the same time alarming news. It will be in the memory of all that Lord Kitchener was lost in H.M.S. *Hampshire* on June 6th, 1916. On the following Tuesday the announcement was made public in so many words, no details of any sort or kind being given.

One of our small transports had just arrived that afternoon from Dunkirk and a writer in the office, being a close personal friend of the skipper, went on board to communicate to him the sad news. He announced it as it was given in the telegram, and the engineer of the ship, who was present at the time, remarked, on hearing it, " Oh, that must have occurred when Lord Kitchener was on his way to Russia." The natural query to this was, " How do you know that Lord Kitchener was going to Russia ? " " Oh," he replied, " I heard

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

that a week ago in a 'caif' in 'Dunkirk' ! Did any man in the street in England know a week beforehand, or even when he had gone, that our late War Minister was bound for Russia ? And when is the true history of the loss of the *Hampshire* to be made known ? I wonder. At any rate I considered the information of such importance that I at once communicated it to the Vice-Admiral, Dover Patrol, and it was duly acknowledged and appreciated.

## CHAPTER II

### DOVER HARBOUR

**I**N spite of my relief at getting something to do, there was just one little fly in the ointment. As a matter of fact, it was to me rather a big one, and that was the state of my health. Now I am painfully alive to the fact that no one who honours me by reading these pages will care a twopenny damn about the state of my health, but I mention it to point a moral—even if it doesn't adorn the tale—in the hope that others similarly situated may benefit by my experience.

For years past I had been a confirmed victim of bronchitis, and at the first sign of a cold have been driven to bed with bronchitis kettle, equable temperature, etc., and all sorts of muck to swallow. At the same time I have had a practical illustration in my own family of the benefits to be derived

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

from the open-air treatment of all chest complaints, but hitherto have never had the pluck to give it an actual trial myself. When I joined up I knew that I should spend a large portion of my days and nights in a little grey hut in the middle of the Channel on the sea end of the Admiralty Pier, and I knew also that it was neither a job nor a place one would choose for warmth or comfort. I have been watch-keeping now day and night on this pier in all weathers for the last four years, and with the exception of ten days in bed with a very fierce attack of lumbago, have never missed a watch through illness. *Verb sap.*

Those of my readers who have already read "A.T.R.M." will remember that in pre-war days, after my retirement from active service, I resided for a period of three years in Dover. Being debarred at the time from anything like strenuous exercise, owing to the injury to my foot, I originated and started a small 14-foot class of sailing dinghies which we used to race every Saturday. They were very smart little boats with centre-boards, and being all built on the one model, were as alike as split peas and, properly weighted and

## DOVER HARBOUR

properly ridden, it was—or rather should have been—on any sort of a day anybody's race. But it never was. There was only one man in it, and it wasn't I. Put him at the helm of any one of the boats we had in commission, and it was the Bank of England to a Hun herring that that particular boat was first across the line at the winning post. But then, you see, he was the only one of the lot of us who had any experience of the vagaries of the tides in the Dover Harbour. I had occasion to discuss this place on its merits in my last book. I have a much more practical and intimate acquaintance with it now.

It is commonly estimated that the Dover Harbour stands the country about six million pounds sterling. If it had cost double that sum it would have been worth every penny of it during the present war, but nothing can convince me that a better, safer, and more useful harbour could not have been selected elsewhere, either to the eastward in the vicinity of Deal-Margate, or to the westward nearer Dungeness. The site was selected and the harbour constructed in the bad, mad and sad days of Party Politics, never, let us

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

hope, to be tolerated again in the future. I much fear me that the double rail-head coming, as it did, to Dover, was the main consideration which weighed with the authorities at the time. It was a Conservative Government that built it and a Radical Government that starved it, with the result that when war was suddenly declared the Dover Harbour was found wanting.

Now I am not blaming anybody in particular, least of all any Board of Admiralty, for I have some knowledge of how these schemes are settled in peace-time, without the advice, and frequently dead against the advice, of the professional experts; but you would have thought that, giving the place the grandiloquent title of "Admiralty Harbour of Dover," the Government would have taken the obvious precaution to secure sufficient land round about it to construct the thousand and one buildings, storehouses, and workshops so essential for a naval harbour and war base. Not a bit of it, and it will, I suppose, hardly be believed when I say that when war broke out not only were the essentials most inadequate, but, to give one instance alone, there was not a single mechanical crane in Dover



## DOVER HARBOUR

capable of lifting over four tons, *and none at all belonging to the Admiralty*. And for the want of this accommodation for all the necessary requirements, Dover itself must take its fair share of responsibility. I can remember years ago when any attempt at securing more room by the suggestion of pulling down a few worn-out workmen's cottages in the vicinity of the pier was met by a howl of indignation by the local Press and by the people. Later, when a most sensible scheme was brought forward for the enlargement of the local docks—which, had it gone through, would have been of inestimable value during the war—it was flouted and condemned as a means only to browbeat the poor and enrich the rich.

The town could do nothing to assist at the eastern end of the harbour, for there you are up against a steep cliff with only sufficient room for the construction of the few vital requirements of the Dover Patrol as it existed before the war; but, at the other or pier end, the local authorities could have helped substantially had they wished to do so. I wonder what a German Government would have done in similar circumstances? No doubt, by an

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

executive order, the greater portion of the town would have been razed to the ground to provide the accommodation required for the purposes of the "All Highest," and any protest rigidly "*verboden.*" No, the people of Dover have failed so far to realize the fact that the construction of this harbour has ruined the place as a residential resort. It has ruined the sea front, it has ruined the sea bathing, and it has ruined the sea view, and the sooner they give up all idea of attempting to attract people to a place where there are now no longer any attractions, the sooner they will be able to set their house in order and develop their town into the successful commercial and coaling centre which it is likely to become in the near future.

As things stand at present, the failure to look ahead has cost the nation an enormous amount of money, inasmuch as, from the Admiral downwards, each department has from the start attempted the impossible task of making bricks without straw. Every day things have had to be improvised, begged, borrowed or stolen, and the marvel to me is not that things have gone so well, but that

## DOVER HARBOUR

they have gone on at all without a serious accident or breakdown.

To attempt to justify my remarks about the injudicious selection of the site for this harbour, let me for a moment try and explain how it is that the tides and the sea here are so troublesome and dangerous. If you look at a map it will be seen that these islands are washed and served by two different seas: to the east by the English Channel, which flows into the North Sea or "English" (late "German") Ocean, and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean. During the flow of the flood tide they both work up on either side of us in a north-easterly direction, but the tide to the west being of a much heavier volume of water, when it reaches the north of Scotland, it works around the headland and forces down the weaker stream—which till then had been working in a parallel direction—until such time as the latter is able to reassert itself. This point is somewhere just west of Dover, and at the psychological moment of the turn you have a slow expiring stream turned suddenly into a strong flood tide and driving in the opposite direction at the rate of from three to four knots, which at spring tides

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

and with a south-westerly gale blowing, is frequently increased even up to as much as five and a half.

To realize the consequences, you have only to turn to the plan of the harbour and study the position of the two entrances. The first spring of this released tide sweeps with a rush into the western entrance, and at the same time swirls along outside the wall of the southern breakwater, where it seeks a fresh inlet round the corner at the eastern entrance. It then stands to reason that these two in-rushes, one from the east and the other from the west, must meet somewhere inside the harbour, with the result that if you happen to be there in a T.B.D. at that particular moment, nosing around for your mooring buoy, you know all about it. Some of the craft of the Dover Patrol have had bumps, and in fact I will admit that many of them have, but the mystery to me is not the number of bumps and collisions they have had, but the fact that not one of them so far has been lost. It's bad enough in heavy weather in the daytime, but remember they have to be on their patrol duties day and night, and nothing must ever stop them.

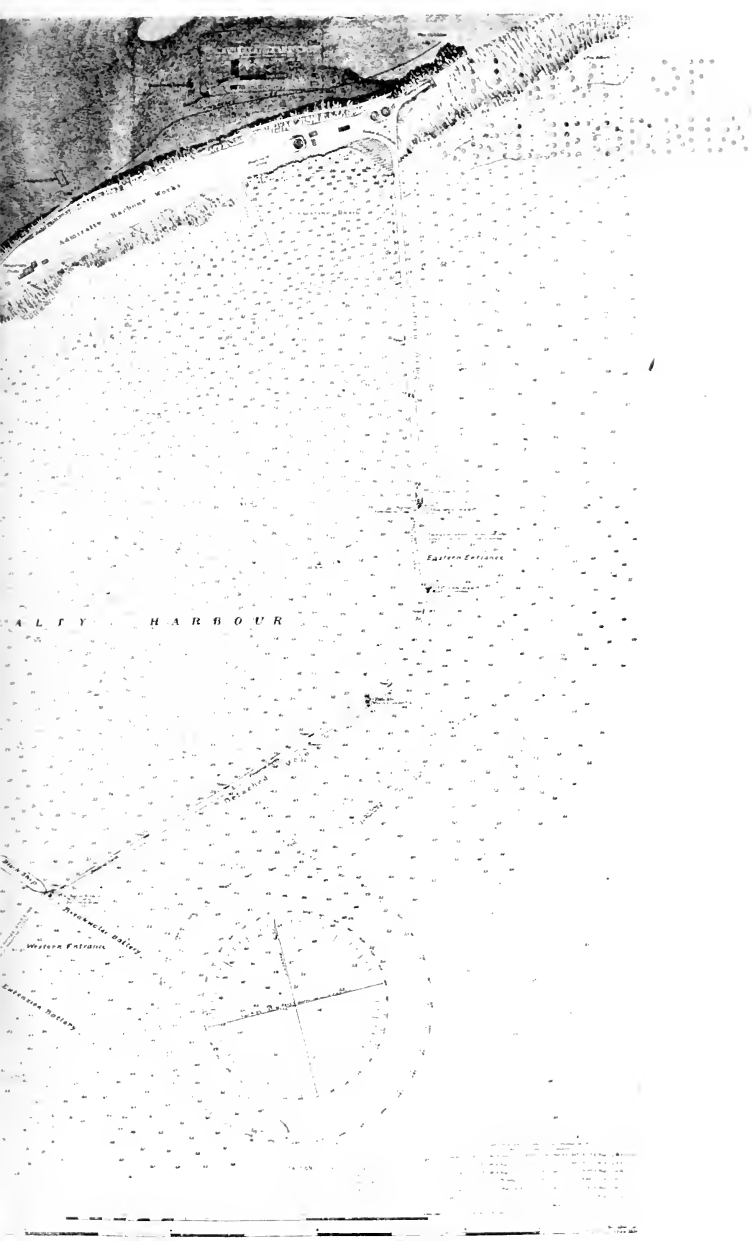
THE  
COMPANY

**NOTE**—The following information is given for the purpose of assisting the crew of the ship in the event of a collision with the pier or other structure in the harbour.

The plan shows the position of the pier and other structures in the harbour. The plan is drawn to a scale of 1 inch = 100 feet. The plan is drawn to a scale of 1 inch = 100 feet. The plan is drawn to a scale of 1 inch = 100 feet.



PLAN OF ADMIRALTY HARBOUR, DOVER, SHOWING EASTERN AND WESTERN SIDES, AND THE POSITION OF THE WOUNDED MEN.



ADMIRALTY HARBOUR

ENTRANCES AND THE NEW MARINE STATION IN THE COMMERCIAL HARBOUR  
 ENTRANCE WERE DISEMBARKED

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1000 1000 1000



## DOVER HARBOUR

It's war-time and Fritz is not the man to be ignorant of our difficulties or to fail to take advantage of the opportunity, should he be allowed to get it.

I know of one case where a full-powered T.B.D.—one of our best and in the hands of one of our ablest skippers, Lt.-Comr. John Brooke, D.S.C., R.N.—took two and a half hours trying to get his ship fast to a buoy, lost a man overboard in the attempt, rescued him, and then had to give it up and run to the Downs for a safe anchorage! And, mind you, many of these men in command of our 1000-ton destroyers are youngsters who, in my sea-days, would not have been trusted to take anything beyond an amplitude or an azimuth, and possibly, by way of a treat, an occasional well-diluted gin and bitters! And I am not talking of what I do not know when I say that it is due to their fearless dash, and superb handling of their craft, that we have so far escaped anything in the shape of a disaster in this the worst of harbours ever constructed for the safety of ships.

Being beaten in the past days of sailing every time I met him by the gentleman already referred to, I endeavoured to learn, by close

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

personal study, something of the working of the tides in the harbour; but I regret to say that even now I am no expert, and I don't believe one exists, for the tides change direction with every change of wind. But I certainly did prove one thing, and that was this fact: with a four to five-knot stream running outside the breakwater to the eastward, I have in my little dinghy, without oars or sails, drifted down inside the same wall in the opposite direction at the rate of one and a half miles an hour. Imagine what this may mean in a gale of wind and a heavy sea, when you are either making or leaving the harbour at the western entrance! And to prove that I am not talking altogether through my hat regarding the difficulties one has to face here, I would ask leave to quote one or two of my experiences of the havoc which the wind and sea can work, in this so-called "haven of rest." I will start with one of the most marvellous feats ever performed by a ship "on its own."

Finding the boom defences of the Dover Harbour were not adequate owing to the great strength of the tides, it was decided that, while altering the system for the eastern

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entrance, the only safe and quick method of dealing with the western entrance would be by sinking craft on each side of it, by means of which the sunken vessel to the eastward would protect the Outer or Admiralty Harbour from submarine or torpedo attack, and that to the westward would provide similar protection to that portion of the harbour known locally as the Commercial Harbour, which leads to the inner docks. For this purpose two ships of large size were selected: the s.s. *Montrose* and the s.s. *Spanish Prince*, both old Atlantic liners of from 10,000 to 12,000 tons. And it is to the first of these two ships, the *Montrose*—celebrated, as all will remember, for the capture of Crippen, the murderer, with his female accomplice, while fleeing from justice to America—that the incident occurred. The ship had been gutted of everything, and cut down to the main deck, and in place of the masts, funnels and all deck gear, she had been fitted with large iron super-structures on which to hang the torpedo netting. In fact, some lengths of this netting had already been stretched across, and it was no doubt in part due to this that the accident occurred.

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On December 28th, 1914, the *Montrose* was completed and moored alongside the extreme end of the Admiralty Pier in readiness for placing in position and sinking the following day. She was lying here moored with several six-inch steel wire hawsers fore and aft, and three twenty-two inch coir ropes, in addition to long scopes of her own chain cable at either end. About 6.30 p.m. that night, a very heavy south-westerly gale sprang up very suddenly, accompanied by a tremendous sea, which, breaking over the breakwater, overturned loaded railway trucks on the pier and fell in large volume on the deck of the *Montrose*. Added to this, a heavy swell coming in from the western entrance caused the ship to range heavily, and by 10.30, to the horror and alarm of everybody, it was reported that this huge 12,000-ton ship, with only two men on board, had broken adrift in the middle of a dark and stormy night, with the harbour crammed full of shipping.

The matter was at once reported to Commander Bevan, R.N., the Assistant King's Harbour Master, who was in charge of the boom defence operations, and he had an

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exciting experience as the result. Hastily shoving on a pair of heavy sea boots and oilskins, he rushed from his office down the Prince of Wales Pier to board one of his tugs, with a view to getting to the *Montrose*. He had ordered his tug to come to the lee or east side of the pier, but fortunately for him when he got there she was not actually alongside, for in stooping to go down the iron foot-ladder a furious gust of wind caught him and blew him overboard. Had the tug been there he must have been killed ; as it was, he was very nearly drowned.

In the meantime, it had been ascertained that the two men on board the *Montrose*, realizing their danger, had managed to escape before the ship broke loose. And what was happening to the ship ? In the first place she was set half-way through the western entrance ; then, the tide catching her, she was flung back and brought up momentarily alongside the southern breakwater. Gaining impetus from the wind and tide, her progress along the wall could be seen simply from the sparks of fire caused by her steel sides rubbing along the stone wall of the breakwater. On she went through the

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battleships, cruisers, destroyers, trawlers, and drifters without touching one of them, and yet only missing some by inches. On again through the eastern entrance with the same thoughtfulness; thence close in shore past St. Margaret's Bay, the South Foreland, across the West Goodwins, and finally, finding a nice, soft, sandy spot, she settled herself down for her long-earned peace and rest on the extreme edge of the East Goodwin!

It is almost impossible to conceive this huge ship negotiating, as if by instinct, the numerous shoals and traps to be found all along the course she took on this her last and truly amazing journey. And if only a Hun had come along that night and brought her to action? Cannot you imagine how the "Blighters of Berlin" would have howled their hymn of hate and screeched their gibes of joy at the total destruction of the latest thing in British super-Dreadnoughts, with the loss of every soul on board, after a prolonged engagement with a German motor boat! And yet in this instance they would have been nearer the truth than most of their flamboyant naval claims. Many attempts were made the next day with powerful tugs

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to pull the *Montrose* off, but she wasn't taking any. She had settled herself down for her last long sleep, to a depth of two feet in the sand, and two days later, another gale springing up, she broke in half.

It was ascertained beyond doubt that the break away of the *Montrose* was more due to the sea in the harbour causing the "ranging" of the ship, than to the wind. Had the wind alone been at fault, one would have found all the moorings snapped like fiddle strings; but only two six-inch wires were so broken, while four huge iron bollards, used for fastening the moorings to, were torn bodily out of the ship and recovered as part of the salvage from the wreck on the Goodwins.

In place of the lost *Montrose*, the s.s. *Lavonia*, a similar sort of ship, was next taken in hand, and towards the end of December she was completed and ready for sinking. Bad weather again accounted for a delay of ten days, during which time, while she was lying at a buoy in this haven of rest, she had her windlass damaged by strain, and later the bollards, to which the cable had been taken, were also started by the heavy swell of the sea. An opportunity offering, the *Lavonia*

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was loaded with 5000 tons of sand ballast, and eventually, when all was ready, she was taken into position. Then with wires out on both sides and five or six powerful tugs in position, the word was given, the sea-cocks were opened and the great ship quietly submerged herself in forty feet of water "low water spring tides," exactly four hours after commencing the operation. Suction dredgers then took her in hand, filling each hold separately with silt and sand which had been previously deposited in the bottom of the harbour for the purpose, thereby completing the job of making a solid and immovable mass of her. The s.s. *Lavonia* was sunk within a few inches of the exact spot selected, and she has not moved since.

In the same month the s.s. *Spanish Prince* was similarly treated, and on the 10th February was sunk to the westward of the south arm. On the 1st March the huge steel curtain between the ends of the two ships which, by the simple means of lifting and letting down, forms the actual door of the entrance, was also in position, and the defence to this entrance completed and made good. I may mention that while Commander Bevan



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was the naval officer in charge of these defence works, Messrs. W. Pearson & Co. were the engineers and constructors, and the greatest credit is due to all concerned for the manner in which the work was done.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LOSS OF H.M.S. "HOSTE" IN THE NORTH SEA

BY CAPTAIN GRAHAM EDWARDS, R.N.

ON the 19th December, 1916, the Grand Fleet, consisting of, approximately, two or three hundred odd vessels, sailed from its base away north in order to carry out one of its periodical tactical exercises. For this purpose the Fleet was divided into two separate forces; the C.-in-C. commanding one half, and one of his senior Admirals the other.

It was the custom of the two halves, after separating and proceeding independently, to meet finally in some area and there give battle. A favourite area for these operations was off the coast of Norway.

The *Hoste* was a flotilla leader attached to the 13th Flotilla. She had been in commission about three weeks and was a brand new vessel of about 2000 tons.

THE  
OFFICERS  
OF THE  
S.S. "FARVER"



"FARVER"

CAPTAIN GRAHAM RICHARD LEICESTER EDWARDS, R.N.

70 2000  
2000 2000

## THE LOSS OF H.M.S. "HOSTE"

The weather at starting was none too promising, and knowing that we had a long trek out, and after our exercises a long trek back, we were not looking forward to the prospect of four days bad weather in those northern latitudes. In the forenoon of the 20th December, the scouting cruisers of the two opposing fleets were in touch with one another, and a practice battle was well in the making. Destroyers, cruisers, and battle-ships were covering the sea, moving at high speed and taking up their various positions. Each fleet was manœuvring for position, and I really think that it is hard to find a more inspiring sight than this.

The *Hoste*, with her flotilla, was proceeding to her station, when in making a turn her helm jambed and she narrowly averted a collision with several of her consorts. A flotilla of twenty destroyers moving at 25 knots in close formation, nose to tail, column to column, is quite the last place in which you suddenly want to find yourself with your helm jambed.

Having turned over the command to another leader and cleared the flotilla, an examination of the trouble was made, and it

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

was found that, owing to the breaking of a stud on the steering engine, it would be dangerous to take any further part in the battle exercises. Permission was therefore obtained for the *Hoste* to proceed independently to her base, accompanied by H.M.S. *Negro* as an escort.

The weather, which had been threatening, was by this time steadily settling down for a gale. After clearing the opposing fleets, the *Hoste* was stopped and temporary repairs were made to the steering engine. This accomplished, speed and course were set for the base with the idea of reaching it at 8 a.m. the following morning. When darkness fell, the *Negro* was ordered to take station two cables astern, and the two ships continued their journey, showing no lights. A south-easterly gale had now set in and for the *n*th time since the war started, we knew that we were in for one of those beastly nights at sea which we were so hatefully tired of.

About 9 p.m. a wireless signal was intercepted from the C.-in-C. informing the base that the Grand Fleet had abandoned its exercises owing to the weather, and was

## THE LOSS OF H.M.S. "HOSTE"

returning to its base, expecting to arrive there at 7.30 a.m. the following morning. This meant that some time during the night the *Hoste* and *Negro*, without lights, would be overtaken by the 300 ships of the Grand Fleet, also without lights. It was not a very pleasing prospect!

At about 10 p.m. a wireless signal was received from the C.-in-C. ordering us to show our navigation lights. At 1.0 a.m. on the 21st December, when the Fair Island light was just in sight, a searchlight suddenly blazed forth on our starboard quarter. It was the C.-in-C.'s flagship making the "Demand" to us; in other words, the whole of the Grand Fleet was on top of us—then all was darkness again.

The gale was now at its worst, and at 1.29 the helm, which had been gradually working more and more stiffly, suddenly jammed "hard-a-port," and the *Hoste* proceeded to sheer out into the unseen fleet. A few seconds after, a loud crash was heard astern, and I realized that the *Negro* had collided with us. That in itself was bad enough, but worse was to follow when the *Hoste's* depth charges (each containing

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

300 lbs. of T.N.T.) having been knocked overboard by the collision, exploded on reaching their depth. A tremendous upheaval and concussion aft made me realize that the worst had happened. The *Negro's* lights immediately went out; the *Hoste's* engines stopped, and looking aft one could see that serious damage had been done to the ship.

Heavy seas were breaking over her, and the whole ship vibrated whilst the after parts appeared to be actually wagging to and fro.

Except for myself and the two officers on the bridge, all the rest were below aft in their cabins and directly over the explosion. I never expected to see any of them again, so imagine my delight when each in turn began to arrive on the bridge. They were very much shaken, scantily clad, but unhurt. The last to arrive was Engineer-Lieutenant-Commander Lyon, who, though blown up in his cabin, had proceeded straight-away to examine all the compartments aft, and take the necessary steps to get the ejectors going. He reported that the ship's back was broken, that the whole stern portion of the ship, about a third of the total length, had been lifted by the explosion, buckling



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the deck, and splitting the ship's side down from the upper deck to the water-line. The after part had then apparently subsided back, and a deep trench had been found in her upper deck extending from side to side, and ending in the crack already mentioned. He replied, when asked if the engines could be used, that they might possibly be revolved very slowly, but that in the existing weather it was doubtful if the ship could possibly live for many minutes.

Meanwhile, a signal had been made by searchlight, the beam thrown in the sky, informing all ships in the vicinity of the disaster, and asking for help. A reply from the C.-in-C. informed us that the destroyer *Marvel* had been ordered to our assistance. Communication had also been made with *Negro*, asking whether she required assistance, she replying that she was damaged forward. That was the last seen of the *Negro*, and half an hour afterwards she sank with a loss of five officers and forty-five men out of a total of six officers and ninety odd men.

It transpired, at the inquiry held into her loss, that the explosion of the depth

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charges had taken place directly under her engine-room (the biggest compartment), blowing in the bottom of the ship and flooding the compartment.

This, in addition to the damage sustained through the collision, was more than the bulkheads could stand in such weather. They gave suddenly, with the result that she foundered like a stone. H.M.S. *Marmion*, who went to her assistance, had no opportunity of attempting to go alongside, and, although the men were struggling all round her in the water, the sea was so covered with oil from the *Negro's* oil tanks that they kept slipping down the ropes by which they were climbing into *Marmion*.

To return to the *Hoste*. *Marvel* joined us, and, as an attempt to steam the vessel back to port was about to be made, she was ordered to take station astern, but to be prepared to render assistance at any moment. My only hope of saving the *Hoste* now lay in the possibility of keeping the ship water-borne throughout her length. Luckily our course for the base was in a south-westerly direction, and the gale was a south-easter.

It was not long before our engines began

## THE LOSS OF H.M.S. "HOSTE"

to revolve very slowly and our progress home commenced. The elements, however, were determined to have their prey, the increasingly heavy seas continuing to break over the water-logged, broken-backed little vessel.

The agony lasted three hours, when suddenly a heavier sea than before broke over the after part and there was an appalling crash of cracking, tearing metal. I think by that time every one of us on board was glad to feel the agony was over, and the end at hand, for during those terrible hours we had realized that no human being could live in such a sea, and no craft, least of all a destroyer, could possibly come alongside us, and that if the two portions of the ship broke apart each and all were doomed. I know that my own feelings and those of the others directly around me on the bridge were of intense relief at the thought that it would all be over in a few minutes.

The ship's back had completely broken by this time, and the rear portion of the ship was now only held to the rest of her by the propeller shafts. The engine-room after bulk-head had at the same time been torn open, the engine-room was flooding, and the ship

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sinking quickly, till the base of her third funnel was awash.

The signalman was ordered to flash into the sky with his searchlight—" *Marvel* close and take off crew." This he did twice, and with the last flash of the signal the dynamos stopped, and all lights went out. That signalman stands out in my memory, for when all hands were busy putting on their life-belts he went quietly on flashing his signal and making no attempt to touch his until he had finished.

All hands now mustered on the forecastle, and there waited for the ship to sink under their feet. It is hard to describe the scene. Not a word nor a cry was heard from any man—they just stood round me and waited for the last—pitch darkness, the little ship rolling 40 to 50 degrees each way, huge seas breaking over all, and nothing in sight but the navigation lights of the *Marvel* astern bobbing about as though they were waved on a wand.

Suddenly a searchlight blazed out from her and played over us. What a blessed relief that light was! Out of the gale she came, cutting through at high speed with seas breaking right over her from stem to

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stern. Then she stopped abeam of us, her searchlight flicking all the time, and tried to make out our real plight. She expected us to take to the water and trust to being picked up; but, as we were still floating and the end must inevitably be the same in either case, there seemed to be no reason in taking to the water before we should have to, when the ship sank under us.

Suddenly the *Marvel* was seen to be gathering sternway, and away she went at full speed stern into the seas, which smothered her and carried away every article on her upper deck except her most solid fixtures. Then, to our amazement, we saw her coming straight at us. What a cheer went up from us all! With a terrific crash she came into us, fore-castle flare to fore-castle flare, and as she crashed the front rank of our men leapt on to her fore-castle. The next sea had carried her a hundred yards away and astern, but *thirteen times* in all did the *Marvel*, under her gallant captain, come alongside us, and each time the leading rank of the ship's company jumped.

At times the rise and fall between the two ships was quite 30 feet and both were rolling

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30 to 40 degrees. At the same time our torpedo tubes had broken away from their training stops and were trained on the beam towards her and half out of their tubes, with their wicked war-heads waiting to be crushed against the *Marvel's* side.

And so with the thirteenth attempt the last of us jumped; 8 officers and 126 men were saved by the *Marvel*. Two men, having missed their stride, had been crushed between the two forecastles as the ships crashed into one another, and two had leapt on to the other forecastle and gone clean over the other side into the sea, where nothing could save them. Some also fell in between the two ships, but were pulled out by willing hands in some miraculous way. A large number were injured in jumping, but, by superb handling of the ship and indomitable courage in risking his own ship and the lives of all his ship's company, the captain of the *Marvel*, Comdr. Homan, D.S.O., R.N., saved the ship's company of the *Hoste*. Five minutes after the last of us had left her the *Hoste* foundered.

At daybreak we arrived at the base, and with the light we realized to the full

## THE LOSS OF H.M.S. "HOSTE"

the fight the *Marvel* had made for us. Her fore-castle was concertinaed, her decks were swept of every article but her biggest fittings, her men and her officers were swollen-eyed with their superhuman endeavours to save their pals, but on their faces was a look of perfect satisfaction that they had kept up the honour of the Destroyer Service, and carried out to the letter the unwritten law that a destroyer never leaves its mate.

### *Note by Author.*

The writer of this thrilling incident—certainly one of the finest feats of seamanship ever performed at sea—is Captain Graham Edwards, R.N., who was at the time commanding H.M.S. *Hoste*. He is always looked upon as the father of every ship he has commanded, and is commonly known amongst his friends in the Dover Patrol as "Farver." Capt. Homan, commanding the *Marvel*, and all his crew, may well be proud of their gallant and successful efforts in sticking to their lame duck, and thereby saving the lives of nearly all on-board a brother destroyer. All honour to them. But "Farver" omits to tell us of his own attempt to jump.

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

Being in command, he was naturally the last to leave his vessel, and when the time came to make his effort, and not being exactly in the first flight of fighters, and somewhat heavy in bulk, he only just managed to catch hold of the ship's side by his finger tips. To this he clung, while his "children" and the crew of the *Marvel*, by almost super-human efforts, just managed to pull him on board, and so save his life. Can you picture the scene? His own ship gone, and clinging for dear life to the bow of another badly-damaged destroyer, which every other moment plunged him under the ice-cold water of the North Sea in winter time!

In the Battle of the Bight or the Dogger Bank, Edwards was leading a flotilla of destroyers when he suddenly got mixed up in a terrific cross-fire from a squadron of German cruisers, and the shells were flying fast and furious. Being on the bridge, he was necessarily the most exposed and conspicuous person on the ship, and you may bet your bottom dollar that Fritz had many a good gun trying to draw a bead on him. (The shooting must have been rotten, because he is at least two yards wide!)



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Seeing that his men were getting a bit excited as to the chance of him and his whole bridge going West, he thought it quite time to go in for a bit of play-acting, so, chucking his uniform cap on the deck, and taking off the brass binnacle top from the compass—a huge thing resembling a large inverted metal pudding basin—and putting it on his head, he cried, "Now, boys, Daddy's safe!" No wonder they call him "Farver"!

In his time Captain Edwards has had many other thrilling incidents to record, but he won't record them, and if only some enterprising publisher could shadow him around with a shorthand writer, and induce him to relate his experiences in the Dardanelles, there is a fortune in the book. But I pity the S.H.W. In my foreword I venture to state what is absolutely true, and that is that the most difficult part I had in writing this book was getting other fellows to write it for me. But "Farver" was the limit of the lot, and had it not been for the good offices of a certain gallant little "Wren" Lieutenant, who was in his office when he was posted as Flag Captain to Rear-Admiral Dampier, C.M.G., this contribution would not

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have been forthcoming. Once her interest was aroused, she never left him, and at any odd, spare moment the typewriter was put into action. And at long last he succumbed. In forwarding the contribution this is what she says of him and the Navy :

“ I sit sometimes for hours listening to ‘ Farver’s ’ yarns in the evenings, when our work is done. I make him describe every detail, and I am going back to the ordinary world I came from just overflowing with wonder and admiration for these men and the things you have all done, and it will never die. I shall never forget my W.R.E.N. days and the friends I have made in them.

“ But when one starts out in cold blood to write down these stirring events in plain English, they lack something. I suppose it is the vivacity and charm of the speaker, and all the dear slang expressions of the Service that one loses. It needs the man himself to make the story live, or else the pen of a ready writer—a painter of pictures.”

Well, “ Bo,” it’s true. So here’s to you, and may you never die till I come along and kill you.

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA



*Photo by Swaine*

LIEUT.-COMM. STANLEY W. COXON, R.N.V.R.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NAVAL TRANSPORT STAFF

MUCH water has passed under the bridges since my seafaring days, but having received a commission as a Lieutenant in the R.N.V.R., the old adage "Once a sailor always a sailor" again proved true, and after the first few days of my joining as Naval Transport Officer at Dover, I had difficulty in realizing that I had ever followed any other profession. I remember it was on a Sunday, the 14th February, that I first went on duty on the Admiralty Pier, and the sight which greeted me made me instantly realize what I was in for. The night before there had been a repetition of one of the gales discussed in a previous chapter, only if anything a little more so. The entire pier was strewn with a mass of wreckage. The greater portion

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of the corrugated iron roofing covering the extension station had been blown bodily away, and the offices and storerooms stove in. Loaded trucks were lying about overturned, a large portion of the station platform, consisting of three-inch planks, forced upwards by the force of the water, had been washed overboard, while the very stones of the permanent way and the rails on which they were laid, had been uprooted so as to make traffic impossible. And worst of all, as I stepped on to the wharf my brand new badge cap, costing 25s., was whipped off my head and blown into the harbour, never to be seen again! "I hadna' been in Dover twa hours when bang went twa days' pay!"

Visiting Dover on a fine day, when all is calm and quiet and somnolent, no one who has not seen it can realize what it can be like on a real rough one; but when I tell you that the distance between the outside of the sea wall of the Admiralty breakwater and the quay where the ships tie up is, roughly, 150 feet, and that on this night in question huge masses of green water were crashing bodily on the decks

## THE NAVAL TRANSPORT STAFF

of the ships lying there, you may, perhaps, gather how puny the efforts of man are when contending against the elements of the Almighty. No one could live on the pier that night, and everybody on duty there had been sent for safety on board the ships. Beyond assisting in clearing the wreckage and rescuing property, no work was possible, and all movements of ships had long since been prohibited. Even on the 15th things were only a little better, and an accident occurred on that day which, in my opinion, put the lid on any argument there might be raised against my condemnation of the harbour as a refuge of safety.

As an additional protection for submarines, the Admiralty had constructed in the north-east corner of the harbour a sort of inner harbour known as the Submarine Basin, in which the submarines with their parent ship, the *Arrogant*, are moored. The *Arrogant*, an old condemned third-class cruiser of about 3000 tons, and used solely as a hulk for submarine officers and ratings, was tied up with her nose on to the wall and her stern secured to a buoy. So that what we have here is, in reality, a harbour

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

within a harbour in which you might expect to find a sort of second Serpentine. And yet on this very day the swell was so great in this enclosed mill-pond that the *Arrogant* dragged her moorings and crashed into the side of the quay, while a 300-ton ash lighter moored to the buoys was washed out of the mouth of the basin, and sunk in deep water in the middle of the harbour. She was, however, subsequently salvaged and repaired in the dockyard.

But to go back to my work. Previous to my joining, there had been many things happening of the greatest interest, but unfortunately, so far as our department is concerned, no log nor daily record of any sort was kept, and it is therefore impossible for me to discuss them in any detail here. There was, for instance, that enormous influx of Belgian refugees, when as many as eight to ten thousand starving people were landed in a day, coming across in all sorts of vessels, even to dredgers, barges, and small boats. They were eventually diverted to Folkestone, where I was then living, and right nobly did Folkestone answer to the call. I had at the time a good deal to do with them,



## THE NAVAL TRANSPORT STAFF

and I can say, without fear of contradiction, that the money, food, and clothes collected for them was something Folkestone may well be proud of, and Belgium everlastingly grateful for. It was an exceedingly heavy tax on everybody concerned, and in our own house we had a Belgian family living with us for months, until they were suddenly recalled by some brutal German order and made slaves of for the period of the war.

The reason for this action is that they were landowners in their own country, and were advised by their Consul to comply with the German demand that landowners in Belgium must be present to substantiate any claim to land or property, and that, failing immediate compliance, such land or property would be promptly confiscated.

The man had been a station-master at Charleroi, and he and his wife landed in what they stood up in. Having given up our car, we were able to furnish the chauffeur's quarters and help them to live. They were an exceedingly nice couple and eked out their existence by selling Belgian papers to the enormous Belgian population then in the town.

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

Then there was the embarkation and disembarkation of that ill-fated—though I dare say quite necessary—expedition of the Naval Division destined to try and save Antwerp, and the altogether curious spectacle of the shipment of hundreds of the London motor omnibuses, which undoubtedly helped to a very large extent to stem the tide of the German inrush for Paris at the Marne, and eventually to drive the brutes back to the Aisne. And, as it is somewhat apropos at the moment, let me here record an incident which occurred shortly after I joined up, and which I suppose was not known to any one outside the Government and ourselves.

All important orders were, of course, sent to us in cipher, and on the 26th May, 1915, just after the battle of Neuve Chapelle, we received a cipher message telling us to prepare to receive a distinguished personage arriving from London, in an Imperial Special at 11.15 that night. Later I received a similar signal from the Vice-Admiral to the effect that a cruiser conveying a distinguished personage would be arriving from France at 11.30, and that I was to arrange accordingly. From the special came the late Lord

## THE NAVAL TRANSPORT STAFF

Kitchener and from the cruiser Sir John French. No one but myself was down to receive them, and here on the pier, in the middle of a very dirty night, these two men for nearly a couple of hours walked up and down discussing the situation. They eventually went on board the cruiser, when after about another half-hour Lord Kitchener entrained and went back to London, and Sir John French sailed for France. And I fear me many a brass hat retired into private life as a result of that conference !

With the possibilities of this port, such as I have tried to describe elsewhere, and the fact that we had a large fleet of valuable transports always lying in the harbour, we could see that it would be essential for a Duty Officer to be on duty on the pier day and night. Later on, when the Hun produced his small mine-laying submarines and got properly to work in the Channel, it became imperative, for not only were our Channel courses changed from day to day to avoid the peril, but also from hour to hour, and to save our ships we have actually had to stop them at times on the point of sailing, and at others to recall them after

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they had sailed. These changes of courses and dangerous areas were sent to us in cipher, and more often than not during the night, and it was then up to the Duty Officer at once to decode them and plot them on his chart. I remember on one occasion getting one which took me two and a half hours' solid labour to decode, and of course, as these things usually happen, it came at 1.45 a.m., and just after a celebration on board one of the hospital ships lying alongside !

The Transport Staff at Dover consisted of one Captain, R.N.—styled the Divisional Naval Transport Officer—and, under him, a staff of four Naval Transport Officers, comprising one Captain, R.N., one Commander, R.N. one Commander, R.N.R., and myself, the only Lieutenant, R.N.V.R. From the rank alone, it may be safely assumed that we were all men long past the first flush of youth. We were all married men with families, and all dug out of comfortable homes. The only accommodation we could lay our hands on was a disused ladies' retiring room which had been utilized by the Customs Authorities for searching suspicious females for contraband ! We used to call it the " dog-hole,"

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and dog-hole it certainly was, but no self-respecting dog would have consented to live in it a week. It was a small wooden structure, measuring fifteen feet by five, and in it we had to eat, sleep, work, and have our being for three and a half years, until such time as a very welcome change in the Administration brought about an improvement. Absolutely nothing in the shape of furniture was provided for over two years. There was no kitchen accommodation and no servant was allowed, so that it was not only a "dog-hole," but a dirty "dog-hole" at that, in which one had to munch one's cold tucker, more after the manner of the navy on the roadside than that of an officer wearing His Majesty's uniform. Personally, after experiencing this mode of living for over six months, I gave it a miss. I transferred my goods and chattels to the Lord Warden Hotel, which is just outside the pier gates, and insisted on using my own discretion about having my meals there when on duty.

Finding, shortly after the war broke out, that the building of the new sea station of the S.E. & C. railway was sufficiently far advanced to make use of, the Admiralty

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decided, in view of the railway facilities and the short sea journey, to make Dover the chief port for the evacuation of the wounded from the other side. And although, when I joined up, things were only just shaping themselves, we were daily making more and more progress.

We had running at this time the nucleus of our fleet of military hospital ships in the *St. David*, *St. Andrew*, *St. Patrick*, all of the Great Western line, and formerly trading as passenger ships between Fishguard and Roslare, and for naval casualties Lord Tredegar's beautifully fitted yacht *Liberty*, Lord Dunraven's yacht *Grainnaigh*, with Lord Dunraven in personal command as a Lieutenant R.N.R., Mr. Graham White's *Paulina*, with his brother in command, also as a Lieutenant, R.N.V.R., and Capt. Sir Charles Chadwick Healy, R.N.R., in nominal command of the old Missions to Seamen trawler, *Queen Alexandra*. Under the provisions of the Hague Convention, all hospital ships are painted white throughout, with yellow funnels, the only difference between ships reserved for the military as distinct from those of the navy being that, whereas the

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former have a broad green band painted round them and for night-time a row of green lights, in the naval ships the band is a red one with a similar row of red lights for night-work. All hospital ships, of course, display a large Geneva Red Cross, which is illuminated throughout the night watches.

With the accommodation at our disposal, one of the chief difficulties we had to contend with was the coaling of the ships, and although there was a naval coaling officer appointed to Dover, it was all he could do to keep pace with the requirements of the fleet in the harbour. At the beginning of things Com. Pickering, R.N., helped us all he could, but it was very early seen that, with an ever-increasing fleet, other steps would have to be taken. Later on, when the railway company got their quayside permanent way in order, and their new cranes erected, and when we were able to berth our collier in No. 1 berth, we were in comparative clover; but during the late winter and early spring months, when the wind here is almost permanently in the east—the worst direction for our work—we were always more or less in trouble.

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Looking at the plan of the pier, you will see that the berths are numbered from No. 1, the inside berth, to No. 6, the outside one, where we carried on our Dunkirk traffic, and later on the Indian mails as well. We started with our collier at No. 4, admittedly, from the curve of the wall and the position of the berth, the worst of the lot, but there was at the time no alternative, and the damage we did getting ships in and out of this berth must have cost the Government a considerable sum. The only tug we had was an old paddle-boat called the *Aid*—later on re-christened by us the *Hindrance*—which had been dug out from the beach at Ramsgate after an honourable career of over forty years, and which, directly any strain was put on her groggy old engines, immediately broke down and always just at the critical moment. Personally, in the circumstances and with the material we had then to employ, I think we were marvellously lucky in avoiding anything like a calamity. It was our job to berth these ships, to coal and water them, and to mother them generally while in port. It was then the duty of the R.A.M.C. staff to land and look after



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the wounded and weary, which came over in their thousands every day.

The work of the Naval Transport Staff at Dover is not in the limelight, but it has been pretty heavy at times, and of late increasing largely in volume. For reasons given elsewhere, the Navy does not like our portion of the harbour. It is always congested and the tides are troublesome, so that, with the exception of an occasional destroyer coming alongside to embark or disembark some important personage, or possibly a cruiser or monitor to do some heavy-weight work under our eight-ton cranes, we seldom or never see anyone except ourselves. Still, we go slogging along, and I dare say it will surprise some people when I state that on the 22nd June, 1918, we landed our millionth wounded man, and at the time of writing we are dealing with from twenty to twenty-six ships a day and, including wounded, leave men and drafts, embarking or disembarking from 12,000 to 15,000 men daily, and so far—let me touch wood—we have not had a single serious accident.

Taking the two Channel ports of Dover and

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Folkestone into consideration, I dare say I can still further astonish you by stating that by the 1st November, 1918, we have dealt with no less than 10,000,000 troops, and this, mind you, entirely excludes the wounded alluded to above. In the mere counting of heads Folkestone is, of course, a long way ahead of us, as no wounded are evacuated at that port; but in this connection it must be borne in mind that 100 fit men can rush up a gangway to a waiting leave train while one poor maimed one is being carried ashore in a stretcher. In other words, while it takes a quarter of an hour to disembark a troopship carrying 1500 troops, it takes about two hours to disembark an ambulance transport carrying, say, 200 cot cases and 300 walkers.

I think I am right in saying that in dealing with these colossal numbers we have not lost a single soldier, and that the only ship lost was an empty one, the *Queen*, which the Huns scuttled during one of their Channel raids while she was returning from Boulogne to Folkestone.

On one occasion when a rush was on and we were working day and night at the

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ships, I remember I was down on board the *Brighton* at about 10.30 p.m. when one of the sisters of the *St. David*, which ship we had just disembarked, asked to see me. On going up I found her in the greatest state of alarm, and she said, "Mr. Coxon, what have you done? You've sent my ship out into the bay, and I have no place to sleep!" "That's easily remedied," I replied; "Come and sleep in my bed." Somewhat mystified and shocked, the dear little lady said, "What do you mean, Mr. Coxon?" "Exactly what I said," I replied; and then, pointing out to her that I would be on duty all night and that I had a nice comfortable bed in a boarding-house not very far away, ready and awaiting her occupation, things were soon fixed up. We got on to the phone and one of the medical officers' wives, who was also living there at the time, arranged to do the needful for her and have everything ready, and with mutual smiles and handshakes we parted, I to my little grey hut on the pier and she to my nice warm bed—and I envied her! Now it happened that at this time nearly our entire staff was temporarily installed at

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this boarding-house, and having a front room window overlooking the harbour I had offered the use of it to my Captain and one of my brother N.T.O.'s. They had never used it before, but both used it on that very morning. The Captain went in, only to find the lady in my bed, and the N.T.O., going in later, found himself looking at a ruffled bed and a lady's "nightie" with pretty pink ribbons, and other paraphernalia resting therein, and he smole a smile! Fortunately my character is *sans reproche*, but in spite of it I got badly ragged, and as for the poor sister, when the incident got wind amongst the other ships of the fleet, she never heard the end of sleeping in Mr. Coxon's bed. Did you, Miss —— ?

And this reminds me of another good and true story which, though in no way pertaining to my narrative, I feel I must tell.

In the long ago I was travelling up from Dover to London with my wife. She was going up on a visit to friends; I, merely for the day, to take a suit of clothes for alteration to my tailor. At Folkestone, where a very nice-looking girl got in, I

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changed into a smoking saloon for the rest of the journey to London. On arrival I came back, got hold of my one parcel and my wife's luggage, put her in a taxi for her destination, and then, calling up another, proceeded on business bent to a certain well-known cutter of cloth in Savile Row. Throwing the brown-paper parcel on the table, I used somewhat forcible language about the inconvenience I was put to through having to come up from such a distance for the mere sake of trying on a garment which fitted me nowhere, etc., etc. The man duly apologized, and while other assistants were busy attending to the wants of other customers, of whom unfortunately there were a considerable few, my cutter came out carrying my garment! But, alas, it was not my garment, and with the remark that "I am not surprised at this not fitting you anywhere, sir," he held up, for the edification of all, a lady's beautiful white silk ball dress! And, like any other garment belonging to a lady, it had neither the name of the owner nor the name of the maker on the beastly thing, and as for buttons, there wasn't one to be found! The only thing

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left for me, therefore, was—amidst considerable chaff from the onlookers—to beat a swift retreat. On my return to Dover the same evening, I found a telegram awaiting me at the Club announcing the fact that my parcel had been left in the cloak room at Victoria Station. Again no name and no address, and I went home to my lonely dinner cursing all lone females and everything belonging to them.

Next morning, while I was at breakfast, the telephone rang, and getting to it I heard, in a very nice, sweet, melodious voice (I love all lone females really): “Hullo! Are you there?” “Hullo! Yes.” “Is that Mr. Coxon?” “Yes.” “Do you happen to have a ball dress that doesn’t belong to you?” “Hullo! Yes,” I said, “I have; and do you happen to have a pair of trousers that don’t belong to you?” Listening, I could hear screams of laughter—they also were at breakfast—and then the dear thing again turning her sweet face to the instrument, we eventually explained things to our mutual satisfaction, until I began to wish there was no such thing as a d—d telephone to interfere with our faces. The

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parcels were eventually returned, and knowing then the young lady's address, I wrote, humbly apologizing for the stupid mistake, but adding that no doubt she would admit there was a funny side to the affair, when I told her that I had taken her ball dress to be fitted on by my tailor !

Not to be beaten, she wrote back denying that it was my fault, but entirely her stupidity in taking the wrong parcel off the rack, and adding that I would have to acknowledge that the fun was not all on my side, when she informed me that she also had taken my trousers to be fitted on by her dressmaker !

There is, it seems to me, the foundation of a good farce to be made out of the above true story. Any offers ?

And as I am on to yarns, I may as well end up this chapter with the following. It was about this time I had an amusing encounter with a spiflicated stoker off one of the ships. Late one afternoon our D.N.T.O., who had left the pier for the day, returned in order to discuss some affair with me. On this particular occasion, being off duty, he came down in mufti. As we were walking up and down the pier the aforesaid

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stoker came up and in rather an aggressive manner started talking to the Captain. Seeing how things were, I induced the Captain to break off the argument, and calling up a couple of marine orderlies, directed them, gently but firmly, to persuade our friend, even though on his lowest speed, up the gangway and back on to his own ship. This naturally annoyed the spifficated one and, stopping half-way and bawling at the top of his voice at the retreating figure of the Captain, he wanted to know why the when the what the blankety old blank was doing out of his blankety uniform, and that the next time he came to speak to a "gen'leman" he was to see that he "'ad his b—— uniform on, and don't you forgit it, d'yer 'ear!" Then, reserving the plum of his love-song for my own special ears, he turned on me and said, "And has fer yew—why, ye're nothing but a bloody band-master. Go to 'ell! Bow-wow!"

Wasn't he rude ?







*Photo Elliott & Fry*

"TEDDY"

CAPTAIN EDWARD RATCLIFFE GARTH RUSSELL EVANS, C.B., D.S.O., R.N.

## CHAPTER V

### DOVER DESTROYERS

BY CAPT. R. G. R. EVANS, C.B., D.S.O., R.N.

**N**OW that the Armistice is signed, my three and a half years in Dover seem but a nightmare of dark night patrols, of green seas striking the bows and falling in spray sheets over me. How monotonous it all was, and yet how necessary. One learnt to do with very little sleep, one had to do with very little exercise, and was forced to do with simplest of foodstuffs.

In 1914 we had two types of destroyers: the long, swift, graceful "Tribals," and the little broken-down, obsolete craft known as the "thirty-knotters." The main destroyer patrols we cleverly varied to meet the situations which arose and changed so frequently; then there were outlying patrols, such as those to protect shipping from

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submarine attack, and to succour mined and torpedoed vessels. Thirdly, we had our escort duties, which employed many destroyers in all weathers to conduct our vast armies safely between England and France. We escorted hospital ships in addition to the transports, and no monitor proceeded without her destroyer escort, until the submarine gave up attacking the fighting ships and "bravely" turned his murderous efforts to the sinking of unarmed merchant ships. The organization of the destroyers to meet with all the requirements of the Dover Command needed a master hand. On our days off in the destroyer service, we often had to carry, or escort, monarchs, potentates, and politicians as their services were required or dispensed with from time to time by the various allied nations. I sometimes carried the whole Cabinet about in the *Viking* (a small destroyer that I commanded in 1915), General Robertson, the then Chief of the General Staff, usually accompanied the Ministers on all important missions.

As the war progressed, it occasionally fell to our lot to carry bullion across the Channel, and I must admit we were a little

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disappointed to learn that the small percentage usually given to His Majesty's ships of war for carrying bullion was denied us. We seemed to earn so little in that hard-working, sea-keeping lot of boats that formed the destroyer section of "Fred Carno's Navy" as the Dover Patrol was styled.

The Belgian coast operations of 1914 afforded a welcome relief to the ever-varying courses of the day and night patrols. These operations will all be written up elsewhere, if they have not already been. There were no German destroyers to fight us for the first eighteen months of the war; but later, when Ostend and Zeebrugge were made into almost impregnable bases, these ports sheltered the Flanders flotilla, which ought to have caused us more trouble than it did.

In 1916-17 we had our excitements, and destroyer scraps took place with a certain welcome frequency. However, to our regret the Germans loved not close action, and with the exception of a few raids into the Dover Straits (the importance of which was much overrated by the enemy Press), we only got to close quarters on three or four occasions.

Perhaps the best advertised destroyer

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engagement was the encounter between the *Swift* and *Broke* and six modern German destroyers on the night of the 20th-21st April. The account of this action, which resulted in considerable loss to the enemy, has been well described by "Bartimeus," in the allied Press as well as in one of his books.

Later on, a very similar action took place, when the *Botha*, a sister ship to the *Broke*, properly "put it across" the Hun. The *Botha* had a composite squadron of English and French destroyers. In general, the other engagements were fought at long range, the German destroyers lining up well under the protection of their own batteries and engaging our little craft as they sped eagerly into the fray. Directly our shots fell near them, away went the enemy vessels "helter-skelter" into safety, close to the captured coast. Try as we would to entrap and enforce them to accept action, we never really succeeded.

Almost my last day in command of the *Broke*, I went up to a position abreast of Zeebrugge in order to lay out a buoy. I had an escort with me of two "M" class destroyers, but I despatched them both before arriving at the position arranged, in order

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to sink floating mines. The weather was misty, and sunset was near. Quite suddenly, out of the evening mist were sighted six enemy destroyers—four large, and two little ones. I announced the fact to my escort by giving the signal to close, and then steamed in to attack. We had an exciting five minutes, the enemy salvoes falling perfectly together, but always just over or short. We opened a controlled fire and expected a really good fight. Two hits were reported by the *Broke's* "spotter," and things began to look lively. We went in still closer, and having got on to our target our destroyers broke into rapid independent firing. Our two companion destroyers came up, but even before they had time to join in the fray the Huns, with their customary agility, turned shoreward and "skedaddled." What their orders were I cannot say, but at the same time I cannot imagine our destroyers behaving in this fashion.

We closed the aforesaid buoy position, moored our light-buoy in place, and I may say we were so masters of the situation, and we had sized up the enemy so well, that we lowered the whaler in charge of the

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sub-lieutenant and waited while he pulled up to the buoy and lit it. We came up and searched all round this position that night, hoping to meet with the enemy, and really expecting to do so; but alas—we drew a blank!

The Dover destroyers were frequently employed to make smoke screens for the bombarding monitors to hide them from enemy observation, and we got so expert in this, that in fine weather we could make an efficient smoke screen in five minutes, which would rise in a dense pall to a height of 250 feet. By a systematic working, an oil-burning destroyer can make an opaque curtain that defies all spotting except from aeroplanes in any weather suitable for bombarding. But later a different method of making white-grey smoke was employed, and small motor-boats were used for this, leaving the destroyers free for more offensive work.

We sank a good many submarines by means of the Dover destroyers, and it was an interesting coincidence that the next time our destroyers sighted the enemy after the 21st April, when it will be remembered







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that the *Broke* sank an enemy vessel by ramming, Commander Victor Campbell sank a submarine in this fashion.

Campbell and I were both in the "Scott" Antarctic Expedition, when he was 1st Lieutenant of the *Terra Nova*, and I had the honour to command her. We little thought in those Antarctic days that in two successive actions, both in the same place, we two should have the luck to sink enemy ships in precisely the same manner.

Mines laid at various periods by submarines caused us some inconvenience, as you may imagine. I regret to say that I had only left one of my little commands, the *Viking*, for a week, when she struck a mine, and all her officers were killed. The ship herself was very little damaged, and it seems to me perfectly extraordinary that destroyers can stand being mined and will not sink, for they very rarely actually sink by means of mines, owing to their sub-division into watertight compartments.

We had a great deal of difficulty in the Dover Patrol on account of the navigation during the dark hours when the Straits were, one may say, almost unlighted; the tides

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were very strong, the weather, especially in the winter, bad ; and the strain was certainly very great for those of highly strung temperament. As I said at the beginning of this, my humble contribution to your work, Mr. Author, of those dark days and still darker nights, the memory of them seems to vanish like that well-earned series of cocktails which I put down on Armistice night. It is ancient history, the Dover destroyers pulled their pound, and, although I say it myself, we never did anything in Dover days of which the great silent navy need be afraid.

You have persuaded me to break the silence, and having done so, if I do burst forth into print again, it is your fault, Mr. Author, and not my literary instinct.

### *Note by Author*

Well can I remember this lively little scrap, and coming as it did, as the very first bit of joy we had experienced since the war began, it was doubly welcome.

It occurred in the middle of the night, when I was fast asleep in the Lord Warden Hotel. Hearing heavy gun-fire and shells whistling over the hotel, I jumped up, with

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the remark: "Those damned Zepps again," and meeting others in the passage we went to the nearest window to investigate. But what puzzled us was that while the firing continued there was a display to seaward of star shells, which we knew could only be the property of "Fritz," and the only conclusion to come to was that they were being let loose in some manner by Zepps. None of us at the time for a moment imagined that it was a sea raid.

However, the firing subsiding, we returned to bed, only to be aroused about an hour later by another bombardment, but on this occasion clearly more distant. Throwing open my window and looking in the direction of the South Foreland, it was easy to see that some naval action was taking place, for the flashes from the guns of the opposing forces were clearly visible, and when eventually Evans loosed off his torpedoes I thought the end of the world had come. It was all over in a few minutes, and again there was silence and darkness, and once more to bed—to wonder and doubt.

It was not until the following morning, shortly after daylight, when Evans was

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seen bringing the *Broke* in as a lame duck, at the eastern entrance, that the joyful tidings got round. Amongst his pals in the Dover Patrol, and also the fisher-folk forming the crews of the trawlers and drifters of the Auxiliary Patrol, Captain Evans—then a Commander—was invariably known as “Teddy.” For, when out on patrol and passing down the line, he always had a kindly greeting for these splendid little vessels, and an occasional exchange of baccy, and possibly other things, for a welcome haul of fish, which had been cast up, generally by mine explosion, tended to cement the friendship.

When, then, these ships realized the situation, they all went mad with excitement, and the shrieking of sirens and steam whistles was a real gladsome sound, and enough to awaken the dead. Efforts were made to stop the din, but there was nothing doing, and when some over-zealous subordinate officer ran along the eastern arm, ordering the row to cease, the only answer he got from the trawlers was “Go to ’ell! It’s Teddy.”

It is commonly claimed here that on that

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night we sank four out of the five enemy destroyers engaged. The *Broke* certainly torpedoed one and rammed another, and she claims another sunk by gunfire, while the *Swift* gave a fourth such a gruelling that all on board are agreed that she could not possibly have reached her base. So to our great content the net result of this little action, between the two British destroyers and five Huns, was one of ours damaged with slight loss of life, as against four of the enemy put out of action, if not all actually sunk and lying at the present moment at the bottom of the sea. It was well that they were collared, and it was only in the nick of time, for in a very few minutes they would have got clear away, and been able to boast that they had gone up and down Channel without having a shot fired at them. The damage done by their running bombardment of Dover was practically nil, and the only explanation is that "Fritz" for once was very much out in his reckoning. For they fired an enormous number of shells, and on the road between Dover and Folkestone the shell marks on the hill-sides could be seen for miles. They killed, I believe, one horse, and the guard at

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the barrier on the Folkestone Road had a narrow escape from a four-inch shell falling within a few yards of their hut. Not much of a bag, I'm thinking, for so costly an effort.

Captain Evans being, as every one knows, of Antarctic fame, is naturally fond of cold water, and he exemplified it here on one occasion. He was entertaining a party of friends to a dinner and dance at the Burlington, when a signal came through about eleven o'clock that a Hun submarine was operating in Channel. He received no direct orders, but it was in the early days, and he knew that at the time his ship, the *Viking*, was the only one in harbour fitted with depth charges. He accordingly made himself scarce and repaired to the Naval Pier with a view to rejoining his ship. But there was no boat. It was in the middle of November, and raining and blowing to such an extent that all attempts at hailing were fruitless. But being all dressed up and somewhere to go, and on business bent, he jumped in as he was and swam to his ship. Ugh !

On another occasion, when he was Chief of the Staff to Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, I met him one December morning



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at 7 o'clock returning to the hotel just as I was leaving it to go on duty. He informed me that he had just been seeing the Chinese Mission off by train; but knowing that this was not the sort of job he exactly hankered after, and finding him all smiles and cheerfulness, I remarked, "Well, sir, 'Chinks' seem to agree with you." He replied, "Well, it wasn't exactly the 'Chinks' who did it, but I had a jolly 'dip' on the way back!" Ugh and again Ugh!

## CHAPTER VI

JANUARY—JUNE, 1915

I HAVE given this chapter the above heading for the reason that in venturing to write a book of this sort a daily record of events is essential to enable one to give them in their chronological order. As it was not until June that we N.T.O.'s of our own accord started a sort of unofficial log-book, I must just tax my memory as best I can for what occurred in the interval, observing that once we had initiated our log-book our only wonder was how we ever carried on our work without one. We were all this time gradually enlarging our Hospital Fleet as ships became available, and by June, in addition to the "Saints" we were able, with the assistance of the *Cambria*, *Anglia*, *Dieppe*, *Brighton*, and *Newhaven*, to extend our range of facilities for the transport

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of wounded, until we had a regular daily service with Boulogne and Calais, and, as requisite, between Dunkirk and Dieppe. For the port of Dunkirk, which was confined entirely to naval casualties, the yachts enumerated in a previous chapter were sufficient for the purpose, while for the Dieppe route the *Newhaven*, with an occasional Calais ship to assist, was generally selected. But owing to the short sea route, the two chief evacuation ports for our army were Boulogne and Calais, and the activity of the ships on these two routes was always an infallible barometer of the severity of the fighting on the Western Front.

During the great pushes at Loos and Hooge, and later on at the Somme, when the fleet was still further enlarged by the addition of the *St. Denis* and the two Belgian Government ships, the *Stad Antwerpen* and the *Jan Breydell*, our ships were running day and night without stoppage, and as the Channel at this time was receiving the undivided attention of the humane Hun in the shape of submarines and an unlimited supply of mines, both sunken and anchored and floating and unattached, the anxiety of

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our night-watches may be easily understood. In addition to this hospital ship service, we had in the early days a daily passenger ship to Dunkirk, as well as a number of small cargo vessels carrying all sorts of munitions and guns, together with every sort and description of food and stores to the same port.

The passenger service, in which the *Princess Victoria* was alone employed, was, of course, restricted to Government passengers travelling under warrant; but even with this precaution and the additional one that the arrival and departure of the ship was supervised by detectives from Scotland Yard, it was ascertained beyond doubt that undesirables were on the move to such an extent that the service had to be abandoned. I remember that, among the many eminent passengers who travelled by this ship, I had on one occasion the great pleasure of being introduced to Captain Constans Toquet of the Belgian Army. He had represented Belgium in the International Lawn Tennis Tournament of pre-war days, and had now the additional glorification and distinction of having a reward of £4000 placed on his head by the "All-Highest."

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He had made a great name for himself, both as a flier and as a commander of an armoured car, and, in fact, he appeared to be one of those delightful sort of men who could turn his hand to anything and shine at each and every one of them. For the honour which Captain Toquet had earned at the hands of the Berlin Butcher, it was reported, and commonly believed, that going out one evening in his car from his lines on the Belgian front, he suddenly became involved in what should have been a German ambushade, but which, owing to his coolness and pluck and dexterity in the manipulation of his machine gun, eventuated in his flattening out some 400 fat Huns which the Head Hun valued at £10 per fat-head. An excess value, of course, but which worked out to the reward announced for his capture. He was a delightful fellow with a perfect knowledge of French, English, and German, and I trust he is still carrying on the good work of the destruction of the European pest.

And talking about cars reminds me that it was some time in the month of March that I, for the first time, saw one of our own

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armoured cars. What beauties they were, to be sure! The chassis was a Rolls-Royce and the gun, a one-pounder pom-pom, was mounted on a movable turret, which gave it a free field of fire in every direction, while the armour, which protected the entire body of the car and its crew, was made of such beautifully tempered steel that I was told it was impervious to any rifle bullets at a distance of twenty paces. Some car! We had a number of these cars parked one morning at No. 6 berth ready for loading in our transport. While awaiting somewhat impatiently the arrival of the crews, a certain haughty naval officer, observing an officer in khaki walking leisurely down the line in the direction of the ship, loudly demanded to know who he was and where he was going. The leisurely one, awakening to the fact that somebody was talking to him, nipped across the rails and, leaping on to the platform and saluting the four-striper, remarked: "I am the Duke of Westminster, sir, and with your permission I am going up to see to the embarkation of my cars." Collapse of the H.N.O.!

But what altogether beat me was the fact

that, while this unit was called an Armoured Car Squadron, it belonged to the Royal Naval Air Service! When I first met the Duke himself he was in khaki, wearing on the shoulder strap of his British warm the badge of a major, and yet, when he took this coat off to lend a hand at a job of work, I found that on his tunic he was wearing a Lieutenant's R.N.V.R. rings, the same as my own, only worked in khaki instead of gold. All the officers were similarly clad, and they, like the Duke, were soldiers, while the men forming the gun crews were naval ratings and dressed in blue. What was the meaning of it all and how were they going to fly these armoured cars each weighing about four tons? At last one morning when we were all actually engaged loading them on the transport, I could stand it no longer, and turning to the cheery soul I was working with, a charming chap who originally belonged to the 17th Lancers, I said: "Do for goodness' sake enlighten me, and tell me why they call you the Royal Naval Air Service?" "Nothing simpler, my dear fellow," he replied. "First, because there isn't a sailor amongst us; second, because

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we seldom or never see the sea ; and third, because we don't possess anything that can fly ! ” Will Mr. Winston Churchill kindly explain, for I believe they were his particular “ pidgin ” ?

However, they were a thundering useful-looking lot of men and have done magnificent work since, so it doesn't much matter how or what they are called. And this same officer that same morning let me into some other interesting items of news concerning his squadron. The gun crews were all naval ratings on 4s. 2d. a day, and pointing to one man hard at work polishing his gun sights he said : “ That particular man possesses three large touring cars of his own, including one Rolls-Royce, and has a retaining fee of two thousand guineas a year ! ” It was Billy Griggs, since decorated with the D.S.C., the brother of Walter, and both celebrated jockeys, and Billy told me that but for a recent riding accident, which had incapacitated him, his brother would have been with him. Then, looking down the hold of the ship, where three more of the four-and-twopenny ratings were seated in one of the cars, all busy chawing up hot coffee and bacon, he



informed me that one of them was from the vicinity of Glasgow, with an annual income of £8000 a year, the other was a friend, and the third his chauffeur! More power to their elbows: and yet the Boche had the audacity to think that we were done to a turn as a nation of fighting men.

We eventually packed them all off, and I have no doubt in my own mind that these very cars and their complement formed part and parcel of the Armoured Car Division which made that daring hundred-mile raid in Egypt, under the leadership of the Duke, to rescue the survivors of the *Tara*, who were taken prisoners by the Senussi.

The next lot of armoured cars I had to deal with personally were, as fighting machines, an even more remarkable lot, and belonged to the Royal Marine Artillery. They all contained two-pounder pom-pom guns mounted on Pearce-Arrow cars, the American equivalent of the English Rolls-Royce, and each car weighed over ten tons. One night while I was sitting in our "dog-hole" on the pier, I was rung up by one of the officers belonging to the squadron, inquiring when he was likely to be embarked. As I was very

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cold and very lonely, and he seemed a cheery sort of cove, I told him to come down and see me and I would tell him all about it. He came, and he turned out to be a Lieutenant Berington, R.M.A., and a cousin of mine whom I had never seen! These cars, owing to their weight, were something we could not tackle with any of the cranes in Dover, and consequently had to await the arrival of a mechanical transport which could lift them with her own derricks.

They were crying out urgently for these cars from the other side, and we were just as anxious to send them over, if only the transport would come along. She did, and the man responsible for sending her—whoever he may be—should certainly get made a member of the “Order of the Bad Egg.” She loomed off the port early one morning, and when we got her alongside at No. 1 berth she turned out to be the s.s. *Siptah* of about 4000 tons, and a fully-fitted out transport for the conveyance of horses! She hadn't a derrick capable of lifting a five-ton weight in her, and being in every other respect a misfit she was returned whence she came, with thanks. The second ship, however, the *Santa*

*Isabella*, was, for her size—about 6000 tons—one of the finest mechanical transports I have ever seen, and she had a hold in which, after lowering the monsters down, all you had to do was to send the drivers after them to place them in position.

It was while so employed one afternoon in the Granville Dock, with several of these cars awaiting shipment, that a German Taube was suddenly reported as making for Dover. In a jiffy the men were at their guns and anxiously waiting for the cry of “Mark forward!” “Coming over!” but, unfortunately, the blighter thought better of it and never came. For sure as eggs is eggs, they would have bagged him—at least, so they said, though personally I have my doubts. I’ve seen a considerable amount of shooting at Zepps and Taubes since and, as far as the latter are concerned, it seems to me to be like attempting to shoot a woodcock with a service rifle. And as far as we know we have never even winged one, in the day-time at any rate.

Until I joined up I had never previously seen a seaplane at work, and it was a wonderfully fascinating sight watching them. But,

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my word, as my Australian friends would say, what a miraculous difference there is in them then and now! While many of them were even then wonderful in their performances, there were others which, like a gull with a broken wing, flitted about from one end of the harbour to another, in a vain endeavour to rise. And now, no sooner do they come out of their seagull cot on the beach than with one swoop they are off, and rising in an incredibly short space of time to heights where they are shortly scarcely visible. They are, however, on business bent down Channel, seeking mines and submarines which, with the assistance of what is known locally as the "Blimps" or "gas bags" or "aerial sausages," namely, small cylindrical airships, they have been wonderfully successful in both locating and destroying. I can only liken their descent on the water to an albatross coming down in the wake of a ship to a nice, toothsome-looking piece of salt pork. It is a most graceful and birdlike performance, and one which I never tire of watching.

Then one morning, to my great consternation, I saw coming out of the bowels of a large ship what in reality looked for all the

world like a portion of the ship's internal economy. It was a huge inflated mass which appeared at first sight to be struggling and in great pain. Gradually it took shape and evolved, and floated aloft as a huge spotting balloon, which was afterwards used with much success at the bombardment of Zeebrugge. On another occasion, again in the early morning, my eyes were riveted, through my glasses, in the direction of the eastern entrance, on what appeared to be an enormous sort of square box floating on the water with a great bubble of a sea breaking all round it, in the middle of which was stuck a pole upraising in the air what looked more like a large pigeon loft than anything else. But as it also had a funnel out of which smoke was issuing, and it eventually came into the harbour and anchored itself, I came to the conclusion that it must be a ship of sorts.

Later, adding wonder upon wonder, I actually saw men clambering down over the side of the box and going for a stroll and a smoke on the surface of the waters! Was this Dover Harbour or the Sea of Galilee? Shades of Nelson! and if the poor old fellow

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could only wake up and see what is nowadays known as a monitor! Of all the hideous monstrosities it is possible to conceive in the shape of naval architecture, commend me to them. For in shape they are nothing but a huge iron box on which is mounted a couple of very heavy guns and a large tripod mast for fire control, and fitted round and under water with an enormous excrescence known in naval parlance as a blister, which projects from either side of the box to a distance of sixteen feet. This under-water blister forms their protection against torpedo attack, and it was upon its surface, which was just clear of the water, that I saw my humans walking and smoking cigarettes, after the consumption of their midday meal! And yet I am now told that this nautical phenomenon, which staggered us in the early days, is nothing to be compared to the more recent mystery ships which have been specially built to deal with the under-water Hun boats. And so the world wags.

The Channel in those days, as far as shipping was concerned, presented an appearance very similar to what it would in peacetime, except that it might be noted that

the vessels proceeding both to the eastward and to the westward passed only at stated intervals. And in spite of the submarine menace and the far greater danger from the indiscriminate use of all sorts of mines this procedure continued during the night as well as the day, and I can remember counting one night from the Admiralty Pier no less than 137 vessels proceeding up and down Channel, as if such a thing as submarines or mines had never been invented. Nevertheless, even in those early days, hardly a day passed that they were not taking deadly toll of us, and the Channel by this time is dotted throughout with sunken ships. With my own eyes and within a few hundred yards of the pier, I have seen so far no less than seven fine ships mined and sunk.

One of the most serious losses, in February, was that of the s.s. *Surrey*, a steamer of 10,000 tons, which was mined off Dunkirk while conveying a valuable cargo of frozen meat for the French Army. On receiving information of this unfortunate loss, Commander Bevan immediately volunteered to try and effect a rescue; and, obtaining the permission of the Admiral, he at once

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proceeded to the scene of the occurrence in company with the two salvage tugs, *Lady Brassey* and *Lady Crundall*. He found the *Surrey* at anchor with her bows high in the air and with a draught aft of 37 feet as against a normal 24. She had been twice struck by mines and was in a bad way, but to still further complicate matters, as the tugs approached they sighted other mines, which of course had to be destroyed before further attention could be paid to the ship.

Calling for a volunteer crew from a destroyer which was standing by with the survivors, they boarded the *Surrey*, and placing one tug alongside to pump and the other ahead to tow, they slipped the anchor, got her under way, and proceeded to the Downs. As by this time the *Surrey* was sinking visibly, the only thing left was to get her in and beach her as soon as possible. This was eventually successfully achieved on a soft patch half a mile north of Deal pier. More than half her valuable cargo of meat was saved, and the ship herself was subsequently lifted, taken to dock and repaired. For this piece of work Commander Bevan received the thanks of the French Admiralty



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together with the presentation of a handsome bronze figure representing "Defiance."

The next heavy loss I can recall, and one which caused us in Dover great personal discomfort and inconvenience, was the mining of the s.s. *Karanja*, an oil tank steamer, which was beached to the eastward. This ship was also cleverly salvaged by a London firm, and she, like the *Surrey*, is still going strong and making good. But in order to lift her it was found necessary to release the whole of her cargo, consisting of 8000 tons of crude oil, and, as the spot where she was lying was only a mile or so off the eastern entrance, the state of the harbour and all in it for months afterwards was indescribable. The oil was of the consistency of black mud and formed a heavy black slime which covered everything. Our ropes, our landings, our boots, and our clothes were smothered in the filthy stuff, and at one time we thought we should never get rid of it. But a succession of south-westerly gales in the winter-time finally washed and cleansed the place as nothing else could, and now there is not a sign to be seen of it. The poor sea-gulls got coated with the stuff to such an extent

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that they were unable to fly, and it was a pretty and pathetic sight, while it lasted, to see any and every day a long line of our Tommies seated on the beach to the westward of the pier, busily engaged cleansing the poor wee birdies of their oil and enabling them thereby once again to fly and to earn their living. Would German soldiers ever be found so occupied? I don't think! For choice I can see them wringing their necks and eating them whole, in the slime which would just be to the taste of the horrible brutes we have come face to face with in this war.

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*Photo by Swaine*

CAPTAIN HENRY PERCY DOUGLAS, C.M.G., R.N.

## CHAPTER VII

### A DESTROYER SCRAP OFF THE BELGIAN COAST

BY CAPTAIN H. P. DOUGLAS, C.M.G., R.N.

DEAR COXON,

**A**LTHOUGH I feel very gratified at your request for me to give you an account of the lively little scrap between our destroyers, with the French, against the Germans on the night of the 20th-21st March, 1918, I must confess that probably a far better account could be given by Roger Rede, who was Captain of the *Botha* at the time, and who really led the Allied force beyond praise. However, there is no doubt I saw the scrap from a very different point of view, being there simply as a passenger, and during the action probably saw far more in many ways than the rest of the officers and ship's company, who were

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fully devoted to their own particular duties. It is odd to be a passenger under such circumstances, and this needs some explanation with which I will preface my yarn.

You will remember that about this time we were all busy preparing plans and making dispositions for the attack on Zeebrugge and Ostend, which eventually materialized on the night of the 22nd–23rd April, and my job—or at least one of them—was to fix up the buoys off the Belgian coast and get them accurately located. For this work I was very ably assisted by Haselfoot, who was also on the Vice-Admiral's Staff, but it was very trying and tedious work. The buoys were a long way off the coast, and being off enemy territory (*pro tem.*) one could not go up there in the ordinary way and cruise about at one's own sweet will. Every time we went up, it meant a covering force, monitors, destroyers, and the inevitable M.L.—the floating cuttlefish—always ready to smoke-screen us from enemy batteries. I need not worry you with details of how the buoys were eventually accurately fixed, as this would probably be of interest only to the Nautical Surveyor; all I will say is, that it took nearly a month

## A DESTROYER SCRAP

to fix about eight buoys accurately. This was principally due to the shocking bad visibility; also, when it was clear, the Hun got busy with his big guns and strafed us out of the buoys' positions on which he had very carefully registered.

It was during one of these attempts to fix the buoys that Haselfoot and myself were on board the *Botha*, and we had the opportunity of witnessing one of the prettiest little sea-scraps of the war. We had been out all day with a large force, fixing buoys off Zeebrugge, but the visibility had been so low that we could not do much, and the latter part of the day's programme was to go on board a destroyer at dusk, so as to fix buoys by the shore searchlights. This was successfully accomplished in the *Botha*, and then Roger Rede took us into Dunkirk Roads, after making a signal for a boat to be sent to take us ashore. It was not to be, however, for we had no sooner reached the Dunkirk Roads, about 10 p.m., after, I remember, a very excellent dinner, than we found an air-raid was in progress. The result was that there was no communication with the shore, as not only was there a very

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terrific barrage being put up by the French, and bombs dropping all over the place, but the whole of the roads were enveloped in a dense smoke from the smoke-screen put up in Dunkirk being blown seaward. After waiting on deck for a bit and hearing the shells from the A.A. guns dropping all round us, and bits on the deck, we thought an adjournment to the cabin to discuss plans would be advisable.

As the *Botha* was refuelling next morning early, Rede suggested we should stay on board the night, using his cabin, as, of course, he always slept on the bridge. This I decided to do, and turned in about 11 p.m., supposing that at 5.30 the following morning we would get on shore and arrange my programme for that day. I remember that I soon dropped off to sleep, but about 3.45 a.m., or thereabouts—the exact times are hardly of moment—I was awakened by the fire-gong going hard. Nipping up on deck, I heard the cable slipped and the engines start, and in a very short time we were off somewhere, through the remains of the smoke-screen, lit up by occasional star-shells, rather mystified by guns going off all round us, and bewildered



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through a fat head not yet shaken off! I was standing aft just before the after gun, and was very soon joined by Haselfoot, and we then proceeded to take stock of the proceedings. Nothing out of the way was going on on deck, so far as one could see or hear—the guns and torpedo tubes' crews were at their stations and the magazine parties down aft, and at that time everything appeared to be normal war conditions. Soon, however, I was able to see craft in line astern of us—these being the rest of our division, 1 British T.B.D. (the *Morris*), and 3 Frenchmen, and then we also saw to port a certain amount of firing and star-shells.

Soon we were in a rather heavy barrage, which mostly passed overhead, so far as we could judge, and by this time it was evident we were going through the Zuidicoote Pass, and the barrage we were passing under was that from the French batteries at Zuidicoote, which had not been turned off in time. We were now steaming pretty fast, and from the stars we noticed we must be steering about N.E.—the sea smooth and the visibility fair. Suddenly, away to port we saw some blurred shapes,

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and almost simultaneously heard the orders as regards range and bearing from the bridge to the guns and torpedoes. At the same time, our recognition signals were fired, to be answered by red fighting lights from the direction of the blurred shapes. Almost simultaneously with these signals, our fighting lights were switched on and we opened fire. The noise was terrific, but above it all we heard the pom-poms and machine-guns on both sides—even above the roar of the larger guns. Looking astern we could see our pals blazing away for all they were worth, and one heard the shell and bullets flying all about the place. We had fired two torpedoes from the port tubes at the enemy, but with what result I could not see.

The action was going on quite satisfactorily, guns blazing away, ammunition coming up from down below, and everything being carried out quite calmly and naturally by every one. Some few minutes later—time did not seem to be the same then as it generally does—I heard the order “Prepare to ram,” and my thoughts at once flew back to the days one was a midshipman at gun-drill when, on this order being

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given, you had to fall down and lay on your tummy like an expiring frog, till the horrible crash came! Consequently I was rather waiting for the horrible crash, but to my astonishment I felt nothing but a slight jar, as if one had bumped a buoy, and the next things seen were two shapes, one floating past each side, and on the top of one to starboard a figure firing off a Verey's light pistol at our bridge. These shapes, as you must know, were a Hun torpedo-boat—or the remains of her, which Rede had successfully bisected at right angles—we never knew who the fellow was on the starboard portion nor why he fired the Verey's light, but I rather expect it was a final "hate."

Immediately after this ramming, we felt the helm go hard over and the ship heel to it, and then almost as soon as she was on an even keel again, at least so it seemed, we passed quite close to another shape and she got it absolutely in the neck, from all our guns, nearly at point-blank range. Then again we heard and felt the helm put over and found ourselves in a thick smoke-screen which had been emitted by the enemy whilst in flight. Nothing could be seen of the rest

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of our pals, nor of the enemy, till about a few seconds later, when down our port side passed a torpedo craft, and almost simultaneously with her passing there was a terrific explosion and crash, which shook the old *Botha* to the core. It took but little time to realize that we had been torpedoed, and almost at once the engines stopped, and there we lay, with no guns firing, in a thick bank of fog made by the enemy smoke-screen and our steam. The escape of the steam was simply deafening, and there seemed nothing much to do except to wait till the noise had ceased. I took this opportunity to test my "Gieve" by blowing it up, and whilst doing so saw Haselfoot don a life-saving jacket and remove his boots in his methodical manner, all ready for any eventualities. In a few minutes the noise ceased, and the smoke and steam cleared, showing us close to port an enemy craft badly on fire, but still firing spasmodically.

Just as day was breaking, when the *Botha* lay helpless with a large hole in her side caused by a torpedo, which had been fired at close range, and which had been the means of the port torpedo tubes disappearing over the side in a mysterious manner, perhaps the most

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perplexed member of the ship's company was a certain petty officer, who was wandering about the decks evidently in great distress. In one hand he held a large handle which was evidently that used for training the torpedo-tube in question. On being questioned as to what was worrying him, he replied as follows: "Well, sir, it's like this, we had just fired both torpedoes, and I was training the tubes fore and aft, and had just shifted over to the other 'andle, when 'e come along, and the next thing I knew was that I nearly had me photograph took." One quite realizes that the flash of such an explosion as a torpedo hitting the ship in the dark might have led the gallant P.O. to think that he was having his photograph taken by flashlight.

By this time the rest of our division appeared, but no sign of the enemy, except the one blazing. The only other British destroyer, *i.e.* the *Morris*, with us now received orders to finish her off, and proceeded to do so followed by the Frenchmen, who had a regular battle practice at her at very close range, whilst our destroyer gave the *coup de grâce* with a torpedo. Dawn grew apace, as the enemy sank, and the *Morris*, commanded by

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Lieut. - Commander Percy R. P. Percival, D.S.O., R.N., proceeded to take us in tow, which was eventually accomplished, and we limped home, damaged but happy, escorted by our trusty Allies. The morning was very misty, and after the scrap our position was pretty doubtful, so it was hard to set the nearest course for home. Roger Rede at this time asked me to go up on the bridge and consult with him as to his position, and it was most amusing to see him when I got there. His costume was *rather* meagre, and it was a pretty chilly morning—monkey jacket, pyjama trousers, tucked into white woollen stockings, and that was about all, except the smile.

We had cocoa and a discussion as to our position, but our progress was very slow. The tow was heavy, the old ship having a very heavy list, and the water washing into the enormous hole on the port side; the consequence being the tow kept parting; but we struggled on and it was with relief that we picked up one of the Trapegeer Buoys, and almost simultaneously a patrol of French seaplanes that were out reconnoitring. Little did we know it, but just previous to this time

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*Photo by Vandyk*

CAPTAIN ROGER REDE, D.S.O., R.N.

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we were within two or three thousand yards of eight enemy torpedo craft, which had come out from Ostend to see what had happened to the remainder of their brood—in fact, I believe, they closed the sunken torpedo-boat, whose mast was above water, and recovered the German ensign; but their inquisitiveness was not sufficient to allow them to make a search, and back they went to the shelter of their shore batteries, missing what would have been with their superiority an easy prey—a disabled destroyer in tow of another, and an escort of four.

Soon after passing the buoy, the Frenchmen closed us, and a good deal of complimentary remarks and jests passed between the various boats. It appears that the only thing that saved the *Botha* from sinking was that the torpedo exploded in a filled coal bunker, and, as it was, she was not damaged to any great extent. One of the most fortunate things was that the torpedoes in our port tubes had been fired before the explosion, and the torpedo gun's crew were actually training the tube fore and aft at the time we were hit, the force of the explosion causing it to be thrown bodily in board, the

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outer part hitting the top of the after funnel, and the inner part making a big dent in the iron deck; after which the whole tube gracefully slid overboard, and the marvel is that not one of this torpedo gun's crew was injured or killed. The damage done otherwise was very little. One of the minor steam pipes had been cut through early in the action, and thus accounted for a loss of speed that prevented Rede ramming a big Hun destroyer, which he had his eye on. The mid-ship pom-pom was rather knocked about, as was also one of the foremost guns. The bow had not even been marked by cutting through the enemy torpedo boat.

All our wounded were most cheerful and happy, and I do not think I have ever seen a ship's company so absolutely merry and bright as this one was on our way back to harbour. They had done a good night's work and felt it, and their delight was not lessened by the thought that the hole made by the "mouldy" meant a dockyard refit and a "drop of leave." Boiling hot ship's cocoa and the ubiquitous fag were soon forthcoming when once we were well in tow, with the collision mat out and the bulkheads

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shored up, and many was the yarn spun and loud the chaff and shouts of laughter at the witticisms of certain of the funny party of the ship.

When through the Zuidicoote Pass, we were met by tugs from Dunkirk, and the Commodore, who came in a M.L. to get the latest information. He was certainly rather astonished to know we had been on board, and was most interested in all the accounts he received. The passage between the piers at Dunkirk, and into the Basin, was veritably a triumphant one. French seaplanes pirouetted overhead and there was a lot of cheering, hand-waving, and subtle remarks from the British Blue on shore. Eleven-thirty saw us safely tied up in the basin with our wounded away in the ambulances, and the last of the official visitors away.

I myself went up to the office, leaving Haselfoot to help Rede to write his report as regards positions, etc. On my arrival at the Commodore's office I found him just about to sit down to an early and quick lunch, as arrangements had been made to bombard Ostend Naval Basin and the vicinity, in the hopes of shaking up (or worse) the destroyers

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we knew were sheltering there after the engagement of that morning. This was an opportunity not to be missed, and, as Commodore Lynes quite agreed I should come with him, I took down my lunch and off we went in a M.L. to the 15-inch monitor detailed for the bombardment. It was a lovely warm afternoon, but rather hazy—ideal weather for a shoot—and the passage to our bombarding position, accompanied by sweepers, M.L.'s, and destroyers, was quite a rapid one.

On arrival at this position, it was not long before we opened fire, nor was it long before the enemy shore batteries replied. Their shooting, however, was not very accurate, principally due to the fact that their spotting aircraft did not have a chance, invariably being driven off by our air patrols, whilst we proceeded with the shoot, being spotted on to the target in a wonderfully short time by our spotting machines. The spotting did not last long, however, as the Hun soon put up a smoke-screen over the town, which completely defeated the airmen, so that the majority of our shells were not spotted. The damage we did was, however, pretty

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extensive, as was shown by aerial photographs taken afterwards; the Naval Basin, etc., was badly knocked about, and it must have been a pretty terrifying experience to the Huns there, as a 15-inch high explosive shell, weighing something in the neighbourhood of a ton, makes a bit of a mess, and to get about a hundred of these at the rate of one a minute, does not give much time to collect one's senses. The town of Ostend was, of course, not bombarded, the Naval Basin being well away on the east side of the entrance; and this was our objective.

During the firing, the Vice-Admiral arrived in the *Phæbe*, and evidently considered we were getting it rather hotly in return, as he proceeded to make a smoke-screen to protect us, and a very fine one it was. It was curious to hear the enemy guns' reports, they being quite distinctly heard in addition to the roar of their shell through the air and the violent upheaval and explosion when striking the water. Only splinters reached us, but the little M.L.'s, who were the shore side of us, had a lot of this big stuff very close, very nearly swamping them. This did not worry them, however; rather the reverse, as they

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got a big haul of fish, stunned or killed by the explosions of the shells in the water. At the end of our prescribed number of rounds, we went off out of range, covered by an excellent smoke-screen from our M.L.'s.

When out of range, the Commodore and myself went on board the *Phœbe* to see the Vice-Admiral, and he was very astonished and very interested to learn of my previous night's experience. I had to tell him the whole story from A to Z, whilst we steamed back to Dunkirk, and on arrival there he at once went on board the *Botha* and made a very fine speech to the officers and crew, then proceeding to the Frenchman and the *Morris* for the same purpose. Eventually we left Dunkirk in the duty destroyer and came back to Dover after a quick passage, till we reached the English coast, when a fog as black as your hat came down, and we had to crawl in guided by the sound of the fog-horn on the break-water. We finally secured to the buoy at about 9 p.m., and this was the "end of a perfect day" as far as I was concerned.

Commencing about 3 a.m., we had sunk three or four Hun torpedo craft, had been torpedoed, had a right royal reception after,

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and ended up in the afternoon by giving the Hun something to repair from the effect of several tons of high explosive. My actual surveying job had not progressed as quickly as it would have done in peace-time, but the time had been by no means monotonous, and it was, I am glad to say, successfully accomplished, principally by Haselfoot, well in time for the successful attack on Zeebrugge.

I have tried to tell you everything of interest in the account of this action and the subsequent bombardment, but I am afraid it is rather incoherent, and perhaps not so interesting to you as I should wish. I must try to give you more of my experiences next time I write.

Yours ever,  
(Signed) H. P. DOUGLAS.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIFE AT THE LORD WARDEN

FOR the first few months of my residence in Dover I had to live in a boarding establishment at some distance from the pier, and I was greatly relieved when in September, 1915, I was able to make satisfactory terms and remove myself and my goods and chattels to the Lord Warden Hotel. For, as everybody knows, it is situated just outside the pier gates, which enabled me, as a general rule, to run off and have my meals while on duty in peace and comfort. But latterly I had been made more than ever anxious to effect this move, as one fine morning on entering our "dog-hole," I found an order under the Defence of the Realm Act, notifying to us that as all liquor was to be prohibited from coming on to the pier the prohibition must include us, and that any



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alcoholic liquor then on hand in the "dog-hole" was to be immediately removed.

Having been brought up on alcoholic stimulant, I foresaw imminent danger to my health if it was suddenly cut off, and I was staggered at the stupidity of the demand. However, going outside to get a breather and to ponder over possibilities, I found another order posted on the outside of the very same office to a similar effect, only in this case special exemption was granted to all the ships lying alongside and to the military messes in the turret batteries.

The net result of these two orders was, then, that, while everybody else on the pier was to be allowed to have whatever refreshment they chose to order, the naval "dug-outs," who had arrived donkey's years beyond the age of discretion, and who frequently had to put in a sixteen-hour night watch all on their lone and in the dark, were to have nothing. To ask a man of my age to confine his dinner for years on end to a chunk of cold meat and cheese carried down in a brown paper parcel or a red bandana handkerchief, was bad enough, but to expect him to acquiesce in washing it down with a

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glass of cold water, was more than human nature could stand. No, thank you. Nothing doing. We applied the blind eye and carried on with the refreshment. How very stupid and inconsiderate some people can make themselves at times !

I lived at the Lord Warden from September, 1915, until June, 1917, when, as nobody came to support it, it was finally closed down. How it continued to keep open so long, I am at a loss to conceive, for beyond an occasional guest with a little bit of " fluff " which blew in now and again for dinner, the clientèle consisted for over a year of Brigadier-General Livingstone, Colonel Marsden, and myself. In fact, so morose and selfish did we three become towards the end of our sojourn there that we actually resented any intrusion which interfered with the proper and punctual serving of our meals. And yet, as I am writing this (October, 1917), I can't help thinking what a pity it is that it closed when it did. For since that date we have added a daily " Leave ship " to our other services, which, coming in the morning with from 1000 to 1200 men, returns in the evening with a similar number, and amongst them we deal

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probably with 200 officers a day. What a joy to them and a gift to the hotel would these men have been if only it were open, and when perchance the ships are held up owing to enemy action, or the weather, double, and possibly treble that number have to be housed and catered for.

And talking of this new service, can any one realize the joy with which we greeted these splendid fellows after the hundreds of thousands of maimed humanity we have been dealing with for the past three years? And where do they come from and how is it done? Just grasp the fact of what this country was before the war, and ask yourself by what miracle the weeds one constantly met with have been turned into possibly the finest manhood of the world. For with them it must be remembered are included Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and, in fact, men from all parts of our Great British Empire.

As I write I have probably dealt with over 250,000 of them, and I closely scrutinise them both coming and going, and so far I haven't found a man that I wouldn't rather shout a drink to than offer an affront. Fit and fresh

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and full of beans, no sooner are they disembarked than they scurry along the platforms with jokes and ringing laughter into the waiting trains, and before ten minutes have elapsed they are all on their way to ten days' bliss in Blighty! I take my hat off to the training establishments of the Army, and only marvel how it is done.

I have elsewhere discussed the grit and spirit of our wounded warriors—which, by the way, is going to win this war—let me now narrate two stories typical of this spirit, the first of which is vouched for by Colonel Marsden. His job is that of a draft conducting colonel to France, and he accordingly has a unique opportunity of pronouncing on the physique of the drafts sent over. We are in the fourth year of the war, and he maintains that the average is up to the very best of the early days. In this I may say he is supported by Colonel Sir Kildare Borrowes, Bart., who is a brother officer on the same beat. On one bitter cold winter night, Colonel Marsden was marching from Boulogne to Étaples, in France, at the head of a draft of about one thousand men. It was raining and blowing hard, the road

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was in an awful condition, and it was as dark as the inside of a cow, when suddenly he found himself immersed in icy cold water up to his armpits. There was a break right across the road, and though it was damnable, and his language was on a par, there was no means of avoiding it, and all he had to do was to listen to the "damns!" which were to follow him. For, mind you, though bad enough for the Colonel, he knew he had a change of dry clothing awaiting him at the end of the march, while for the men there was nothing but what they stood up in. The first files went splosh; the second files went splosh; and right away down the line they all went splosh in turn, and yet the only sound heard right throughout the draft was a cheery "Quack! Quack!" And J. M. read unto himself a lesson never to be forgotten!

Again, on another occasion, another draft conducting officer had a large draft to entrain at Boulogne, but for the first time, instead of the ordinary train of third-class carriages he was accustomed to, he found he had to make shift with a train of French cattle trucks, which are boarded up so high that only a tall man can see out of them. There was, however,

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nothing for it, and forty men with their accoutrements and bags, had to be accommodated in each truck, while the journey was a long one and the weather cold and vile. The outlook was not promising, but the men, with little or no grumbling, were duly entrained. Just before starting, the C.O., with his sergeant-major, went along the train to lock up each truck, and the only greeting he got was a long-continued "Baa! Baa!" Tommy at his best, and absolutely undefeatable!

Jack, also, is of the same make and mould, and here is an authentic case of the cheerful manner in which he keeps his end up. After the battle of Jutland, when they were landing a number of wounded at a certain port in the North, a pal came down to meet a man who had had his leg shot off close to the thigh. Recognizing him as they were carrying him ashore in a stretcher, he shouted out: "Hullo, Charlie, how are you, old man?" "Tophole, matey, and only one boot to clean!"

During my stay at the Lord Warden, we had some exciting experiences, for, in addition to numerous air raids by both Zeppelins and aeroplanes, we had to deal with the survivors

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of those three tragic disasters which are discussed in another part of this book: the mining of the hospital ship *Anglia* and the P. & O. s.s. *Maloja*, and the torpedoing of the mail steamer *Sussex*. Never as long as I live shall I forget the sight which met my eyes as I came into the hotel dining-room for lunch on the afternoon of the day of the sinking of the *Maloja*. From 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. I had been disembarking the survivors and the dead and wounded of that ill-fated ship from the various crafts which had brought them alongside our pier. I never for a moment thought I should see any of them again. The hotel was simply crammed with them, and the dining-room reminded one of nothing so much as a scene in a tragedy at Drury Lane Theatre. There they were, men, women and children, all seated at the different tables and garbed in every sort of wonderful garbing. Reach-me-downs of all sorts and sizes, dressing-gowns, pyjamas of strange and wonderful pattern and hue, a priest's cassock, large warm bath towels, and rugs and blankets were all in evidence, and had the sight not been such a pathetic one it would have made a cat laugh.

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Going to my table, I sat down next a handsome soldierly-looking man wearing a dressing-gown with a Turkish fez on his head. When I passed the time of day with him and congratulated him on his escape, I little knew the awful tragedy the poor chap had just been through. I learnt it afterwards, for while he was with me he used my rooms as his own, and I was proud to be able to be of any service to him. General McLeod's story was a simple one. Just having married a second wife, he was on his way out to Bombay to take up his appointment as G.O.C. of troops in that town. Seeing that the ship was sinking, and being a powerful swimmer, he took his young wife in his arms and plunged in. He told me that for nearly half an hour he was swimming about with his precious burden before he could attract attention, and then a trawler came to his assistance. When he got alongside, his wife was alive. As he handed her over to the willing arms extended to receive her, she died!

Let me give you another of the harrowing incidents I experienced that day, and I will stop, for, after all, it is past history now and one needn't dwell on episodes of the sort.



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Finding a young woman seated in the hall of the hotel, sobbing her heart out, I ascertained that she was looking for her husband to whom she had been wedded but recently. From 2 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. she had sat in that chair looking, every time the hall door opened, for the husband who never came. He was drowned, and his body was at the time lying at the mortuary awaiting identification, and I knew it. She wouldn't eat and she wouldn't drink, and she couldn't sleep, until, fearing a collapse, I had to call in the aid of some other ladies in the hotel, and get her carried forcibly upstairs and put to bed.

It was a day of sad sights all round and the hotel was over-crowded, but to the credit side let me add that both the P. & O. Co. and the hotel authorities did everything humanly possible to alleviate suffering and to assist those in distress. Food, drink, and clothing, and, in fact, whatever was asked for, was given without charge and in abundance. Telegrams and cablegrams were written out for all and sundry and sent free of cost to the senders, while doctors and nurses and willing helpers rendered every assistance to those in need of it.

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I remember that on that particular week-end some friends of mine had arranged a week-end party, and amongst the guests were two particularly charming young ladies from the caste of "Bric-à-Brac" at the Palace Theatre in London. They had come down for a joy-time, and on Saturday we had it. But when on the Sunday the tragedy occurred, no one in the hotel did better work than our two little "Bric-à-Bracs," and they ended up by taking charge of the poor young forlorn widow and escorting her right up to her home in Brixton. Good little Bricks!

The first close personal connection I had with an enemy air raid was, I remember, on a certain beautiful Sunday afternoon. The siren sounded just as I left the hotel, and the guns started popping off as I made for the pier. The Hun Intelligence Department is, as we know, magnificent, and on this occasion they must have ascertained who it was taking over charge of the pier, for no sooner was I on the spot than they dropped a bomb within about fifty yards of me, fortunately a "dud," and in the water. A second one fell immediately after, just short of a hospital ship lying alongside. Commander de Berry and I then

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ascended our look-out platform and had a beautiful view of the attack and the defence. From one-pounder pom-poms up to three-inch and even six-inch, both from the ships and the forts, they were all blazing away for all they were worth, while the Huns seemed to like it and to be even smiling at their efforts. Finally, as a parting salute, when they were about four miles away, the monitor *Lord Clive* crashed off with a shell from her twelve-inch gun! It was rather like using a sledgehammer to kill a mosquito, but the shot was a beauty, and very nearly knocked the tail off one of them. During the raid I noticed the Chief Officer of the H.S. *Dieppe*, one Mahoney by name, busily engaged lowering and manning one of his lifeboats, and when the show was all over I called him up and inquired what the brain wave was, and whether if we had brought a Hun down it was his intention to take his boat out to rescue the occupants? His reply was quite to my liking: "No, divil a bit, sir," he said. "I was just making ready, in case I saw any of them floating around, to go out and slit their bloody gullets!"

We had at this time in the hotel, as guests,

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a Major and Mrs. and Miss Ratcliff. The Major was out at the time, but on my return to dinner, the ladies told me how kind Harris, the hall-porter, had been to them, and the young one informed me that she had had the time of her life. He rushed them from one window to the other with, "Here you are, madam! Now you can see our guns\* into them! Come this way, miss, if you want to see one brought down," and so on. That evening Harris went home a proud and happy man. The next morning he returned a sour and a sad one. His house had been cut in half by a bomb, and his family had had a most fortunate escape. Harris is a widower with three daughters, and all the girls were in the house at the time. Fortunately, the bomb struck the kitchen and out-house portion of the house; otherwise, everybody in it must have been killed. Poor old Harris, prince among hall porters, who has been at the Warden for over forty-five years, has now only one wish left, and that is to meet just one fat Hun, please!

The next interesting air raid which I witnessed, was the first crossing of a Hun seaplane by night. I remember it was about

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1.30 on a beautiful still moonlight morning, while I was on watch. At the time I was engaged decoding a cipher telegram. Suddenly, in the stillness of the night, there occurred what I, on the spur of the moment, concluded was a short and sharp bombardment by an enemy submarine which had entered the harbour and was engaging our ships. We all rushed out, the orderly, the operator and myself, and practically before we were out it was over and there was silence again. What was it? Then in the town there arose a big sheet of flame from a burning house, and I knew at once that it must have been an enemy aircraft dropping bombs. Only one remark was made, and it was by Witt, the Irish writer, and to the point: "Oh, be God! it's the brewery." And the brewery it was.

Now it's all very fine to say that this man was out to kill women and children. It must be borne in mind that Dover is a fortress, and the enemy is justified by every means in his power in attacking it. This particular Hun was a clever and a daring devil. For, as far as I know, it was the first night raid by aeroplane ever attempted. He dropped nine bombs in all and never wasted one in the sea,

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and to show his appreciation of the failure of the anti-aircraft force to locate him and fire at him, he dropped his first bomb right in front of the corps commander's house, and shattered all his windows! He then shaped a right-handed course, dropping the rest of his eggs on the town, inflicting several casualties and causing considerable damage to house property. Then up over the castle and descending on the top of the hill to within a few hundred feet, he opened his machine gun on the camps between here and St. Margaret's, and finally from there flew back unscathed to Hunland.

On September 6th, 1915, I saw the entire fleet of the Dover Patrol sail across for the first bombardment of the Belgian coast. It was a curious medley of a fleet and consisted of one old-fashioned battleship, several monitors and cruisers, a large force of destroyers, a spotting-balloon ship devoid of masts, a cross-Channel steamer converted into a floating sea-plane base, together with a huge flotilla of trawlers, drifters, armed yachts and motor-launches. The work done on that occasion was exceedingly effective, for we more or less caught the Hun napping.

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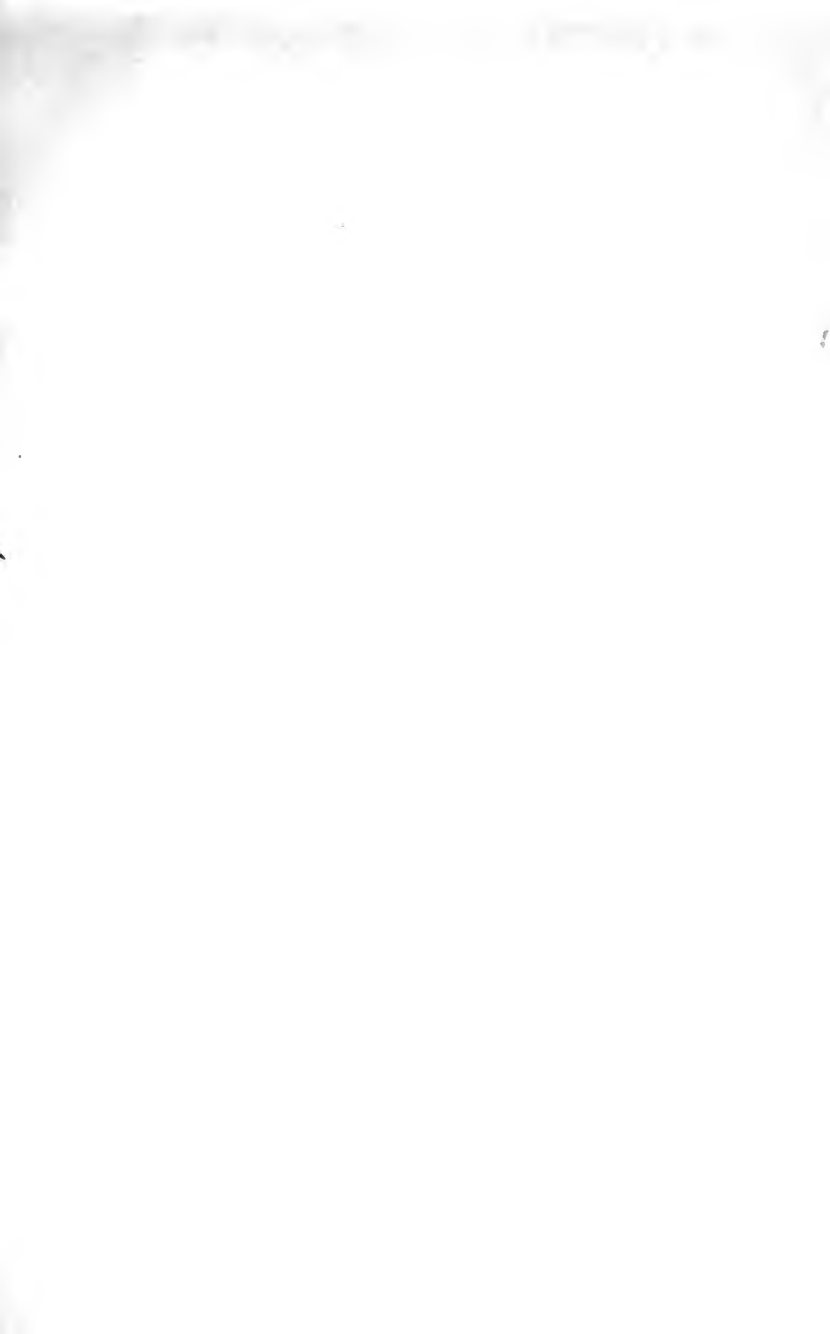
On the 15th the dose was repeated, but in the short interval we found that the defences had been enormously strengthened, and, though effective fire was opened and our casualties were nil, the result of this second bombardment was not altogether satisfactory.

Shortly after this, my turn for the annual ten days' casual leave came round, and taking advantage of a cordial offer of a shoot from a couple of very dear old friends of mine I got into a train and hied me away to Scarmadale, a place about twenty miles the other side of Oban. A long distance for so short a stay—yes, but worth it. Mr. and Mrs. Ted Gedge had taken a rough shooting there together with a portion of a small farmhouse situated on the edge of the loch. There were only the three guns, Ted, the gillie, and myself, and no beaters. The birds were wild at that time of the year and the going was strenuous, but we shot every day and all day, and when we were not shooting we were fishing, and we lived entirely on grouse, black game, and the fish from the loch—nothing else being allowed on the table. In the evening, we three old friends, over a bottle of the mountain dew, discussed old times, long gone by. The

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simple life! What more do you want in time of war? and I could have done with a month of it. Thank you, Ted and Biz, for that most enjoyable ten-days amongst the "Pees' Weeps."







*Photo by Bassano*

CAPTAIN GEORGE WILLIAM CAVENDISH VENN, D.S.O., R.N.R.

## CHAPTER IX

### DOVER DRIFTERS

BY CAPTAIN G. W. VENN, D.S.O., R.N.R.

DEAR COXON,

**A**T last I have managed to get a minute. Convoy work is most strenuous, leaving little time for anything except talk, which I can generally find time for.

In spite of knowing the drifter life inside out, being such a damn poor writer, when it comes to putting it on paper, I am as much in a "Dilly-Emma" (as my Master-at-Arms calls it) as I was at the first sight of a drifter and her crew.

*Dover and how I got There.* After the *Aboukir* I joined *Cornwallis*, and it was from her that I heard I had been appointed to *Arrogant*; looking her out in the Navy List, saw Depot for Submarines.

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I had applied, when at Chatham, for navigation for submarines, but their lordships evidently thought that the capabilities of a sailor bred in a Ditcher (who used the carpenter's rule as parallels and carried his sextant about in a canvas bag) hardly met the requirements.

Arriving at Dover I was handed over to Bowring, who informed me we were out to "net Fritz." "Your job is the discipline and general routine, while I'll do the thinking."

We had as our office a room in a private hotel; as the proprietress frequently called in about trivial matters (he being a handsome man), "We require more room," he said, so shifted!

*Staff.* Captain.

Myself as First Lieutenant.

Two R.N.R. Lieutenants.

An Asst. Paymaster, R.N.R. (who afterwards got his leg shot off at Dunkirk).

Temp. Surgeon, R.N., from *Arrogant*, who did good service in instructing men how to spell.

Chief Carpenter, seventy years old, wearing the Burmah medal.

M.A.A. (who was in *Titanic* and owed his

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life in having to pass the "bar" just before taking to the water).

Two telephone orderlies, R.N.V.R. (Scotch).

Brass finisher and pattern-maker.

Boy scouts as messengers.

Six drifters had arrived from the East Coast. I regret I did not keep a record of their names, and can only remember three :

*Clover Bank*, lost afterwards off the Belgian coast.

*Sidulus*, which did good work in Adriatic, and always appealed very much to my M.A.A., owing to having on her funnel a racehorse.

*Nevertheless*, fastest boat out of Yarmouth, whose crew were evidently sportsmen, or poachers, as they arrived with game feathers stuck in their hats.

Bowring and I inspected them; they knew not a four-ringer. They treated him rather like their owner; their simplicity amused him greatly. Personally, I was afraid they would ask him to have a drink. The M.A.A.'s face was a picture when one skipper, with his hands stuck deep in his pockets, continually spat across Bowring to the other.

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side of the deck. After inspecting them and giving them good advice, we left, he remarking to me, "You must use patience."

I found them willing and out to do their "bit," the hatred of the Germans predominating over everything, their one idea being, after the war, to meet a German fishing on the Dogger Bank. I think they will have something to say about the bombardment of the East Coast.

*Uniform.* They arrived rigged rather like a pawnbroker's shop: hard hats, odds and ends of old clothes. To get skippers, drivers, and second-hands uniformed and ready for inspection for Sunday divisions was not easy, as india-rubber collars and dickies generally got twisted under their ear.

From the first they liked Bowring, calling him amongst themselves Dick. The *John Roberts*, now in the Adriatic, was his flagship. One day he asked me to send down and inform the skipper that he was going to sea. I went myself, singing out, "Skipper, the Captain is going out at ten o'clock, so haul up to the wharf." "Ay, ay, sir! Heh, Tom (boy-cook), start on making them dumplings. The boss is mighty fond of

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dumplings." It was in the *John Roberts* that I had my race home from the Hun.

*Patrol.* Patrol gradually increased, as we extended our drift across the Straits, worrying and catching Fritz frequently. Unfortunately, until the lance-bomb came in, we had nothing to destroy him with, and only had to call up destroyers. We must have been a great annoyance to submarines, for our own people used to curse us enough when going backwards and forwards to Dunkirk, as drifters never lay to their nets, so one never knew where they were. It was no joke in the dark. "Submarine in the nets" was the frequent cry. Up dashed destroyers; many depth-charges exploded: "Scene"; everybody in a panic; destroyers, drifters, yachts, turning round like dancing dervishes; suddenly one hears the skipper sing out: "Ay, there he is on the bow," not a sub. but a codling. It took some time to make them more concerned about the sub. than the fish. The cry of "Wolf" was frequent, owing to old wrecks catching the nets, which would, with a strong tide, give the inexperienced the appearance of the net moving away. I remember a

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certain officer had a sub. in the nets on the surface. Giving the alarm, up dashed a destroyer, drifter backing out to let him deal with it. Nothing was done, although C.O.'s report stated he was within 15 yards. Bowring was frantic; calling officers and men together, he explained what had happened, adding: "Any man who does not act at once on occasions like this, either lacks common sense or courage. Now bear this in mind." And everybody did.

*Belgian Coast.* In the early days, Admiral Hood went over in the old *Revenge*, taking some of us with him, our duty being to form a zareba round him and attend to old fat Bickey,\* who sat on the spotting tripod. About this time, Admiral Hood left, being relieved by Bacon, shortly after which we started mine nets. Commander Davy arriving with torpedo-men from Portsmouth the old post office was taken over and converted into barracks, the Gunnery Lieut. being placed in charge, whose duties also were to instruct drifters in the use of 3-pounders, which were daily arriving. Establishment of these we thought would end the war as far as we

\* Commander Bickford, R.N., who was "Guns" to both Admirals Hood and Bacon.



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were concerned, for up to this we had nothing but a rifle. Just about this time, also, we lost Bowring, who went as Flag Captain, Captain Bird taking his place.

The *Gleaner of the Sea*, lost in the second raid, had rather an experience when lying off Ostend, as a submarine came up between her anchor and bow. She was bagged by lance-bombs, and the usual reward received.

The patrol grew until we finally mine-netted from South Goodwins to Snow Bank, which meant a lot of hard and dangerous work. During the whole time we only lost two drifters. I worked in the T.H. vessel *Alert*, which was blown up on the line later by a German mine, losing eleven of crew. I was more than sorry about this, as she had done such fine work, and had such a good crew. My signal lad owed his life to having on a pair of leather sea-boots, by which means he was able to kick a panel out of the door and get out. Our big losses were during the German destroyer raids, very few occurring on the Belgian coast.

*Punishments.* Our crime sheet was exceedingly small, in spite of now having 1200 men. With regard to punishment,

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unless the offence was serious, it seldom went to the Captain, as the very simple method of stopping a man's leave on shore we found was all sufficient. This meant, he would come in from sea after three days out, and go straight to a ship anchored in harbour, staying there until his ship came and fetched him, just previous to her going out on patrol again. Just to give an example of punishments: a skipper had once come into dock against the signal lights. When brought before me, I told him not to do so in future. The very next time, he did the same thing and nearly missed being run down by a destroyer going out. I took him before the Captain, who punished him, for during the next three times he was in port he had to go to the North Pier with a white and red light showing, either one or the other, according to the harbour signal to incoming drifters, in case, as Bowring said, their sight might be as bad as his own. This caused great amusement to the other skippers, and for many weeks after he was chaffed about it. Needless to say, it had the desired effect. I quote this instance to show how the undisciplined became disciplined by simple methods.

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Again : two deck hands, one night, being tired of the Hippodrome performance, saw through the window of the gallery, which looked on to the backyard, a cask of beer. Scrambling out, they slid down the drain-pipe ; opening the door of the yard they rolled the barrel down towards H.M. Drifter *Girl Annie*. Getting thirsty half-way down, they tapped it ; not having a can, got an old paint-pot, half full of dried paint, and were just enjoying themselves when the civil police arrived.

At the court next day, Capt. Cay, R.N., the presiding magistrate and a strict teetotaler, asked me (an officer of the patrol always had to attend, and I generally made a rule to go myself, if possible), "How as to the character of these men ?" (I had never seen men look more innocent.) "Your worship, they are two very good men at sea. Hope that you will fine them and not imprison them, as their services are valuable to the patrol, and I am sure Chief Constable Fox will vouch for the general good behaviour of the Drifter Patrol." Fox did. After a long lecture on temperance, his worship said, "These men will be punished by naval

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authorities, of course ?” “ Oh yes, certainly,” I replied. Acquitted.

Next morning before the Captain. M.A.A. Case : Found by civil police, having in their possession a barrel of beer taken from Hippodrome, and were found drinking it out of an old paint-pot. Acquitted at civilian court, and handed over to be punished by naval authorities.

The Captain, who had a habit of shutting one eye when looking at anybody brought up before him, said : “ Well, Commander, what have you got to say about these men ? ” I replied : “ Exceptionally good at sea, but seem to play the fool on shore, sir.” “ Yes, so I should imagine. Well, this time, as the Commander says you work well and are valuable to patrol, and as people are such damn fools that they cannot lock up their beer, you can go.” “ Dismissed. On caps ; right turn ; quick march.”

*Recreation.* I thought, with a big patrol like this, that it was essential we should have some form of amusement, so started football, boxing, and physical exercises for everybody under 22 on Prince of Wales' pier, from 9-9.45 every morning. This was

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compulsory. Captain Henderson, the late King's Harbour Master, used to delight in coming down and joining in the tug-of-war, also any other N.O.'s who were passing.

I obtained a field for footer for them, and provided jerseys, which a man had to earn by being picked by a committee so many times in a season. Unfortunately, in the first raid we lost all our forward line, but soon had another team, and a very good one it was. The Yeoman of Signals, who had been in his time the heavy-weight champion boxer in the Navy, and who now only had one eye and a paralysed side, was secretary, and worked very hard to make the game a success. Most of the officers played, and sometimes we had two matches in one day. The second year we lost our field, which was taken by the E. Surreys for a camp. Then the Navy formed a club, and we got the choice of three or four fields on application to the secretary, and we certainly had our money's worth. The year I left we were very successful, and, in spite of playing all the army teams, out of twenty-seven matches we only lost five, and this was principally due to our best men

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being at sea, although a certain paper once had a paragraph headed :

“Football is a grand game, but war is most important. What would tax-payers say if they knew that there is a certain Commander in a patrol at Dover who keeps his men back on shore to play football? Whoe'er the cap fits, let them wear it.”

No doubt you will know the paper it came from. Absolute rot, of course. Football was closely followed by skippers, who generally get away to watch a match. One great match against the E. Surrey Regt., Captain and everybody came. We tied up to time, playing twenty minutes over before the goal was scored.

I was proud of our boxing, as the cook of the *Datum*, who was lost in the first raid, took on the champion of the *Arrogant* and beat him.

*Signalmen.* Admiralty informed us that we had to make our own signalmen, so volunteered for them. Many volunteered as they got 2*d.* extra a day, when they could pass out. The first question asked was: “Can you spell?” “No, I am not much at spelling; but I know my larning.” This from a man about 35. Anyway, as I wanted

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about 90, I picked out 115, and Surgeon Bailey, known as the little doctor, who is now at Zanzibar, in his spare time devoted his attention to them and held spelling classes. To see him on P.O.W. pier, surrounded by 20 fishermen, was amusing. "Now then," pointing to the man sitting at the top of the class, "how do you spell Cruiser?" "K-r-u-z-e-r." "No, next one." "C-r-u-z-z-e-r." "No; next." "C-r-u-i-s-e-r." "Up you go to the top," and so on. I was indeed very grateful to the doctor, for without his services I don't know how ever I should have had time to teach them.

After a man was passed in spelling, he was handed over to the leading signalman, Woods, and then for proficiency to the Yeoman. As I thought that too much instruction was tiring, when I had time the doctor and I took them for a walk over the hills. These men did their three days out and in as usual, and only went to signal class when on shore. Scotchmen I found the most attentive and anxious to learn. The skippers asked for a class, so that they might know what was going on.

*Baths, Wash-houses.* One thing that

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troubled me greatly was how to keep cleanliness in the Patrol, as regards personnel, for men that had such dirty work to do, namely, in the handling of tarred rope, tarred nets, you could hardly expect them to be as clean and smart-looking as the blue-jacket should be, when they only had a bucket to wash themselves and their clothes in. When on the Committee of the Naval Canteen, Bowring being President, the question cropped up about baths, with regard to drifters I said: "At present they go to the Town Hall, where they pay 3*d.* for a bath, which seems rather hard to the deck hands, and does not encourage cleanliness." After the meeting he said he would see the Admiral and ask him to forward a request for a bath-house for the Auxiliary Patrol. This eventually went through and was much appreciated, and I felt very proud of the bath-house, which contained hot and cold showers, washing troughs, and two good drying-rooms. This bath-house was open during certain hours on week-days, and up to an hour before divisions on Sundays.

*Miscellaneous.* Barracks, sick bay, bath-house, drill hall, these I want you to go and



## DOVER DRIFTERS

see, as it is a better way than writing about them. Then you can say what you like about them. I should also recommend having a talk with Surgeon Beare, the M.A.A., and Yeoman of Signals. They could all give you a very good idea how the patrol was carried on and probably tell you a lot of things that I have omitted.

*General Character and Personnel.* Most people thought that we wired in the docks because our men got drunk and fell in. This is incorrect, but coming out of Snargate Street on to the dark quay was fatal; and to get to his ship a man might have to step over several other drifters where no lights were allowed. I found them of good character, gallant and brave, and a very few bad. One could call them out at any time of night, and the whole three years I was there I never had one case of where a man refused to do his job, or turn out. They had unlimited faith in destroyers, and they had been brought up in a creed which taught them to help one another; consequently, although when one ship was mined, to go to her assistance in anything but a small boat is dangerous, nothing would prevent them from rushing

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

over in the drifter. Teddy Evans, now Captain of the *Broke*, is a great favourite of theirs, and they spoke of him as "Teddy." They must have got to know him during the early days in the *Crusader* and *Viking*, when working with them on the Belgian coast. Possibly you may remember the noise they kicked up when the *Broke* came in after her scrap.

I saw the casualties from the drifters brought in, where some had been badly knocked about, one man having his left eye knocked out by a splinter. Also I have seen when their legs have been caught in the wire netting, when shooting, and nearly torn off. Not on any occasion have I heard them murmur. I enclose a photograph of our footer team.\* Clean, healthy sportsmen, who would lose in the same spirit as they won. The boy marked with a cross is only 18, and a coming boxer; the other two marked with a line, played for the Navy against the Army.

*Guns.* Till the second year we never had anything except lance-bombs and the American Winchester rifle, which men gene-

\* To my regret I have mislaid this photo, or would have included it.

## DOVER DRIFTERS

rally managed to shoot one another with. The 3-pounders were first put into officers' ships, and were the envy of everybody, the feeling being "Ready at last for the German Fleet." As we got more, they were put into other ships. If you found a man absent from his job on the dock, you generally found him cleaning or pulling his gun to pieces, all being most keen to learn everything about them. The Gunnery-Lieut. and instructors said they were very quick, and splendid fellows to teach. At prize firing they were rather dissatisfied, as everybody wanted to have a shot, even the cook. Pom-poms, Maxims, and Lewis guns came along. Each ship had either one or the other. They were instructed in the use of these by an Army Lieutenant and two instructors, the former saying, when the course was finished: "Commander, it has been a great pleasure to teach your men. I wish it was as easy to instruct soldiers."

*Wireless.* Great excitement prevailed when the first ship was fitted out with wireless. R.N.V.R. operators came from different depots and were lads from all grades of life, respectable, obedient, and efficient. About

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

this time we had to undertake the training of 1000 R.N.C.V.R.'s, 180 at a time; some were willing; others dirty. While willing and eager to learn, my own opinion is that, however hard you try, you can't make a sailor out of a long-shoreman; moreover, starting him in a drifter in winter-time in the Straits of Dover is a very severe test.

*Relief Fund.* It was evident that we should have some immediate relief fund, so that the wives of those killed or drowned would feel that they were not dependent on outside charity. A committee was formed, and after a discussion it was resolved that every one who wished to benefit should put in so much each week. The scheme worked well, and I was rather amused, because the Scotsmen were more anxious than others to have a higher subscription. The men were encouraged to bring their wives to Dover, as I had an idea they would be better behaved. At first they did not like the idea, but the raids on the East Coast helped considerably. Their women-folk were always respectably dressed, and their children beautifully clean. This I found when I visited several of them with the doctor.

## DOVER DRIFTERS

*Stories.* We had been over to bombard Ostend; a zareba had been formed round three of the old monitors. During the action the *Sanda*, that charming old commander, Gartside Tipping, had been done in. On the order being given to return to Dover, we had our nets to weigh. A certain corner got it very warm from the shore batteries. I was waiting for the *Hyacinth* (now in Adriatic), who was having quite a struggle with his nets, shots splashing all around him. At last he started moving out from the shore. When I got alongside of him I said: "Are you hit, skipper?" "No," he replied. "Then, why the devil didn't you sink and leave your nets?" "If I had left the — you would have only put me in — gaol, so I thought I had better have them."

The following conversation ensued about 12.45 p.m., which I overheard when sitting in my office, which was on the ground floor.

M.A.A. (cheerily), who was standing outside on the front steps: "Hullo, colonel! What the 'ell do you want?"

"Want to see the doctor."

"See the doctor at 12.45! Do you think the doctor is here all day? Go back to your

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

pub and come back at five o'clock. If you are going to die before then, just write home and tell 'em where to send the flowers. Is yer address below? If not, leave it, because we are always subscribing for some other — floral garlands for the likes of you fellows that are going to 'eaven."

This man's ship was off to sea that afternoon. He went in it.

Another time, about noon.

M.A.A. "Good morning, madam. What can I do for you?"

"Want to see the Commander."

"Well, he's with the Admiral! Can I do anything?"

"Well, Mr. Bailey, I have just come up to see him to ask why my Bill hasn't been made skipper. He's only come out to kill Germans, and not be bossed by Mrs. Smith's husband, I can tell you!"

"Look here, madam, this ain't no petticoat Government who rules 'ere. I don't care, nor does the Commander, if your old man has come out to kill Kaiser Bill 'isself, or Little Willie, but I tell yer, the Admiralty here don't have no woman a-bossing about this establishment."

## DOVER DRIFTERS

I could go on telling you stories for weeks, but Surgeon Bailey, now in Zanzibar, made a book of them.

### NOTE BY AUTHOR

It fell to the lot of Captain Bowring, D.S.O., and Commander Venn, as he then was, to inaugurate the Drifter Patrol of Dover, in other words, to transform fisher-folk into fighting seamen of the Navy. It was a most interesting job; the material was splendid, but it was work requiring, above all things, tact, firmness and a fellow feeling for our fellow man.

Two better men than Captain Bowring and Commander Venn could not have been found, for everything depended on the manner in which the men were dealt with in the first instance.

Their record during the last four years is sufficient to show the complete success which has attended the united efforts of master and man. The history and doings of the Dover Drifter Patrol will be fully dealt with in Volume II.

In the meantime both Captain Bowring and Commander Venn have left us; the one

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

to take command of a cruiser, and the other as a Captain of Convoys conveying American troops to France. In his contribution Captain Venn tells us of the loss of the *Alert* on the Dover barrage, but he omits to tell us that he was on board the ship at the time, and that this was the fourth occasion on which he had been torpedoed or mined.

He was torpedoed on the *Aboukir*, *Cressy*, and *Hogue*, and on this occasion was altogether five and a half hours in the water, incidentally saving the life of a midshipman on one of his numerous swims.

He was the life and soul of the Drifter Patrol while he was with us, and there was not a man nor boy amongst these splendid fisher-folk who did not regret his departure.

He won his D.S.O. by a very fine bit of work in running a number of his drifters through our mine fields when chased by a flotilla of Hun destroyers, and thereby saving the lot of them. I have not the details of this instance by me, but no doubt it will be referred to by Captain Bird, C.M.G., D.S.O., R.N., the present head of the Patrol, who has kindly consented to write a chapter for me on this subject in Volume II.



## CHAPTER X

### NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

I MAY mention that I am making no effort to record events in these chapters in any chronological order. I am merely entering them as they appear to me to foregather and fit together. To hark back, it was during the month of June, of 1915, that two more or less important events occurred, and one of minor importance. For it was on the 17th of that month that the first bombardment of Dunkirk by the Germans, with a 15-inch naval gun, took place. It was very effective, and was said to be firing at a range of from seventeen to twenty-one miles. Our airmen, however, were not long before they located it, and found that after firing several rounds in the open it was switched off into a tunnel. For a number of days it took its toll of death and destruction, but eventually, by a very clever

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

piece of work, it was knocked over by one of our guns by a direct hit, whilst in the act of firing. Unfortunately for Dunkirk, it was not long before it was replaced, and at irregular intervals it still continues to harass the town. The second event was the despatch to the other side in our hospital ship *St. Patrick* of thirty-five American doctors and seventy-seven nursing sisters, together with a large consignment of drugs and medical and surgical appliances. They were a remarkably fine-looking lot of men and women and all full of vim, and, though they had a terrible crossing, they expressed complete satisfaction at what had been done for them to help them on their way. It was the pioneer movement of the entry of America into the war.

The event of minor importance to which I allude, and which occurred about this time, was my first trip in a submarine, and as not a very great number of you have been in one of these under-water boats, it may be of interest if I try and describe my own experience. Knowing nothing at all about them, I used to think what wonderful shooting the Huns must make when sinking our

## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

ships in such numbers. To an expert it's as easy as falling off a log, and given decent weather and an unobservant ship, I don't see how you can well miss. On this particular occasion, five British submarines were sent out to practise on the old parent ship of the port, and I was a passenger in one of them. Our instructions were to proceed down Channel under escort of the *Hazard* to a certain position, where we were to spread ourselves out in fan-like fashion and attack the cruiser on her return journey. We all submerged and took independent action, and when we came to the surface again we were informed by signal that four out of the five had registered hits, and that the only one to miss was the one told off to attack from the stern when the ship was zigzagging.

To me it was a wonderful experience and intensely interesting, as I was allowed actually to work the periscope myself a part of the time. We were on one of the smaller and older boats, and as I am not now quite as slim as I used to be I found the brass buttons of my uniform coat interfering in an annoying manner with free movement while struggling to get up or down the conning-

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

tower, which, as a matter of fact, in this class of boat is little better than a man-hole. As we were on the point of submerging for attack, I was ordered below, leaving the commanding officer the last to come down. Finding myself in difficulties, I said to my C.O., "Supposing I can't get down, what happens?" The reply was final and effective—that the only alternative left to him would be to jump on my head until I got there. I went. But seriously, in war-time, it is a perfectly awful life.

Of course, our little show was only practice, and mere child's play. But when we were "under" and in the dark, I couldn't help wondering whether all the short and sharp orders given and the different things equally quickly done in compliance with the orders, were the right ones, and what would be the result if anything went wrong? You have only to try and imagine sixteen or seventeen humans boxed up as we were, without a chance of escape, to make you take off your hat to the officers and men who elect to lead such a life. And now they tell me that, in the North Sea at the present moment, they feel safer below than

## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

on the surface, for the moment they rise for a breather they run the risk of every gun from every ship in sight immediately blazing forth at them! What a war and what a life! Not even safe among your friends! And so the world wags. They are a delightful lot of boys, are these underwater men. They have a very cheery mess on board the depot ship *Arrogant*, and I have frequently enjoyed their hospitality there.

While returning the other day in a motor bus from Folkestone, I met one of my old friends who had been away in the North Sea in an E-boat, and who, having a "drop of leave" to his credit, was on his way to look up his former messmates. He told me an amusing and authentic case of a recent encounter between a Hun submarine and one of our T.B.D's. It was at night-time while out on patrol that the T.B.D., sighting a conning-tower on the surface, immediately turning eight points, rammed her at full speed. Down she went like a stone. The only men it was possible to save were those on deck and on the conning-tower, some six in all. The only one actually saved turned out to be the Commander, and for the time

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

being when he was hauled on board, he was dead to the world. Recovering from being almost drowned, he sat up on deck and pulling himself together, inquired in good, but guttural English, from which port the destroyer hailed. On being told Devonport, he said, "Thank God, I will now be aibel to get some goot old Plymouth gin, won't I?" In pre-war days he had been head waiter in a Plymouth hotel!

And that reminds me of another story for which I can't vouch, of another submarine which was sunk outside a certain port on the coast. On board was found a dinner menu of the day before of one of the leading hotels in the place! And, mind you, it is not at all impossible. It is, on the other hand, perfectly feasible and probable. All these U-boats carry a small collapsible Berton boat. What is simpler than for one of them to select a soft spot off the port he decides to visit, lay submerged until night-time, and then disembark his visitor? The English-speaking German officer, in an English built suit of clothes, lands in comfort, stows away his folding boat, has a tophole dinner, gains the information he requires, and then proceeds

## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

with many a "hoch, hoch," to sink some of the ships he has ascertained are sailing from certain ports on certain days. Since we commenced operations here, we have caught a number of these obnoxious craft both in our nets and by our depth charges, and also by actual ramming, but the exact number is only known to the select few and will not be divulged until the war is over.

Having been "under," I naturally wanted to get up and have a flip in the air, and, though it was a long time after the date of the event here recorded, I may as well mention it as the result of my first effort had an amusing side to it. As explained in another place, the seaplanes had such a fascinating effect on me that I elected to try and go up in one of them in preference to a shore machine. But by this time it was somewhat difficult to accomplish, as passengers, other than flying officers, were not in favour. I was informed that I would just have to take my chance. If I saw a seaplane about to be launched, I was to go along and offer myself, and if there was a vacant seat I might get in.

Seeing one in this position one morning,

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

I fled along to the base, saw my kind friend Flight Commander Farquhar, who, by the way, is a Canadian, and was told to jump in. After being suitably clothed, and just as we were starting, my K.C.F. came along and throwing in a couple of life-belts shouted out, "As you fellows are likely to come down, you had better put these things on." Thank you so much, but it was too late to get out. However, as Arthur Roberts says in his song: "You have got to get up to come down," and we never even got up. After what they call "taxi-ing" about on the surface of the water for nearly an hour, making vain efforts and rushes to get off and each time coming down with a "splosh," which I didn't at all relish, my pilot, turning round to me, said, "It's no bally use; she won't rise, and I'm going in." Again with relief I said, "Thank you."

There was nothing wrong with the pilot, for he had done a lot of flying, but it was the old bus which was at fault, as she simply had not the motive power to lift herself off the water, and I afterwards ascertained that she had done excellent



## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

service in the battle of the Heligoland Bight ! The next time they tried her the pilot did a "solus," and she got up all right, but she never came home again. She fell in the sea somewhere off Margate, and had to be towed in, a wreck, but fortunately without damage to the pilot. Considering all things, I am now rather pleased to think that on that day I had a "taxi" trip instead of a flight, but on my return to the base my pilot is reported to have said to the officer in charge, "Might as well try to fly with bally old Hindenburg as that fellow." Rude boy !

Whilst on this subject I must not fail to record a second magnificently plucky feat performed by another flying Hun at Dunkirk. And to give the devils their due, one has to admit that their flying men, at least, are a brave lot, and so far as I am aware, have throughout "played the game"—a compliment which cannot be extended to any other form of German. On this occasion, one fine morning there was to be seen, as you would see any fine day at Dover, a number of our fellows flying over the port ; the difference being that, while here we have chiefly a training school, at Dunkirk they

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

are all fighting machines and armed. Nobody was taking any particular notice of them until suddenly, to every one's horror, one of the machines was seen to swoop down to within a few hundred feet of one of our ships, and drop bombs on her, killing several men outright and severely damaging the machinery of the ship. There were also several casualties in a destroyer lying alongside. He was a Hun flying "one of our captured machines," but how or when he was able to join in the fray throug unobserved, still remains a mystery. He at once made off, but was chased and shot down, while his observer, preferring suicide to a lingering death in a flaming machine, jumped out at a height of about 3000 feet and was never seen again. The fact remains that when this man took on the job, he must have known that he was going to certain death, and I am glad to add he got it ; for, after all, there is no Hun nowadays so welcome as a dead 'un.

Dover was at this time the chief port through which notabilities passed for passage to the other side, and there are few in this war that I have not had the pleasure of meeting.

## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

I was on duty on the pier when we despatched Sir Ian Hamilton and a large staff on his way to his ill-fated mission to the Dardanelles, and it was in October that the P. & O. s.s. *Nanking* came into Dover to complete the loading of a large number of seaplanes and aeroplanes for that seat of warfare. I lost many good friends in that campaign, and two of my nephews, Charles and Wallace Ferrier-Hamilton, were all through that terrible experience as troopers in the 4th Australian Light Horse. Charles, poor boy, was subsequently invalided out of the Army and sent back to Australia, seriously ill from the gruelling he got there, while Wallace came home, and after getting a commission in the Sherwood Forest Rangers Yeomanry, joined the R.A.F., obtained his wings, and is now at this moment in my house awaiting orders for the front. Would that I had room to give but a brief account of the experiences these boys went through both in Egypt and in the severe fighting they took part in while in occupation of the front line trenches at Suvla Bay. That history has yet to be written, and it will astonish the world. But while hating everything

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

German with an intense and undying hatred, Wallace has nothing to say against the Turk. He maintains that he is a gallant and a clean fighter, and when the island was eventually evacuated, the Australians left behind many tokens of their friendship for them.

Wallace is also full of admiration for the splendid work done by the Navy, and he adds that everybody, without a dissentient voice, was of the same opinion. This, coming from the troops themselves, is highly satisfactory. When at times during a night or day fight they were getting it in the neck owing to heavy odds, it was always a British T.B.D. who, on receipt of a signal, came up, and by accurate firing into the Turkish trenches, pulverized their attack. He described to me the landing at Suvla Bay. What astonished him more than anything else was the conduct of what he called the "kids" in charge of the picket boats and barges. He says that their effrontery and smiling audacity were amazing. For in the midst of this inferno of firing, when men were rushing on all sides to any available shelter to avoid instant death, these boys seemed to be treating the whole show as if

## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

it were nothing more serious than a football match. Wallace actually overheard one of them using the most blasphemous language to an old petty officer, old enough to be his grandfather. On the departure of the irate mid., Wallace went up to him and said: "I say, old man, that kid was giving you merry hell!" The reply was the reply of the Navy, "Lor' bless you, I just love 'im!"

Another important personage I was proud to meet about this time was General Cadorna, Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Armies. He came across in a French cruiser, and on the day of his arrival at this port it was raining cats and dogs. The whole of the Naval and Military Staffs were down on the pier to receive him, but on account of the rain were under cover in the station. I was the only officer in the open when he landed. At last, when all farewells on board had been made, the great one prepared to descend, and I was stationed at the foot of the gangway. But there was still the guard of honour to deal with, and while they were at the "present" and all of us were at the salute, with the water streaming down the inside of my sleeve, that infernal French bugler went

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

on blowing until I really thought he would have burst, and he certainly never gave in till he could blow no more. The General then descended and with arms extended, turned towards me. In my alarm, I retreated, as, being of a retiring disposition, I did not desire to be taken for anything more than I was—an officer in a very subordinate position—so calling to my aid my very best French, and pointing to our own Admiral, I cried, “Il est l’admiral.” And *he* got it!

During November the Zeppelins were very troublesome here, and although the actual damage done in the town was slight they were constantly over, necessitating the screeching of that infernal siren, and causing everybody to get the wind up. Personally, after over three years’ experience of these raids, both Zeppelins and aeroplanes, I would never sound a siren after dark. When they hear it, women with children must get up and seek safety, if possible, in a cave or a cellar, or some other more or less safe place. What is the result? Loss of nerve, loss of sleep, loss of balance, and nine times out of ten nothing doing. No, to my mind, certainly in a place like Dover or Folkestone,

## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

it is quite time enough to move when you hear the guns firing, and that, you may rely on, is sufficient to wake even the dead. I know it is a much-disputed point, but I give my own opinion for what it is worth.

On December the 20th, the great landslide on the S.E. & C. Railway occurred, which completely put a stop to all railway communication between Folkestone and Dover. This came as a great blow to us at a most inopportune time. For it not only placed a serious obstruction to the conveyance of wounded to the various inland hospitals, but it congested traffic of vital importance both to this port and the other side. Surely in this war, in spite of all we have done, the fates have seemed against us, and favourable to the Hun. Every time, both on the Somme and now in Flanders, whenever Haig has attempted a push, he has been stopped by the mud and the weather, and at the time of writing, when the Hun is making his midnight murder incursions, the wind is absent and the moon is shining as it never shone before, and for thirteen consecutive nights the siren has sounded, driving thousands of women and children to

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the caves and the disused railway tunnel to spend endless hours of misery and anxiety.

But they can't have all the luck all the time, and there is not one of us down here who is not supremely confident that in the end they will have every sort of seven bells knocked out of them. Over and above this, the collapse of this branch of the line, which they now tell me is a permanent one, has caused not only the greatest inconvenience to the two towns, but has put an end to even the small relaxations we once had. For after all, war or no war, one must try and do something in one's off-time. Here in dirty old Dover there is absolutely nothing, not even a theatre nor a decent music hall, while in Folkestone you have a really excellent theatre, a good golf course, good music, and a clean town. But nowadays you cannot get there, the only mode of conveyance being motor buses, which are generally full, and always irregular in their running.

Let me end up this chapter with an amusing incident which occurred in this town. The conversation was overheard outside the local post office, and took place between two women, one of whom was draped in deep



## NOTABILITIES AT DOVER

mourning, and with whom were five small children, all of them similarly garbed, and two of them wee mites occupying a perambulator. Said the mother to her friend: "Yus," she said, "when I 'eard the bad news, I put 'em all into black, even to the little baiby, and no sooner 'ad I done it than I gets a telergram telling me 'e was alive. Now don't you call that d——d 'ard luck?"

I so appreciated this story that, making out a rough sketch of it, I sent it to one of the illustrated weeklies, and received a guinea for it, which went to swell the balance of the local Mine-Sweepers' Fund.

## CHAPTER XI

### AIR RAIDS ON DOVER

BY CAPT. W. C. HAWKE, R.E., T.F.

28.12.18.

DEAR COXON,

**A**LTHOUGH I can tell you very little of the earlier days of the air raids on Dover, some of the things that occurred in the later days of the war might be of interest to you.

On the evening of the last day of July, 1914, I returned home from a very keen game of golf, and was informed by my parlourmaid that the Garrison Adjutant had been ringing me up on the phone several times during the afternoon. I promptly got in touch with him, and the conversation between us was, to say the least of it, brief.

“Are you fit?” “Perfectly.” “Then you are on duty to-night, and your company



CAPT. W. C. HAWKE, R.F. (I.I.)

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## AIR RAIDS ON DOVER

has been ordered to return from Southsea at once" (they were in training there).

I was in command of the Western Section of Search-Lights, which were "out" that night and kept running with difficulty until the company was mobilized.

On the night of the 4th August, 1914, at the Electric Light Directing Post, Admiralty Pier, the telephone orderly received a message just after midnight. "Please repeat, sir." "Thank you, sir." "War declared, sir." "Thank you." "Carry on." I think most of us know what that meant now—did we then? Between then and December 21st, 1914, I had various jobs to carry on in defence works and fire control post; then transferred to the 1st/2nd Home Counties Field Coy., R.E., as Major Commanding, and at once proceeded to join the B.E.F., France. So that the news of the first air raid on England, December 24th, 1914—the bomb which dropped on Tommy Terson's garden—I read of in the English Press forwarded to France.

For the next two and a half years the Press was the usual means of obtaining information of later attacks, the usual formula

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

being: "A town on the S.E. coast," but really it was not very difficult to make out when "Dover" got it.

Apparently for some reason, Sunday lunch-time appeared to be the favourite hour of attack by the Hun. (Quite correct.—Author.)

During all this period the only attack I personally saw was made by a single machine on the Duke of York's School, when a few bombs were dropped in broad daylight. It was just like watching one of our own machines being peppered by the Archies in France.

In 1917 the air attacks were apparently getting more serious, and on my being invalided to the reserves and returning to take up civil duties—September, 1917—as Borough Engineer, Dover, I found that instructions had been issued by the Dover Town Council to my deputy, to prepare dug-outs for the shelter of the civil population. The first to be excavated was in the Connaught Park, principally for the shelter of the children playing there during the daytime. This was, however, used quite frequently, later, at night by the residents in that district.

It was perhaps only known to a few of

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the older inhabitants that behind the Oil Mill Barracks, at one end of the town, known as the Pier district, there existed caves of enormous size, perhaps a quarter of a mile long, and fifteen feet wide, capable of sheltering as many as ten thousand people. The military authorities, after making provision for such men as were stationed in the barracks, kindly placed the remaining portion of these caves at the disposal of the civil authorities. Seating accommodation and electric lighting were installed, and Dr. and Mrs. Ord headed a committee and organized the whole place, so that many thousands were accommodated there nightly when attacks were anticipated or when "Lizzie" (the siren) was sounded.

At the eastern end of the town caves of a similar character existed. These were handed over by Mr. Grimes to a committee under Mr. Licence, of the *Dover Chronicle*, and here a further four to five thousand souls could be accommodated.

The inhabitants would flock to these two large shelters both before and directly after the siren sounded, but attacks became so frequent, and occurred so quickly after the sounding of the alarm, that the cry went up

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for more shelters in other and more distant localities.

In the meantime, public buildings had been sandbagged and strengthened, and smaller dug-outs were being rapidly constructed in the chalk hills surrounding the town.

Early in September, 1917, an attack which many people say came over in waves, lasting some twenty to thirty minutes, thoroughly bombed the town. Several buildings were destroyed and several casualties occurred. The next night, and again ten nights in succession, attacks were made, but the artillery barrage was now so perfected that the Huns could not get through, or if they did were so confused as to do very little damage.

Attacks became so frequent that a public meeting was called with a view to enlisting voluntary labour to assist in the construction of dug-outs, with the result that by the latter end of the year 1917 it was calculated that twenty-five thousand people could be safely sheltered from attack. The military authorities were appealed to, and assisted with Labour Corps, and later a section of Royal Engineers, with modern machinery,



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were stationed in Dover, who in a very short space of time provided further shelter in the form of tunnels bored in the chalk, capable of accommodating at least three thousand people.

It must be remembered that the shelters first provided, consisting of public buildings with reinforced concrete floors and sand-bagged windows and doors, were no longer considered safe, as the size of the aeroplanes had so increased, and with them the bombs they carried, that nothing less than thirty feet of solid chalk cover was approved of.

Looking back over the attacks both by air and sea during the last four years, the light list of casualties and small damage incurred are really nothing short of marvellous—but so are the escapes both to life and property.

I know of many cases of people, who have lain down in the roads and the bombs burst within a few yards, who have escaped injury—but not nerves; buildings where bombs of 110 lbs. have penetrated to the cellars without exploding; houses shattered a few moments after the inmates have rushed for greater safety.

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In the autumn of 1917, when the raids were most frequent, it was heart-rending to see families, evening after evening, pouring out of the town to scatter in the fields for greater safety; but then, as the barrage increased, more guns being mounted, the shrapnel splinters caused further danger, and also the nights began to get cold. So the dug-outs and caves became the main source of shelter, and instead of going out into the country the reverse happened. Women with perambulators and small family hand-carts, barrows and all kinds of means of removal, came down the streets at dusk, and the caves and dug-outs then became the regular homes at night of many who would not risk the safety of their own houses.

Visit these caves with me. Outside at the approach would stand a crowd of men smoking—"No smoking allowed in the shelters." Inside, brightly illuminated, but still a foggy atmosphere. You would find a bed here made up and the people sleeping, or endeavouring to do so; here a party of children at play; a little further and a tea and coffee stall, a concert party, or a four at cards. Special constables on duty

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keeping order. In the larger caves, Dr. Ord and Mrs. Ord, controlling a small headquarters, with a staff in case of sickness, had always a kindly word for all.

At times humorous happenings occurred. I believe it is on record that a poacher of some repute was busy in a wood not many miles from the town, when a Zepp., which was getting all he wanted in the way of shell-fire, with a view to getting away, dropped some very heavy bombs, one on the wood. Our friend the poacher has not been out since.

From my house I get a beautiful silhouette of Dover Castle against the rising moon, and it might have been as in the mediæval days to see the watchmen in the keep—some one always watching night and day.

A certain public building, a chapel, had a notice on the door: "In case of air raid you may shelter here." Hundreds of people must have passed that door on one of Dover's worst nights: no one went in. The chapel was unroofed and gutted.

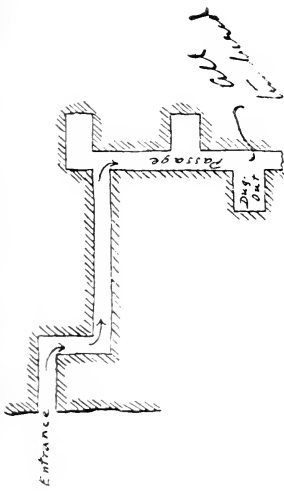
The last raid, Whitsun night, 1918, was going for hours. The raiders had been to London, But one, believed to have been

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

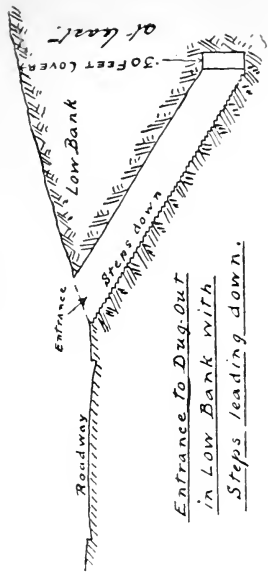
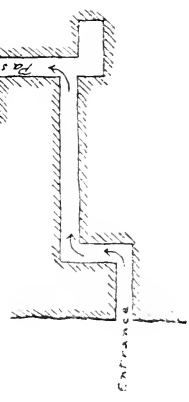
“Arnold,” who always made an attempt on the ordnance stores here, and got very close on several occasions, evidently saved a little of his stuff for the home trip: he dropped four, in as many seconds—110-pounders. He got very near his mark, but broke windows only, and burst a gas and a water main; afterwards took a dip in the Channel. Finis.

It might be of interest to have a short description of the “dug-outs” which were constructed in the outlying districts of the town. These were standardized as far as possible, but of course had to be varied in design to suit the surroundings. The general idea was a heading six feet by four feet to form the gallery, with a turn right or left, and so avoid any direct blast from a bomb which might fall in the vicinity. Two entrances or exits were indispensable, as if only one were provided it might be blocked, and the occupants entombed.

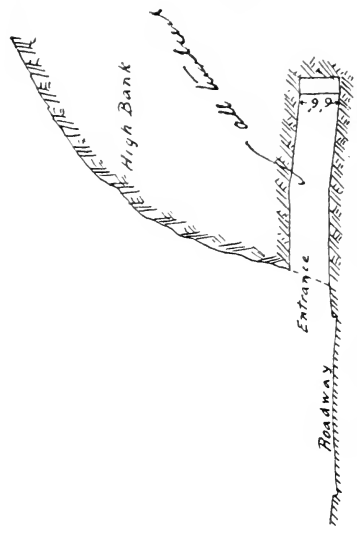
Opposite is a rough sketch of the general idea, which permits of fresh current of air and parties of people appropriating the various chambers, so that on the warning being sounded every one knew where to go. Special



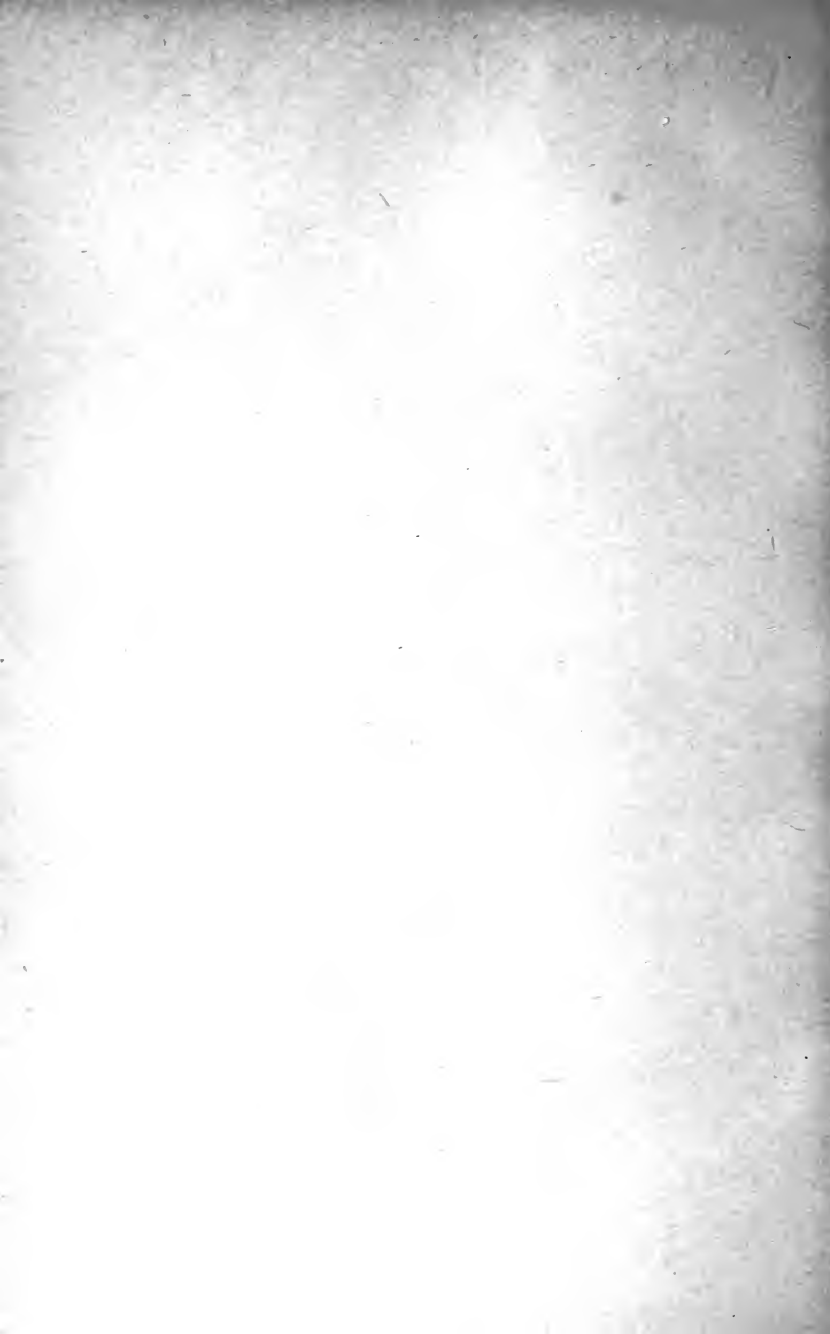
Plan of Entrances  
And Dug-Outs



Entrance to Dug-Out  
in Low Bank with  
Steps leading down.



Entrance to Dug-Out  
in High Bank or Cliff.



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constables were sworn in to control each dug-out and local committees formed to control all movements. Women and children were naturally given the preference. Letters of thanks were received by the authorities for the sense of comfort afforded to the inhabitants by the construction of these shelters.

In some cases these shelters and dug-outs were constructed underneath the roads and dwellings ; in one case underneath a cemetery. Here it was necessary to make staircases or steps down to get the necessary cover. As soon as possible, all were lighted by electricity where the current was available.

Timber was so difficult to obtain at this time that trees were cut down in the parks and public grounds to supply the necessary props and head trees to permit of the construction of these dug-outs.

During all these years it must be remembered that Dover was in absolute darkness ; just a few shaded lights were shown on the main street which were controlled by switch from the power station. Here was installed a special line from the Castle, and so we were enabled to receive the first warning sent by wireless from the Patrol of the approach of

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enemy aircraft. On receipt of this, "Mournful Lizzie" was sounded, all lights turned off, and the streets left in utter darkness. The tram cars, carrying small head and tail lights, were supposed to run to shed; but attacks generally came so suddenly that drivers and conductors, getting the "wind up," would leave the buses standing in the track. Thus many a battle was fought between some one rushing for shelter and the end of a car, and I think many service cars have also had collisions in the darkness.

I have mentioned several times committees appointed to control dug-outs and caves. All these people were sworn in as special constables, and did yeoman service; but I cannot leave the subject without making reference to one particular special constable, standing not more than 4·99 feet, who had the most important duty of regulating and controlling such inhabitants as took shelter in the cellars of the Burlington Hotel, kindly thrown open by the Frederick Hotels Ltd. His own house not having more than a floor and roof over his head, not exactly bomb proof, he was regularly on duty, the Burlington having seven floors. Under



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such circumstances, I might have done it myself.

At the Yacht Club during the liveliest times, Harvest Moon and the Hunter's Moon, 1917, we were all—may I say—very maty. A certain senior naval officer had the happy knack of foretelling the time at which Fritz would arrive.

“What time to-night, sir?” would ask a junior.

“Oh, 7.13,” would be the reply.

And sure enough about that time some one would walk into the billiard-room and say, “There she goes.” Silence for a moment, and we could all hear Old Mournful Liz with her longs and shorts. Married men would drop cues and make for home to look after their womenfolk; duty officers would disappear, hurrying to their posts, and the blasé old 'uns would fix up a game of “slosh” and await results.

One of these nights, being a married man and naturally going to look after my home, I started up the hill. To the troops the order was “Return to barracks,” and they were returning at some speed. Still I kept up, but presently we heard the grumbling of

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Fritz's Gothas overhead, and crash! crash! —bombs were dropped in the castle and camps just on our right. The boys wanted to get down on the ground and stay there. I hustled them on and then crash! just as it seemed on the left; another one—it was Leney's brewery once more.

I got in all right, to find my three women-folk quite calm, and if anything admiring the sight of the dropping bombs. There were no guns that night.

The bombardment continued for some time; then the phone rang and the police wanted assistance to "dig out" some people who had been buried in the debris of a house that had been struck. I got to the station, where I found the military in considerable strength with tools ready for work. We marched off, and reached the house which had been wrecked, passing several others on the way. In the doorway stood a man. On inquiry he assured me that all the inhabitants, six in number, were quite safe in the Citadel. They had been in the house, half of which was destroyed by a bomb, but not one of them had been touched.

Although an officer home on sick leave,

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I for a time was under the watchful eye of the civil police. Signalling (?) had been seen coming from the direction of my house, which, being well up on the hill, and isolated, naturally lent itself to such opportunity.

I came home one evening about 9 p.m. and found the house surrounded by the officers. I invited them to make a thorough investigation, but nothing could be found, although the place had been under observation.

Some days later, on making inquiries, I found that at a point directly above my house, but at a much higher elevation, there was an orderly-room, with a sentry-go outside, and when the door was open the sentry-go made "iddy-umpty"—Morse code—quite nicely.

In writing these notes, the name of E. W. T. Farley, Esq., M.B.E., Mayor six times in succession, should by no means be neglected. He took a very deep interest in the provision of dug-outs and shelters for the people, and many a time, as chairman of the sub-committee, he tramped around from point to point to satisfy himself that proper provision was being made in various outlying positions

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in the town. This being done at times when in the opinion of many he would have been better resting, he being none too robust.

Then again, probably the most worried official in the town was the Chief of Police, "Old Fox," a great friend of mine. I think during the winter of 1917-18, he came to the conclusion that there was much more moonlight than daylight, and so did many others. It was only to-day I was surveying the police station with him with a view to various reinstatements, and he remarked, "Fancy, only twelve months ago and this place would have been crowded to-night with anything up to a thousand people," there being a full moon on. The police station is situated underneath the Maison Dieu Hall, which has a floor of about four feet thick, constructed of ancient masonry, in addition to the groined arches; in spite of that, I'm very thankful that no Hun bomb ever fell on the building. I tremble to think what the result might have been.

"Old Fox" never rang me up to come out unless he thought there was real necessity, and on one or two occasions there was. The following is an incident which I think brings

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home the spirit of the Briton and shows how the people stuck it.

Situated as Dover is, with houses built in the hill-sides, very many people decided to dig small shelters or dug-outs in the chalk banks in their gardens. On viewing the site and approving the proposed plans, I would provide them with timber, tools, lights, etc. After a hard day's work these men, assisted by their womenfolk, would work far into the night, to endeavour to provide shelter for the little ones.

One man in particular always seemed, like Oliver Twist, to be asking for more timbers, etc. On closer inquiry I found that he was constructing dug-outs behind five houses and connecting them up by small galleries. His four mates were at sea and so could not help to do the work. He was on the beach, and had promised to look after his mates' women and kids. That's the spirit that helped England out.

Again, a woman came to me, with the question: Could I have a dug-out made nearer to her home? I naturally asked why? "Well, sir," she said, "I have four little children, and it takes so long to dress

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them after the siren goes, that by the time I have done so the guns are going and I dare not go out of the house because of the shrapnel splinters, nor can I carry them all"—they were only wee mites. She continued: "My old man, he's out on a drifter in the Dover Patrol, and can see every attack going on over here. He worries so, he's almost afraid to come home when he gets a watch ashore."

Recently a story was told of a Scotsman stationed at Dover, who, during a raid, collected his family under the dining-room table for shelter. The anti-aircraft guns were busy, with the result that a plaque hanging on the wall was shaken off and hit Scottie on the head. He, thinking the house was about to collapse, with arms upraised, admonished his family as follows: "Dinna be frichted. I am quite prepared to support the hoose wi' me hands, ye ken."

We Englishmen are quick to forget, but I really think the only time I really jumped from my bed was when a U-boat bombed the town, one shell passing so close to us, or apparently so, that I recognized the difference in the sound from the ordinary bomb-dropping outfit. This particular shell burst in the Park.







PLAN  
OF THE

**BOROUGH OF DOVER**

PREPARED BY  
**HENRY E. STILGOE, ASSOC. M. INST. C.E.**  
MASON, ENGINEER & ARCHT.

MAY 1940.

REFERENCE

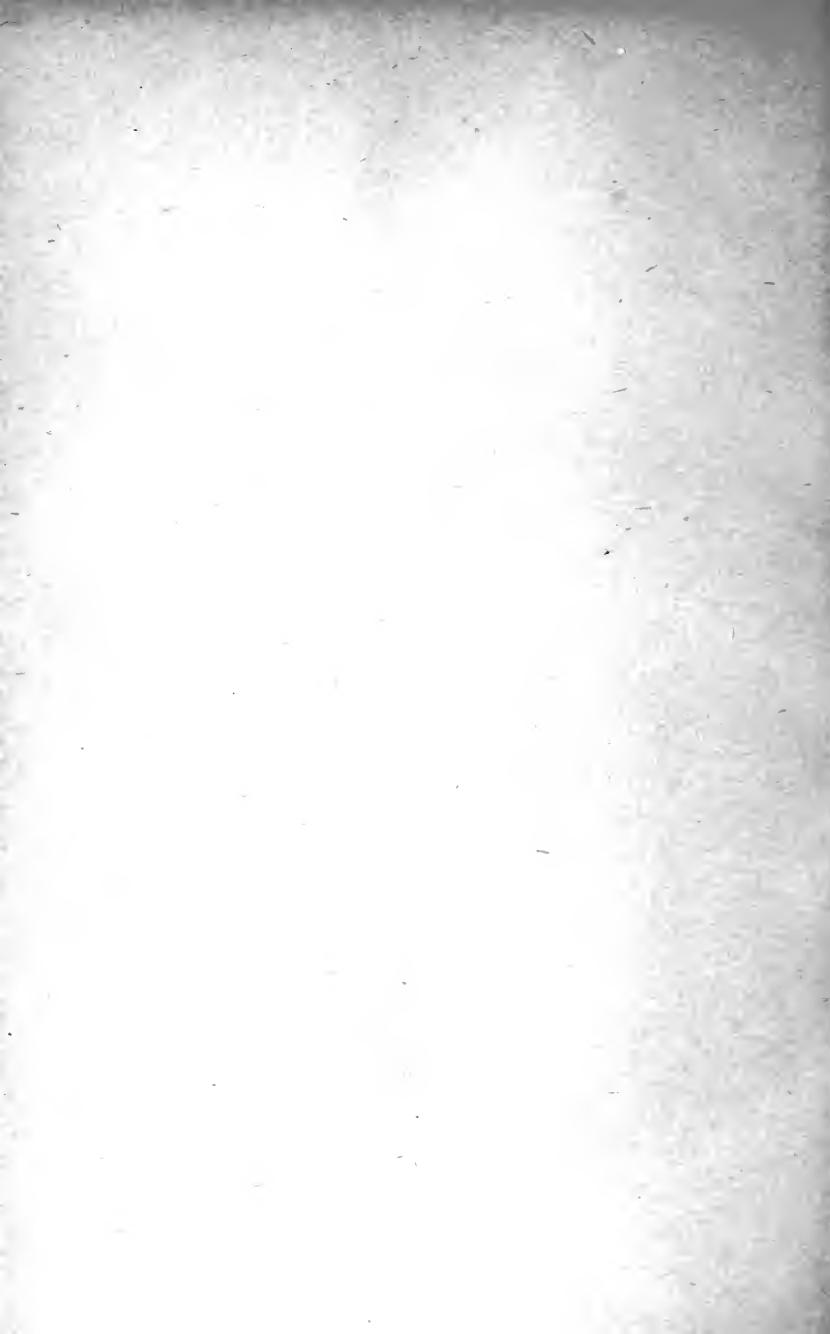
THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS, GEODETIC SURVEYS, 1880 & 1899 ADJUSTED.

- LEGEND
- 1. The actual positions of enemy bombs dropped within the actual precincts of the town of Dover.
  - 2. The actual positions of enemy bombs dropped within the actual precincts of the town of Dover.
  - 3. The actual positions of enemy bombs dropped within the actual precincts of the town of Dover.
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  - 9. The actual positions of enemy bombs dropped within the actual precincts of the town of Dover.
  - 10. The actual positions of enemy bombs dropped within the actual precincts of the town of Dover.

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED DATE 11/19/83 BY 60322 UCBAW



PLAN SHOWING EXACT POSITIONS OF ENEMY BOMBS DROPPED WITHIN THE ACTUAL PRECINCTS OF THE TOWN OF DOVER BY ENEMY AIR-CRAFT DURING THE WAR



## AIR RAIDS ON DOVER

That U-boat, I believe, fired about thirty rounds, 4·1 shells, in two minutes—killed two children, but did very little material damage.

Hoping these notes will be of interest to you.

Yours sincerely,  
(Signed) W. C. HAWKE,  
Capt. R.E., T.F. Reserve.

P.S.—I enclose map showing where bombs or shells have fallen. Although not so many as may have been reported, these are authentic.

W. C. H.

### NOTE BY AUTHOR

As a matter of fact, our opposite numbers, Calais and Dunkirk, on the other side of the Channel, got quite double the dose of air raids that we did, and in the years 1917–18 there was not a night, when flying was possible, that these ports were not visited and strafed, and frequently two or three times in a night. And the worst of it was, we could always both see and hear them being strafed. At the same time, we knew Fritz's chief ambition was to flatten out London, and he never missed an opportunity of trying to do so. and

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Dover being in the direct line of flight we always got the Gothas both going over and coming back. It was this length of interval which made the wait so tedious and caused such interference with our rest and night's sleep. Elsewhere I criticize what I consider was the unnecessary sounding of "Lizzie" at night-time, and I should like to have had Captain Hawke's opinion on the point. He talks of ten successive raids in September last; so there were, but for fourteen consecutive nights that horrible siren gave forth its wail of woe.

I have heard some silly people declare they would give anything to have had the experience of an air raid. Personally, I can't conceive anything more uncanny. From the Burlington, where I lived, to my "dog-hole" on the Extension, was a walk of about a mile and a half, and I have had to do this on occasions both going and returning, after "Lizzie" had sounded and when both guns were firing and bombs were dropping. If anyone with such views had accompanied me on one of these trips, I think they would have followed my example of trying to get inside the wall! The only thing that sup-

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ported me, in my efforts when trying to reach my post of duty, was the fact that I had certain fixed halting-places for a breather. They were in order of sequence, the Dover Club, the Esplanade Hotel, The King's Head, the Lord Warden, and finally the Pier Turret Battery, where I was generally received in a state of exhaustion, which necessitated the application of immediate restoratives !

No, I have no use for air raids, and don't like them a bit.

Early in 1915, I realized what a Zepp. was capable of doing when left alone, and it put the wind up all of us on the pier. From the Turret Battery to the end of the extension, you go along a granite wall about a quarter of a mile in length, and thirty feet in breadth. A Zeppelin paying us a visit one night, dropped three bombs in quick succession, and all of them on this narrow strip of masonry ! Fortunately, the Hun was trying for the wooden buildings, and wasted his effort with incendiary bombs, so that with the exception of a small fire, which was immediately extinguished, the damage was nil. The only Zepp. I personally ever saw caught in the rays of the searchlights, was one which visited

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

us about a year later, or to be correct, on the 24th August, 1916. And though called to wakefulness from a deep and refreshing sleep after a hard day's work, by the booming of the guns, and that peculiar shrieking noise of shells as they fly overhead, it must be admitted that she presented a fascinating sight. But, when sufficiently awake, I was glad to note that she was sailing in the right direction, *i.e.*, away from us and towards mid-Channel. The lights were kept glued on her the whole time, and when at a distance of between four and five miles a monitor in harbour loosed off at her with one of her enormous 12-inch shells. It was magnificent! The shot was a beauty, and all but got her. It clearly put the wind up Fritz who, fearing another of a similar calibre, immediately released every bomb he had in the sea, emitted his smoke mask, like a cuttle-fish, and putting his nose up almost perpendicularly, went up and off skywards for all he was worth, and got away.

And talking about these Zepps. reminds me of a most gruesome episode which occurred at the destruction of the first of these monsters at Cuffley, in Essex. For some months we had

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a man who, after being badly gassed in France, was put on to driving ambulance cars at our pier. In course of conversation one morning, he told me that his car had been the first to reach the wrecked Zeppelin. Of the crew of some thirty to forty, only fourteen bodies were found on the ship, while that of the commander—only distinguishable by his uniform and medals—was discovered some few hundred yards away. It will be remembered that the ship came down in flames, and the fourteen remaining bodies were all found in a standing position grasping the steel struts of the machine with their hands. My informant told me that when they went to lift the bodies, the hands of all came off at the wrists and remained fixed on the struts! He added that the bodies were so charred that when they were laid out in a pile, previous to burial, they did not occupy the space of four normal bodies.

Horrible! And yet one can find no grain of pity in one's heart to waste over the fiends who were out night after night, and no doubt gloating with Hunnish joy in their barbarous deeds. Aerial warfare is bad enough in all conscience in the battlefield,

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but I can conceive no civilized nation but Germany initiating such a senseless and useless form of warfare as the bombing of towns and villages outside the actual fighting area. But they are a race by themselves, for the fact remains, there never was a humane Hun nor a German gentleman in the real meaning of the word, or, as the French still more aptly describe them, there are *les huns et les autres*.

When living at the Burlington, I did at first as all others did, and that was, directly "Lizzie" sounded her awful warning, got up, dressed, and sought the safety of the lower floors. I had some old friends living on the second floor, a Captain and Mrs. Dixon, of the S.E. & C.R., and his sitting-room was always a safe find for a little Dutch courage. When the firing was close and fierce and bombs were dropping, we adjourned to the corridors. When it became more distant we returned to the comfort of his fire and his whisky bottle, and so was spent many a night until the "All Clear" sounded, and we once again sought the comfort of our beds. Later on, when the raids became more frequent and our nights more and more disturbed, I came to the conclusion that, with the larger



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bombs then in use, it was just as safe, and possibly safer, to stay in one's room and risk a direct hit, as it would be anywhere else in the building, and by this means it was possible to get more rest, even if all idea of sleep had to be given up for the time being.

On the pier turret, one night, we all had a very narrow escape. It was during one of my night watches, when there was a particularly violent attack by a number of planes. We were out in the well of the turret watching the effect of our gun-fire, when crash ! came a bomb, as we thought right on the turret itself. We no longer remained in the well. The following morning, it was ascertained that it was one of our own three-inch shell which had fallen a yard or two outside the turret and had exploded on impact. Had it fallen only five yards to the eastward, it would have caught the well of the turret and all therein would have gone West !

But, in my own case, I had an additional burden of anxiety to bear in these raids at Dover, and that was the fact that I had my "little all" located in the neighbouring town of Folkestone. On the left of me lay Deal and to the right Folkestone, both places

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in 1916 armed with A.A. guns. I could hear the Deal guns popping off with a certain amount of complacency, but when my ear caught the guns on my right blazing away I immediately got the wind up badly. And so much worse did this get, as time went on, that immediately after the big Folkestone raid I felt compelled to close down and move my family away to some safer place. They first went to Tunbridge Wells, then Southsea, and finally to the Isle of Wight, so that for the remainder of the war I had three establishments on my hands—my own rooms at Dover, my house at Folkestone, and my wife and family at various places. If, then, in days to come, I am fortunate enough to have a grandchild who is inquisitive enough to inquire what "Grandad did in the Great War," I can honestly reply: "Not profiteering, my child."

About 6 p.m. on the 25th May, 1917, we were startled in Dover by the siren sounding and a heavy fire opening simultaneously from every A.A. gun in the place, both from the shore batteries and the ships in harbour. Looking seawards in the direction of the exploding shrapnel, we could see a long line

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of enemy planes—I counted seventeen myself, but it is commonly believed there were nearer thirty. But what we could not understand was their direction. For they were proceeding due east parallel with the coast, and yet while within range of our guns they made no effort to turn in and attack the town. For quite half an hour we were blazing away at them, and though nothing was brought down the firing was distinctly good, and it was easy to be seen that the Hun had but one object in view, and that was to get away. When we first sighted them, I dare say they were not more than 12,000 feet up, but before we lost them they were well over 20,000, and proceeding homewards as fast as their engines could carry them.

And the explanation of their course and direction was not long in dispute. Knowing that my wife would have heard the particularly heavy fusillade, I lost no time in getting on to the phone to assure her that she need have no alarm for me and that all was well. I then learned, to my horror, that the dirty dogs had dropped all their bombs on the defenceless town of Folkestone, killing a large number of people and doing heavy damage

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to the town, and that when we saw them they were merely making a joy-ride home, probably smacking their lips at their unusual success. No wonder the swine-hounds did not attack us, but I am still wondering why they came within range of our guns?

All who have read my last book will remember the contribution of the "Lady of the Lift" on the subject of camping in India. She has been exceptionally unfortunate in the matter of raids, and I feel sure it will interest my readers if I include here her experiences from a woman's point of view.

### AIR RAIDS

I am only the wife of the author, therefore a woman of no importance, but nevertheless he has asked me for my humble contribution towards The Book, so here goes.

*My First Experience of an Air Raid.*—It was an exquisite summer's day in May. Some people had been having afternoon tea with me, and after they left, about 5.30, being such a perfect evening, I thought I would go and see some friends living in Earl's Avenue, so strolled out, and before I got any distance I became interested in a very large flight of

## AIR RAIDS ON DOVER

about twenty aeroplanes circling and pirouetting over my head. I stopped to watch their graceful antics, and thought to myself: at last we are up and doing, fondly imagining they were our own machines practising. I leisurely walked on, and as I was crossing Earl's Avenue I noticed a woman coming towards me carrying a basket. I had hardly time to reach the Olivers' garden gate when a bomb fell behind me, killing the poor woman I had just seen, and falling on the very spot of ground I had just walked over. She was picked up very shortly afterwards, but died on her way to hospital. No sooner was I in the house before another bomb crashed in Grimston Gardens, breaking all the glass of the conservatory.

There is always an uncanny "calm" after a bomb falls, and when I could realize what had happened I at once started off to Brampton Down School to see if my daughter was safe. Going through Grimston Gardens it was exactly like walking through a thin coating of ice on a winter's day, which crackled and broke under one's feet. The roads were thickly strewn with finely-broken glass from the hundreds of windows that

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were smashed from the concussion, and in Grimston Gardens Tennis Courts the fall of one bomb had made a hole twenty-five feet across.

I breathed once more when I found all the girls well and safe, and greatly excited at their experience, the mistress telling me that they had behaved uncommonly well, and in doing exactly what they were told no accident had occurred.

I then telephoned to my maids at Pembury Lodge to ask if they were safe. The answer was "Yes;" but it was nothing short of Divine Providence that our house stands to-day, as an aerial torpedo fell in a piece of waste ground just in front of our garden. It was a "dud" and nothing happened, beyond some windows smashed and tiles dislodged from the roof.

Not three hundred yards away, in Kingsnorth Gardens, a lot of structural damage was done, and at the Central Railway Station two cabmen and their horses were killed outright. There is no doubt the enemy were aiming at the railway bridge, and it was exceedingly good shooting—for they only missed by a few yards. Passing over Folkestone they

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unfortunately got a very nice house absolutely in the centre, demolishing it to matchwood, and, alas, killing two maids who were in the kitchen at the time. The entire staircase was cut in half, and nothing remained but a heap of dust, bricks, and broken furniture. The enemy then dropped their final lot of bombs on Tontine Street, the poorer quarter of the town, near the harbour, and where crowds of women were doing their week-end shopping. I was not there myself, but I was told afterwards by a medical man, that it resembled a battle-field—a gruesome sight of severed heads, arms, legs, etc., mixed up with wreckage of broken houses and windows. Doctors and ambulances did their utmost to alleviate the awful suffering, and in a very short time every available bed in the different hospitals was filled. The exact number killed did not come out until some time afterwards, but including Shorncliffe Camp it amounted to several hundreds and a large number of horses. In Folkestone alone the killed were 16 men, 31 women, and 25 children—total, 72; injured: 31 men, 43 women, 12 children—total, 86. The material damage was estimated at £20,000.

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

I do not think many people will be likely to forget the first visit the cultured Hun paid us on the then undefended town of Folkestone.

*Raid No. 2.*—I had been at home and elected to return to London by the 5 p.m. train. I travelled in the same compartment with two ladies and a Canadian officer. It was a beautiful, clear evening, but as the moon, which was at its zenith, rose majestically in the heavens I could not help feeling pessimistic as to what would happen. Hardly were my thoughts formed when we steamed into London Bridge Station. All lights in the train were extinguished, and No. 1 bomb fell crash. Without further delay I bundled out on to the platform, with my suit-case, to find myself very much in the state of “all-rigged-up but nowhere to go!” and by this time it was as dark as pitch and a good many people had become rather excited and began rushing about.

However, I shouldered my swag, as they say in my country, Australia, and followed in the direction of a voice that called out, “Anyone for the cellar!” So down I was taken on a luggage lift and was soon transported many feet below the earth, to a place



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which was uncommonly stuffy and smelt of paraffin oil and packing-cases. I found myself beside a nice, friendly lady, and we began chatting like friends of a lifetime, and sharing sandwiches, which I had brought in case of emergencies. Every few minutes we could hear dull thuds from the heavy barrage of our guns, but being so far underground it did not sound quite so bad. A cheery porter came every now and then to keep up our drooping spirits with fragments of news, and so we passed the time from 7 p.m. until 10.45 in London Bridge cellar, and it was with great glee we received the news of "All Clear," and once more came up to the surface and sniffed fresh air. In an incredibly short time lights went up and the trains were running, and I got back to Charing Cross Station and managed, in spite of my suit-case, to catch the "Tube" to Brompton Road, and finally reached my hotel, the Rembrandt, to find my nurse and small child safe, the latter having slept through all the noise.

*Raid No. 3.*—In July I had been spending a most enjoyable week with my friend, Mrs. Dyce Murphy, at her flat, in London. It was

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Saturday morning, and knowing week-end trains were always crowded I decided to travel home in the morning; so the porter got me a taxi and my hostess wished me God-speed. I noticed as I got into the car that my Jehu was not as young as I could wish. In fact he must have been well over sixty years of age. When we reached Hyde Park Corner, about 10.30 a.m., there were a lot of people looking up in the sky, and, following their example, I soon saw a tremendous flight of aeroplanes, about twenty-six in number, circling in the formation of a huge fan—a very pretty sight; but I knew in a second they were not “ours”; so putting my head out of the window I shouted to the chauffeur, “Put a sprint on and get under cover. These are hostile aircraft overhead.” The poor old man became so flustered at my news that, instead of getting a “move on,” he jammed on his brakes and the car naturally came to a standstill. Meanwhile, our flying friends were playfully dropping bombs all round. Getting out of the car, and with soft persuasion and coaxing, I got the old chap to start his engines going again, and I was not sorry to feel a sudden

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jerk, and my aged driver once more driving me towards Charing Cross. I could feel he was distinctly nervous, but somehow we got to the Admiralty Arch. It was a pretty sight watching those aeroplanes forming into different shapes of flight, but, I must truthfully confess, not a very comfortable one, and I was glad to get under any sort of cover.

On arriving under the Arch, I did not lose much time in quitting that taxi. My old man evidently did not notice my exit, as I heard him-exclaim: "Good God! she's gone!" "Oh no," I remarked; "I'm here all right." I then found myself standing against the wall between a Commander in the R.N.V.R. and a young Lieutenant in the Royal Irish Rifles. We looked at each other, and I for one felt I had struck two pals. The noise was deafening and it was not a case of whispering sweet "nodings" in one's ears. We had to shout, and we kept up as lively a conversation as circumstances would permit. I don't think any of us quite realized at the time that one of our own big guns was on the top of the arch, and letting forth for all it was worth.

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Trying to collect my shattered ideas, I found myself staring at a very large iron lamp which hangs immediately under the Arch, and which in peace days sheds a brilliant light, but now was shrouded. It was swaying about in a most alarming manner, to and fro. I looked first to the Army, then to the Navy, and—please forgive me, it's war-time—I clutched my newly-made naval friend by the arm and said, "Would you mind telling me if that lamp is swaying, or am I?" He immediately hastened to assure me I was not the offender, and that it was the lamp. I was relieved, but could not resist exclaiming, "God help the poor sailors on a night like this!"

I'm afraid, even at a somewhat critical moment when life seemed very dear and shrapnel flying around like hailstones, I could not help seeing the funny side of it. In another five minutes it was all over, and we heard the welcome call of "All clear!" I warmly thanked my protectors, got into my taxi, and drove to the station, which was all but empty; but in less time than it takes to write, people poured in, some from the Tube station, others from the hotel, and in a very

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few minutes traffic was going, trains starting, and "Business as usual" the order of the day. I was not too sorry to get into a corner seat in the train bound for Folkestone, and contemplate my last adventure, and I am glad to add my last raid. The end of a Perfect Day.

From this it will be seen that my wife was actually in the thick of three bad air raids: one in Folkestone and two in London. But we were in another together, and that also was at Folkestone. We were out shopping one fine morning in the car when the siren sounded. At the time I was sitting in the car, while my wife was in a greengrocer's shop making the daily purchases. It was in Sandgate Road, *the* public thoroughfare of the place, when a man crossed into the middle of the street and stood there peering skywards, with a pair of binoculars. A nervous, excitable lady, seeing him in this position, rushed across to him and asked him where they were. Stretching his arms towards the sky and extending them outwards, he replied in the most lugubrious howl ever howled, "Madame,

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they're all over England!" Exit the N.L. at a hand gallop! As our kids were on the beach bathing, we decided to hurry home—which was on our way—drop our purchases and go for them. Ahead of us, ambling along for all they were worth, were two maiden ladies, evidently sisters, and both bound for the same refuge of safety. Just as we approached the corner of the street, a constable flew round on a bike, blowing a fearsome whistle and displaying a large placard with the ominous warning: "Air Raid. Clear the Streets. Take Shelter." The suddenness of the apparition, combined with the shock of the signal, was clearly too much for the nerves of the two poor souls, who immediately dropped all their parcels in the middle of the road, and galloped off in opposite directions! Turning in at our gate, my wife jumped out, and throwing a bundle of asparagus on to the kitchen table, shouted to the cook: "Cook this for lunch, Wickie!" At that moment the guns started and Wickie's only remark was: "Yes, madam, I'll cook it if I live to cook it." Madam retorting with, "Well, Wickie, after all, it's much more important that we should

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live to eat it." ; we fled off, secured the kids, returned all serene to lunch, and ate the asparagus.

And that was the end of yet another Perfect Day !

## CHAPTER XII

### A GERMAN CRIME—THE SINKING OF THE HOSPITAL SHIP “ANGLIA” BY A GERMAN MINE

**I**T was on the 17th of November, 1915, that this foul and abominable crime disgraced for all time the honour of the German Navy. To begin with, I cannot do better than insert a short account of the disaster, kindly furnished me by Captain Manning, who was in command of the ship at the time :

“The *Anglia*, which belonged to the L. & N.W. Rly. Co., was at the outbreak of war requisitioned as a commissioned ship, when, after ten months’ service with the Fleet, she was converted into a hospital ship in May, 1915, from which date she was employed carrying wounded from France to England until November 17th, 1915. On this date she was lying in Boulogne Harbour with



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wounded on board, and we were to have sailed at nine o'clock that morning, but had orders to delay our sailing, and did not eventually depart until eleven o'clock.

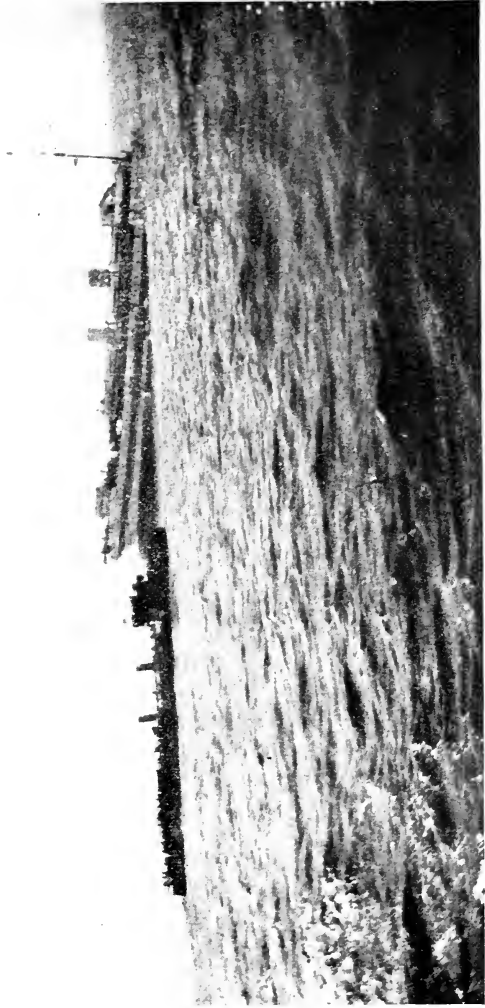
“The day was beautifully fine and clear, and we had nothing to report until we saw our turning buoy ahead. I, being on the bridge, made the remark that we had made a beautiful course. I then went to my room to get my gloves and came out immediately and returned to the bridge. I had only just got there when there was a loud explosion and I was thrown from the bridge on to the deck below. I at once jumped up and, going to the wireless cabin, ordered the wireless operator to send the S.O.S. signal. I found his face cut and the room wrecked, and he explained to me that the apparatus was useless. I ran at once to the telegraphs to stop the ship, but found that they were broken by the explosion, and then hurrying to the voice tube I gave verbal orders to the engine-room, but that also was broken. The ship was now very much by the head, and the star-board propeller was turning clear of the water.

“The Chief Officer and myself, with some of the men, launched No. 2 lifeboat and

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lowered it to the water, where we got about fifty people into it. There were other boats being launched aft at this time, one of which I am sorry to say sank, either through being overloaded or the discharge of water from the engine-room filling it up. I kept No. 2 boat alongside until I thought the end was not far off, and then let go the forward tackle and signed to those in her to pull clear. After this boat had pulled clear I busied myself throwing life-rafts over for the use of anyone that might be in the water. At this time H.M.S. *Ure* came alongside and took a lot of people off, and with splendid seamanship the commander of the *Ure* manœuvred his ship alongside a second time and took several more people off. I cannot speak too highly in praise of the work of H.M.S. *Hazard* and H.M.S. *Ure*.

“The steamer *Luisatania*, which was proceeding down Channel at the time, hearing the explosion, and seeing our predicament, most bravely returned to render us assistance, launching all her boats. Our boats at this time approached the *Luisatania* with a view to putting their crews on board. Being on the lower bridge deck at the time, I saw them



THE SINKING OF THE HOSPITAL SHIP "ANGLIA" OFF DOVER. H.M.T.B. "URE" AS RESCUING SHIP IN ATTENDANCE



## A GERMAN CRIME

proceed to the *Luisatania*, but as the first man started to clamber on board the rescuing vessel there was another explosion, and the *Luisatania* sank stern first shortly afterwards. There being no one on my deck at this time, and seeing no one about, I proceeded on to the next deck and went towards B Ward, but found I could do nothing as the orderlies had already got the wounded on deck. I came up and sat on the rail, not knowing then that anybody remained on board. The forecastle head was now under water, so I simply let go and slid into the sea, the water being then at my feet. I swam for a distance from the ship where I thought the suction would not take me down. Feeling rather tired, and not having any life-saving apparatus on me, I lay on my back to rest, and did not know anything more until I found myself in the doctor's cabin of H.M.S. *Hazard*. I take this opportunity of recording my sincere gratitude to the officers and men who so kindly attended to me and others they picked up. We eventually arrived in Dover, when I was carried ashore on a stretcher and sent to an hotel, and by that evening I was quite myself again.

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“As regards the mines, I cannot help but think that they were purposely laid there, knowing that this buoy was a rounding mark for hospital ships. There were six mines in all, and they were well clear of the up and down Channel traffic, so why were they placed at this particular spot ?

“I was delighted to hear that the services of the brave sisters were recognized by a decoration.

“I think I have nothing more to say except to express my thanks for the great kindness and attention we all received.”

As will be seen by the Captain's narrative, the German nation has no loophole of escape from the direct charge of intentionally sinking a hospital ship, which was at the time flying the Geneva Red Cross flag, and all the other emblems of a ship of mercy, as prescribed by the Geneva Convention, together with that of the murder of wounded men and nursing sisters. For his remarks about the “rounding buoy” cannot be questioned. Considering, as we did in those days, that hospital ships would be treated as sacred even by the Hun, we had actually laid down buoys for the

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course of these ships. It was, in fact, a hospital ship course on which no other ships were allowed to travel, and it was at the last of these buoys on her homeward journey round which the *Anglia* had to pass that this dastardly trap was laid. Leaving nothing to chance, and with their usual fiendish ingenuity in attending to details, the Hun allowed this unfortunate ship, with its load of helpless men, no possibility of escape. For he had laid a *chain* of mines right across the track the *Anglia* must take, which, as Captain Manning points out, no doubt greatly to the delight of the "All-Highest," not only sent his ship to the bottom, but also a collier which came instantaneously to his assistance. It was a very sad day for all of us in Dover, for Captain Manning—a typical Irishman of the best type—and all the medical officers and nursing sisters, were close personal friends of ours, and I frequently used to lunch and dine with them on board their ship.

My readers will no doubt remember that it was the H.S. *Anglia* which had the honour of conveying across the Channel His Majesty the King, when, to our regret, he met with that very serious accident while

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reviewing his troops on the other side of the water. It was on the 1st November, at about 7 p.m., that the *Anglia* arrived alongside the Admiralty Pier, and I was on duty at the time. His Majesty had had a villainous crossing ; but, as his case was a great deal more serious than anybody at the time was allowed to suppose, risks had to be run, though every precaution possible had been taken for his comfort and safety. —To mark his sense of gratitude for the attention he had received while crossing, the King honoured the matron of the ship, Mrs. Mitchell, by sending her a brooch as a souvenir of the occasion. As I had not had the opportunity of seeing this brooch, I asked Mrs. Mitchell, one day while at lunch on board, to show it to me, and she promised she would keep it for the purpose, though she was anxious to send it to her home for safe custody. The ship was then sailing, and she was to show her treasure to me on her return from Boulogne. Alas, it was on her very next journey that the *Anglia* was mined, and the brooch and all her earthly belongings are now at the bottom of the sea !

Having been up all night the night before, I was not on duty on the day the *Anglia* was



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lost, but I saw the ship struck and sink from my window at the Lord Warden Hotel. When the survivors were landed, I sent a note to Mrs. Mitchell from my wife, placing our house at Folkestone at the service of herself and the rest of the sisters. In reply Mrs. Mitchell scrawled me a short note in pencil to the effect that they were all quite comfortable, and being well looked after, and even at that moment in the train and on the point of departure for London, where they were to be billeted. But the scrawl was more than that. It was one of the most touching and womanly little scrawls ever scrawled, and in a few words described the awful experience she had been through and the horrors she had witnessed. And now for the first time I must tell Mrs. Mitchell what happened to this little note, if only to place before all and sundry the kindly nature of our sovereign the King.

The next day when I was on the pier and had the opportunity of discussing the disaster with Captain Manning and some of the R.A.M.C. officers belonging to the ship, I ascertained what a little heroine Mrs. Mitchell had proved herself to be. Where all had

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behaved splendidly, she was conspicuous, and she was found by Lieut. Bennett, when the ship was in danger of sinking at any moment, in B Ward, up to her waist in water, endeavouring to rescue another cot case. Lieut. Bennett assisted her, and they succeeded in getting the patient safely off, but he informed me that he had to use physical force to prevent her going back again into the Ward. This decided me. Just after the outbreak of war, the King had honoured me by accepting a copy of my first book, and having had some correspondence on the subject with Lord Stamfordham, his Private Secretary, I took the bull by the horns. I then and there sat down and wrote to Lord Stamfordham, enclosing Mrs. Mitchell's little pencil scrawl to me. I pointed out to him for the information of His Majesty, how I was in part responsible for the loss of her much-valued treasure, and at the same time I did not fail to place before him what I had been told of her behaviour during the awful tragedy.

I received a reply *by return of post* from Sir Charles Cust, intimating that the King had quite appreciated my motive in

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bringing the matter to his notice, and that he had been commanded by His Majesty at once to dispatch a replica of the lost brooch to Mrs. Mitchell. I am glad also to be able to add that subsequently, and after due inquiry, Mrs. Mitchell was decorated with the order of the Royal Red Cross, and, if this decoration was ever earned, it certainly was earned on that occasion. I trust if she ever reads these lines, she will, in the circumstances, pardon me the almost unpardonable bad form of forwarding a private letter for the perusal of those for whom it was not intended.

To describe in detail what I have heard of the sufferings of those on board this ship would be too gruesome a subject for any book. Considering the suddenness of the catastrophe, and the fact that there were on board at the time no less than two hundred helpless cot cases, the loss of life was not great. All honour to those who rescued them. And let me not forget to endorse what Captain Manning has said of the rescuing ships. Lieut.-Commander Sturdee—son of the admiral who revenged us in the Falkland battle—who was in command of the *Hazard*, and Lieutenant Boxer, who had the *Ure*, both

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

rendered splendid service. For it must be remembered that the ship's engines were never stopped, and that, while one propeller was going full speed ahead under water, the other was doing the same out of it, the effect of which was that the *Anglia* was being driven round and round in a circle at the rate of about eight knots by the one propeller, while the other was a never-ceasing menace to vessels approaching her on that side, and all the time, be it remembered, the ship was steadily sinking by the bow.

The *Hazard*, which is an old gunboat and used as a mother ship for submarines, was too large to manœuvre alongside a sinking vessel, so she stood off, lowering all boats and rafts, and rescuing wherever and whenever she could. The procedure followed by the torpedo-boat *Ure* was to rush alongside without actually stopping, and getting all within reach on board. This she did successfully on two occasions, and then finding a few still remaining on board when the *Anglia's* bow was actually under water, Lieutenant Boxer threw his vessel across and over the sunken bow of the *Anglia* and succeeded thereby in saving all those remaining on deck. He also

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succeeded in holing himself, but this was a mere detail of the day's work, and any sailor-man will appreciate the risk he took and the nerve required to take it.

Perhaps the most pathetic incident of this barbarous murder was the loss of poor Sister E. A. Walton. It is supposed that she was in her bath at the time, and had some difficulty in escaping. Just as the vessel was going down she was seen to rush to the side and plunge in. She was never seen alive again, though her poor body was subsequently recovered.

Of the crew 25 in all were lost, consisting of the Purser, 4 deck hands, 12 of the engine-room men, and 8 stewards.

The R.A.M.C. staff consisted of :

R.A.M.C. officers : Capt. W. J. Gow,  
Lieut. T. L. Bennett, Lieut. H. W.  
Hodgson.

Nursing Sisters : Mrs. M. S. Mitchell,  
Miss A. Meldrum, Miss E. A. Walton.  
R.A.M.C. Orderlies, 19.

Of these Sister Walton and ten orderlies were lost. In patients the ship had at the time 14 officers and 372 other ranks, of whom 5 officers and 128 men were drowned or killed.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A MINOR INCIDENT ON THE BELGIAN COAST BY A "NONENTITY"

ON September 27th, 1918, we were in the basin at Dunkirk; as nice a looking destroyer "as ever was seen." Dame Rumour was as usual on the wing, and, indeed, for the last four years it seems she has never been to roost. We were having a few hours' rest from the eternal round of patrols, and we were enjoying it, for neither Logenheum (the Long Range Gun) nor enemy aircraft were worrying us. But a certain atmosphere of restlessness was apparent, and letters and signals arriving on board started every one guessing and trying to read between the lines. Such conditions are the breeding ground of rumour, but this time the old lady was only a little ahead of her arch enemy, Fact. Towards 4 p.m., we

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got our operation orders and left the basin to oil. We then anchored in Dunkirk Roads until it was time for us to proceed up the coast. As far as we knew then, the only thing that was going to happen was an intense bombardment of the enemy coast batteries and lines of communication. Every available monitor and siege gun battery was to take part. As monitor bombardments were of daily occurrence we did not feel, from a destroyer point of view, very enthusiastic, especially at the prospect of having our precious "night in" upset. But this, strange to say, we are used to.

Our particular job was to protect the Eastern Bombarding Force, consisting of the two "fifteen-inch" monitors, *Erebus* and *Terror*, from hostile destroyer attack should the enemy send his destroyers out from Zeebrugge for that purpose. This protecting force was to consist of the *Douglas*, *Mentor*, *Broke*, *Mastiff*, *Moorson*, and *Melpomene*. As the Hun, on similar occasions of late, had shown little or no inclination to attack, we were all rather bored at the prospect. However, just before dinner all the destroyer captains were summoned to the Senior

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Officer's boat, the *Douglas*. There we were told that we were to have a nice little bombardment of our own, which, needless to say, pleased us immensely. We were to go into a position some four or five miles off the coast and fire off a lot of ammunition, including a good many star-shells, to try and induce the wily Hun to think that a hostile landing was about to take place. This it was hoped would keep his troops massed on the coast to deal with such a danger, whilst the real attack was launched by the Army in the Dixmude sector towards Roulers and Thorout. Of course, on the face of it, this was not a very desperate or vastly exciting proceeding from our point of view. It was certainly interesting, however, and a change from the usual monotony of yawning up and down a patrol line all night, or watching monitors hurling one-ton "bricks" into Zeebrugge all day. Thus there was rejoicing in the *Broke*, *Mastiff*, *Moorsom*, and *Melpomene* when we were detailed for this little diversion.

At 10 p.m., when we left Dunkirk Roads, the weather had changed and looked none too pleasant. This, by the way, was the reason why the destroyers were given this little side



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show of a dummy landing to carry out, the weather being too rough for the coastal motor-boats, who were to have done it originally. The wind was rising quickly; to make it worse, rain squalls added to our discomfort, and we soon had the usual nasty sea which gets up so quickly on the shallow Belgian coast.

At about 1.30 a.m. the monitors reached their bombarding positions and anchored some twelve miles off the coast between Zeebrugge and Ostend, the destroyers patrolling to the eastward of them—we could then see the usual flashes in the sky lighting up the low-banked clouds all along the Western Front. There were occasional series of “flaming onions,” a few intermittent star-shells, but otherwise, except for the rising wind and occasional dull boom from the guns on the front, everything was quiet.

As the minute-hand of our deck-watch began to approach 2.30 a.m., which was the “zero time” for opening the bombardment, our interest began to revive. “Two-twenty-nine,” “two-twenty-nine, thirty,” “forty,” “fifty-five”—Flash! Bang! away goes the first ton of T.N.T. and steel to pay our

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

morning compliments to Zeebrugge Docks. A few seconds later, the other monitor, the *Erebus*, fires. Meanwhile it seems as if the footlights of a darkened theatre have been suddenly turned up, and the Devil's Cinema started. Flashes from the other groups of monitors and the heavy siege guns keep the whole sky lit up, flicking their flashes on the cloud-ridden celestial screen like a badly worked cinematograph.

But the Hun was not to be left out of the garden, and soon after the commencement of the bombardment he put up a tremendous star-shell barrage, looking for all the world like an enormous bed of white chrysanthemums, whilst above them zigzagged stream after stream of the ubiquitous green flaming onions. Low down on the horizon little ripples in groups of two and three of rose-coloured flashes lend colour to the scene. We all knew what they meant, and waited, counting the seconds. There they are! A colossal bang; the whole ship shakes. If you look hard you can just see three enormous white columns of semi-transparent whiteness drifting away into the night. It is Master Tirpitz and his friend Jacobynessen (two big German

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coast batteries) having their say in matters. Slam three heavy doors of three adjoining rooms (better still, let one of these doors be a glass one) and you will have a good imitation in miniature of the noise made by these two friends when they fire at you. Yes; they are having their say, and not a bad say either, for their first salvo is but 200 yards short of the monitors, and not much more from us.

We now reach the inshore end of our patrol line, and the leading boat turns outwards from the monitors, for which we are thankful, as if Fritz should take it into his head to try a "spread for deflection," his fifteen-inch shells would be unpleasantly close. As we turn, *Terror* fires again. Twenty seconds or so later Tirpitz makes a hot return—not much more than fifty yards short of the *Erebus* this, as far as we can see through the darkness. And so the game goes on, an unceasing rally as in a good game of tennis: Bang! from *Terror*—splash from Fritz. Bang! from *Erebus*—splash from Fritz again. By some extraordinary luck he always seems just to miss. But it is wonderful shooting, for when one comes to think of it, he is firing at us from a point some twenty-six thousand yards

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

or more away. All this time Fritz continues to make his garden beautiful with untold numbers of star-shells, signal rockets, and every conceivable kind of firework his munition gardens can produce. But the master-gardeners to-night are the big monitors who are uninvitedly planting their twelve- and fifteen-inch bulbs systematically in Fritz's coast allotment.

It is now 4 a.m., when the bombardment is to cease temporarily, whilst the monitors move to their day bombarding positions nearer Dunkirk. It is during this interval that the destroyers are going to keep Fritz amused with our little entertainment. A small shaded signal lamp blinks from the senior monitor. It is the message we have been waiting for. "*Broke* and Division proceed in execution of previous orders," it says. We turn out of line leaving *Douglas* and *Mentor* with the monitors, and go off with our new leader—the *Broke*—to make a certain light buoy. This is to give us a good "departure," as it is very necessary to know our exact position when operating in unlighted and unswept enemy waters. We find our buoy, and as we pass it we increase speed to 20 knots. A

## A MINOR INCIDENT

nasty sea is running on our beam covering the ship fore and aft with spray, making it necessary to keep the guns' crews under shelter. We know that it will take a certain number of minutes to reach the point where we are to turn on to our firing course, and which runs parallel to the coast. Inshore of it, mines are known to exist. As the minutes pass we wonder when *Broke* is going to turn, as from the revolutions of our own engines we calculate his speed as 21 knots instead of twenty; and besides this the tide is setting us towards the coast. Enormous mines with colossal and most fragile horns rise up in one's imagination. Ah, he is turning now. Round we go in his wake. Thank Heaven it is dry on this course, and the guns ought to have no difficulties from the spray and wet. The Hun is quiet too. He seems to have exhausted a three weeks' supply of star-shells, and the coast is almost in darkness again.

Suddenly off goes *Broke's* first salvo, lighting up the whole ship. Bang! goes *Mastiff's*, then *Moorsom's*, then *Melpomene's*; once more up grows the German garden. The whole area seems like broad daylight.

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

and his star-shells, though short, light us up beautifully. "There she goes, boys!" shouts out the ship's wag, whose job in the ammunition supply party for the moment is a sinecure. "This way for the Crystal Palace. Take your seats, please. No charge to-night." Our star-shells burst and mingle with those of the enemy. They are mere candles compared with the wonderful light given out by those fired from the enemy's big guns, and which leave a trail of burning sparks falling away below them as the star itself falls more slowly. Then come those little rose-coloured flashes again, bigger now as we are closer to them. We hear their resultant offspring "whirring" away over our heads miles out to seaward. They have not yet got our range, and all this time whilst we are firing we are not worried by anything dropping at all inconveniently close. If it did we were much too occupied with firing our own guns to worry much about those of the enemy.

After twenty minutes we cease fire. Away astern of us we see another of our destroyer divisions amusing the enemy in a similar manner off Middlekirk. Astern of them again we can just see Dunkirk main lighthouse

## A MINOR INCIDENT

winking his double flashes for us at regular ten-second intervals. He, too, is taking a hand in the game, and has been put on at full power to-night. The part he plays is helping to make the Hun think that big things are imminent on his stolen sea fruit, for only once or twice before has Dunkirk main aided mariners since the war started.

Away to the eastward is a faint yellow streak. Dawn is not far off, and already there is an almost imperceptible light creeping into the darkness. It is time we were off. *Broke* turns to port and as we follow her, there suddenly appears high up behind us the king of all star-shells. It was like some one entering your bedroom and switching on the electric light unexpectedly. Down he comes, dazzling every one with the intensity of his brilliance, falls into the water, gives one last flare up, and the light goes out as quickly as it was switched on. Hardly had we steadied on our new course when crump! bang! crump!—in deafening succession. Simultaneously three enormous water-spouts rise up like ghosts on either side of us: one on the *Broke's* port beam, one between *Mastiff* and *Moorsom*, and one on *Melpomene's*

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

starboard bow: "Whew! What a beauty. That must be Jacobynessen," says number one. "No, I think it must have been Knocke," says the sub. ("Knocke" the name of a big German battery at that place.) "That last star-shell must have just shown us up to him nicely." "I don't care a damn who it was," said I, "but I hope the next one won't come any closer." We were now opening from the coast fast. If old man Knocke had seen us turn the chances were that his next salvo would again "straddle" us. "Ah, that's all right," we all say in the same breath, as a few seconds later we hear three more similar "crumps" well astern of us this time, and again later even further astern.

Dawn is now breaking. We have the light buoy which guided us to pick up. We must not leave it for Fritz to find, and thus give away to him the channels that we use. The buoy is soon "weighed," thank goodness, for we are all getting tired, most of us having been on deck all night. Away we go to join the monitor as fast as the now heavy sea and swell will allow of. We soon get under the lee of the banks and shoals off Dunkirk, and are thankful as we can now go faster.



## A MINOR INCIDENT

To our great content we are told to anchor, which to most of us means permission to go to bed. The monitors continue their fearfulness with an occasional interruption from "Tirpitz." "Tirpitz" really has the most abominable bad luck from his point of view, as his shells seem to go as close to the monitors as possible without hitting them. One comes close to us, but every one is too tired to take much notice, except two irrepressible "Blues" in the break of the forecastle. They have got hold of two children's toy helmets, and don them with much mock fear, to the intense delight of their messmates. Even they are beginning to yawn, like the reader.

So we will leave them, that they, too, may get their heads down, and try to make up for the loss of that evasive luxury in the destroyer world at Dover—"a night in."

### NOTE BY AUTHOR

This contribution is of too much interest to be left under a *nom de plume*, and though I have not his permission to do so, I must give him away. It was written by Lieut. George E. L. Atwood, commanding H.M.S. *Mastiff* during the bombardment.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ANOTHER GERMAN CRIME—DECLARATION OF WAR ON HOSPITAL SHIPS

**O**N the 2nd February, 1917, to add to other horrors, the Huns declared war upon our hospital ships. Ye Gods ! Their reasons as given in the current *Times* were :

(1) That they were being used for military purposes.

(2) That they were being used as munition transports from the fact that they were laden in a strikingly heavy manner on their outward journey from England to France.

(3) That the transport of troops by these ships in Channel is clearly customary.

(4) That on various occasions the arming of such ships has been established to the satisfaction of the German Government.

Lies, damnable lies ! each and every one

## ANOTHER GERMAN CRIME

of them, and all without a shadow of foundation. So far are such practices from our idea of cricket, that they are hardly worth the trouble of refuting. But as for the last two years I have assisted in the control of these ships on the Dover-Calais, Dover-Boulogne, Dover-Dunkirk, and Dover-Dieppe services, perhaps I may be allowed to say a word on the subject. And these, mind you, are the ships specifically referred to by H.I.M. the "Almighty Liar" for the carriage of troops, the transport of munitions, and the mounting of armaments. What are the facts? Not only have we never contravened one single regulation of the Hague Convention, but we have gone to the other extreme to prevent the possibility of our *bona fides* being challenged. On no occasion has anybody but a sick or wounded patient, or the complement of the ship's staff, been allowed a passage on any one of these ships.

At the beginning when, as it sometimes happened, a nurse or a doctor got left behind by being late for their own ship, we used to allow them to go across in the next ship bound for the same port. But even this was subsequently forbidden. I remember once,

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

considering that I was part and parcel of the administration of the service, applying for leave to go and see for myself how things were done on the other side; but being a combatant officer, the application was refused. On another occasion a medical officer of one of the ships, who had been on leave, asked for permission to cross over in another to rejoin his own at Calais. Permission was refused.

Formerly, to keep up the supply of drugs and other Red Cross material, we allowed in a few instances a ship to carry more than she needed for her actual requirements. And lastly, when we had an enormous number of Red Cross ambulance cars to send across for the hospitals on the other side, we utilized one of our ships which had sufficient deck space for the purpose to carry some eight or ten of these cars for several trips.

On this coming to the notice of the Admiralty it was at once stopped, and so far is the carrying of troops by these ships—apart from wounded or sick men—opposed to the actual fact that at the French ports, which are always congested with shipping, no troopship is ever allowed to disembark her troops

## ANOTHER GERMAN CRIME

*over the deck* of a hospital ship, lest it might be said that fighting troops had actually trodden the deck of a ship reserved specially for the transport of wounded and sick soldiers.

As for the armament of these ships, or the use of them for the transport of munitions, such an idea could only emanate from the brain of a Hun, and the accusation needs no contradiction.

From first to last they have been used only for their legitimate purpose of mercy, charity and loving-kindness towards those broken in the war. But hold on ; I must be absolutely truthful. I do remember one occasion on which this hard-and-fast order was transgressed, for I was on duty at the time. A certain naval officer at Calais, being desirous in his spare time of catching some fish, had procured in Dover a small trawl net for the purpose. A man brought it down to me on a hand-barrow and the whole bundle did not weigh fifty pounds. I ordered it to be put on the jetty and told the man that I would send it over in a coal barge sailing that day for Calais. My relief, however, seeing the innocent thing lying there alongside a hospital ship which was at

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

the moment just about to sail, and not wishing to disappoint his naval friend, had the net thrown on the deck of the ship as she moved off. The incident was reported to the War Office, thence to the Admiralty, and we got "Hell!"

In the early days when I first joined up, what pain it caused me to see the sufferings of these poor fellows, and even now one can never get callous to the sad task imposed on us. One saw some terrible sights at first, especially among the gas patients. I have seen men come ashore raving mad from it, others chattering like monkeys, and others again whose faces were drawn with agony. But on the whole I would go as far as to say that 70 per cent., or even more, of our patients will live to fight again another day. And their cheerfulness and their gratitude and their wonderful spirits! Would that I had the pen capable of telling all I saw in this direction! But one little episode, illustrative of many, I can and will recall. It was the case of a young Irish officer. I had just got the *St. David* alongside on a miserably cold winter's day when one of the first to come up the gangway was this jolly-looking

## ANOTHER GERMAN CRIME

Irish boy. He had got it badly in the hip, was covered with mud, and limping slowly and painfully up the plank. At each dressing station at which a man is dressed on the way from the front line he gets a ticket like a luggage label, which is attached to his coat for the information of the medical officer. Our friend had no less than five of these, and when he got to the top of the ship's gangway and was asked who and what he was, he replied with a smile all over his face, as his tickets fluttered in the breeze beneath his chin: "Begad, I don't quite know what I am, but it strikes me I'm a blooming lottery. Have a ticket?" Can you beat it, and can you imagine a Hun saying such a thing?

And talking about Huns and comparing them with our men, I may say I always thought that our picture papers made the worst of the physiognomy of our enemies until I saw the Somme films. Did you ever see anything like the faces of the creatures running down our trenches? Go and have another look at them and compare them with the faces of their captors, and you will then understand the awful crimes for which that nation has yet to be punished. But as, in

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a manner, I cannot hope to do the type of men I am alluding to justice, let me, as a "temporary naval gentleman," take my hat off to "A Temporary Gentleman in France" and ask him to permit me to include here an extract from one of his stirring letters published in a book under the above heading. To anyone who has not read these letters let me beg of him or her to procure a copy at once and do so, for they are "*It*" pure and simple and unaffected.

"I'm not an emotional sort of chap, and I'm sure before the war I never gave a thought to such things ; but, really, there is something incurably and ineradicably fine about the rough average Englishman, who has no surface graces at all. You know the kind I mean. The decency of him is something in his grain. It stands any test you like to apply. It's the same colour all the way through. I'm not emotional ; but I don't mind telling you, strictly between ourselves, that since I've been out here in trenches, I've had the water forced into my eyes, not once, but a dozen times, from sheer admiration and respect, by the action of rough, rude chaps



## ANOTHER GERMAN CRIME

whom you'd never waste a second glance on in the streets of London; men who, so far from being exceptional, are typical through and through just the common, low-down street average."

Yes, these are the sort of men this temporary military gentleman has had the honour of fighting and bleeding with in Flanders, and they, also, are the men on this side whom this temporary naval "dug-out" has had the sad task of receiving wounded and maimed in their hundreds of thousands, and whose only possible help was confined to a fervent wish for their speedy recovery to health. God bless 'em!

I wish I could quote more from these most readable letters, but if anyone after reading them considers them too high-pitched, let me commend him to study another book on the same subject by an author of a very different calibre: I allude to "A Student in Arms," by Captain Donald Hankey. From a totally different standpoint he even goes one better, and from the Preface, written by H. M. A. H., it will be seen that Captain Hankey was a man of

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

deeply religious views and principles. He was afterwards killed in action, and I am told that his last words to his men as he went "over the top" were: "Well, boys, remember if you're wounded it's Blighty, and if you're killed it's the Resurrection."

His was the Resurrection. R.I.P.

And what has been the outcome of this declaration of war on hospital ships? Has the enemy scored by it? The answer is in the negative. True, he has been able to a certain extent to satiate his blood-lust in sinking some of our finest hospital ships, and thereby carrying to a cruel grave a number of wounded and sick men, together with nursing sisters and the ships' crews, but at the same time he has heavily handicapped his future by incurring for all time the hatred and detestation of the whole civilized world. Was it worth it? Again the answer is emphatically "No." For in this port alone he has enabled us to send over more than double the number of reinforcements for his own eventual destruction. In place of the hospital ship proper, decked out in her beautiful white raiment, and the emblems of the Geneva Convention, hitherto protected

## ANOTHER GERMAN CRIME

by a covenant of nations and immune from attack by virtue of her sacred calling—and be it remembered ships which had sheltered friend and foe alike—we have now the sinister-looking ambulance transport camouflaged and armed for her own defence, and no longer flying the Red Cross flag.

This is the answer to German brutality and German stupidity. The stupidity is manifest, for, whereas formerly the ships brought only wounded from France and returned empty, they now return full of troops. At the same time the functions of these ships, as distinct from the regular troop transports, have never been confused, for, while they carry as many troops as we can put into them, the space for them is confined to the deck space available. Their wards have never been invaded, except for the purpose for which they were intended, and they never bring other than wounded men on the homeward journey. Their real hospital nature has therefore never been obscured, and comfort and cleanliness remain their great characteristics.

There is, however, one serious loss the Hun has been able to inflict on our suffering

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

soldiers; that is, the loss of the nursing sisters. The sisters themselves were in arms at being removed, and could not understand why a change in name should deprive them of the great privilege of their calling. They were willing and anxious to remain, and, in fact, did remain to the last moment, hoping for a reprieve. They asked to be allowed to remain and share the added danger with the men, and were indignant that they were not permitted to do so. The War Office was adamant and would listen to no argument, and they had to go. For the wounded it was a regrettable change, for, though the orderlies who relieved them did their work efficiently and well, in the nature of things it is given only to woman to possess those qualities which a man, no matter how gentle and humane, can never hope to attain. A sweet presence in the sick room, a comforting word in a soft voice, an instinctive arrangement of the pillow, and a soldier in pain forgets his battles and his pain and feels that after all his mother country has not forgotten her gentle care of those who have freely offered up their bodies, in order that humanity and civilization may endure.

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Curiously enough, this change of name from "hospital ship" to "ambulance transport" has caused confusion to the man in the street, which has in some cases resulted in serious consequences, and I have already been deputed in two separate cases, instituted under the provisions of D.O.R.A., to appear on behalf of the Admiralty to protect the name and character of our hospital ships. The first was a case of a man at Banbury, whose home was at Sandwich. A conversation was taking place one evening in the bar-room of a public-house at Banbury, concerning the transport of guns and ammunition to France. One man said it went one way and another man another, when our friend, who had just returned from a visit to his home, astonished the assemblage by stating: "Well, if that's all you blokes know about it, it's not much. Would it astonish you if I tell you that I've seen with my own eyes the hospital ships at Dover being loaded with live shell?" Unfortunately for the man, there were two soldiers amongst his audience who, looking upon his statement as a very serious reflection on the Navy, immediately reported it to their superior

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

officer. The result was, he was prosecuted, and I went up to give the statement the lie. It was the more serious from the fact that the accused was a ganger in charge of a gang of three hundred enemy prisoners working on the line, and, as the prosecuting counsel pointed out, what he stated in a public-house, he had possibly repeated to his German prisoners, and the Court, taking this view, very rightly convicted him, and sentenced him to six months of the best.

The second case, which only occurred quite recently, was even a worse one, only, unfortunately, the man did not on this occasion meet with his deserts. At Burslem a man named Hans Carl Pauer (sounds a bit Hunnish, doesn't it?), managing director of a firm of wine merchants at Hanley, was prosecuted under D.O.R.A. and fined £100, together with a sentence of six months' rigorous imprisonment, for stating in a railway carriage that it was a common thing for troops to be carried in British hospital ships. A constable of the Folkestone Borough Police Force, seeing a report of this case in the paper, took it upon himself to forward the cutting, together with an anonymous

## ANOTHER GERMAN CRIME

communication, to the Clerk to the Justices at Burslem, who had tried the case. The communication ran as follows :

“What Pauer says he was told, every harbour-worker in Dover, Folkestone, Calais, and Boulogne knows, and sees going on every day since the 18th March (1918), and tons of stores, not only medical. But, nevertheless, you will get a representative from the War Office or Admiralty to swear different, and Pauer goes to the wall. I see he is appealing and has money. He should be able to get witnesses to prove his case. Come and live at Dover and keep your eyes open.”

Emanating as this did from the hands of a police officer, and, mind you, absolutely gratuitously, well, if it isn't a serious offence, I don't know what is. On this occasion I was accompanied by Major McCreery, M.C., R.A.M.C., head of the Disembarkation Staff at Dover, as representing the War Office, and both of us were prepared to “swear different.” Unfortunately for us, but fortunately for the man, his counsel, on seeing us in court, immediately recommended him to plead guilty, and the case confined itself to the arguments of the

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

opposing counsel. The defence was—as it could only be—*ad misericordiam*, and I don't mind admitting, Mr. Mowl made the best of his opportunity. He pointed out that his client had seventeen years' honourable service in the police force to his credit, and holding up a photograph for the edification of the Court, in which the accused was depicted with a collection of pots which he had won during the five years he was in some Volunteer Corps previous to his joining the force, he had the Bench wobbling. After a retirement of some twenty minutes they returned, and after offering their condolences and apologies for having to bring him in "guilty," solemnly sentenced the accused to a fine of £5. Ye gods! I wonder what they would have done with him in Germany?



Univ. of  
California

TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY



*Photo by Malcolm Arbuthnot*

ENGINEER COMMANDER WILLIAM ARCHIBALD BURY, D.S.O., R.N.

## CHAPTER XV

### H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

NO need to apologize for including in this portion of the book the following three letters from men who took part in the finest naval episode of the war—the blocking of the pirate dens of Zeebrugge and Ostend. The public interest is still keen on their glorious effort. It has already been written about in "The Glories of Zeebrugge," and "How we twisted the Dragon's Tail," and, though founded on fact, neither book can compete in interest with private letters written on the spur of the moment by men who took a prominent part in the attack, and which were never intended for publication. My grateful thanks are due to those officers for permitting me to publish them.

The first is written by Engineer-Comdr.

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

W. A. Bury, D.S.O., to his late captain, and it must be remembered that he took part in both shows in the same ship, the gallant old *Vindictive*. Coming out unscathed from Zeebrugge, he insisted on being allowed to take her on her blocking expedition to Ostend on the grounds that nobody could know what the ship's engines were capable of except him, and those who were with him on the first stunt. The Admiral could not refuse such an appeal, and he had the honour of giving the *Vindictive* her final *coup de grâce* in the exact spot selected for her at the mouth of the Ostend harbour. He was, I regret to say, badly wounded in this second gallant effort.

The second letter is by Comdr. R. R. Rosomon, No. 1 of the *Vindictive* under the command of Captain Carpenter, V.C., and written to his brother in China. Bury and Rosomon were old friends, and it fell to their lot to have the principal share in fitting the ship up for her hazardous enterprise. He was unfortunately twice wounded in the attack on Zeebrugge.

The third letter emanates from Comdr. E. O. B. Osborne, D.S.O., "Guns" of the *Vindictive* and Flag Commander to Vice-

## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, K.C.B., and it was written to a friend. Though each letter is on the same subject, you cannot have too much of a good thing, and the interest in them is centred in the fact that the writers were all very much eye-witnesses, and each writing from a different point of view.

Never shall I forget looking out of my window on the morning of the 23rd May, and seeing the *Vindictive* anchored off the eastern arm of the harbour. What a sight she was, and what on earth had happened? For so well had the secret been kept that in spite of the fact that the *Vindictive*, *Iris*, and *Daffodil*, and all the Block ships had been fitted out in different ports, and the men trained in different places, not a soul in Dover, with the exception of the select few, had the faintest idea of what was in the wind. Comdr. de Berry had a son in the *Vindictive*—Lieut. H. A. P. de Berry, of the Royal Marines—and yet the first he knew of it was seeing his son, all merry and bright, as he berthed the ship alongside our pier. The night before, while I was on duty, I had received orders from the Chief of Staff to reserve a berth the following morning for a ship arriving with naval

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

casualties. Other straws came along, and putting two and two together we knew, or rather felt, that something out of the ordinary was about to happen, but exactly what that something was we hadn't an earthly !

*Vindictive* left the Zeebrugge Mole somewhere about midnight, and at nine o'clock the next morning she was alongside Admiralty Pier, Dover, followed, shortly after, by *Iris* and *Daffodil*, and when all three ships arrived, battered to pieces and carrying their dead and dying and wounded men, one didn't know whether to cheer or to weep. But the former had it every time, and in spite of the awful shambles and the terrible loss of life, it was worth it. For it was the beginning of the end of the war, and the brutal, bestial Boche was at last made to realize the sort of men he was up against, and to feel that in the end he must fail. He failed then, and he has gone on failing ever since, until now we have the great debacle—the greatest and the ugliest in all history. It is after all only the old, old story of the school bully who when properly collared invariably turns out a coward. Only on this occasion the bully had pals, and all went into the conflict armed with secretly

## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

prepared knuckle-dusters which the smaller boys of Europe were without, and it took a long time to get them made. From a military point of view Germany set out deliberately to wipe us off the face of the earth, and the boast of their navy was to wrest from us the Trident of the Sea.

With what result? In the early morning of the 21st of November, 1918, the whole of this mighty High Seas Fleet came crawling along in single file to surrender abjectly to the very fleet which it had beaten to a frazzle in the Battle of Jutland! Battleships, cruisers, destroyers and submarines, all dirty, dishevelled and dishonoured.

And so ended the idea of a German Navy.

Bacon at two and tenpence a pound, "marg." up twopence, the meat ration again reduced, and I can get no jam! What is the Navy doing? Well may the question be asked, and where, oh where, is the reply?

And now to discuss our little side-show. The Belgian coast from the westward of Ostend to the eastward of Zeebrugge, was admittedly the most heavily-fortified sea-frontage ever known in the history of the world. Zeebrugge was a veritable mouth

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of hell, and if hell has two mouths Ostend was the second, and that is exactly why the Navy decided to attack it. No doubt the price of "marg." had something to do with this decision; but, above all, the Navy had to try and attempt to justify the colossal wages it was receiving at the hands of an all too generous country for doing nothing; and there is no incentive so inducive to men to do daring deeds as the realization of the fact that they have been for many long years overpaid and underworked!

When Admiral Keyes was first appointed to the command of the Dover Patrol, I asked a naval pal of mine what sort of a fellow the new Admiral was. He said, "Well, Roger is an offensive little blighter, and he won't be long doing nothing. When he makes his first offensive, he will probably be the first man killed in it." Fortunately, such was not the case.

On the night of the 23rd of April, when we attacked Zeebrugge, the Admiral was in the thick of it on board H.M.S. *Warwick*, commanded by Captain Victor Campbell, D.S.O. His position was practically at the end of the Mole, in close touch with *Vindictive* and the whole of his fleet. He is the only



## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

man who can tell us exactly what happened on that night ; and, so far, his despatches have not been made public. Consequently, anything anybody may say is mere surmise.\*

But let us try and consider on the facts as we know them what actually happened. We know that the general idea was that, while the whole of the Dover Patrol formed a screen in the Straits of Dover, not only to bombard Zeebrugge but to ward off any possible offensive from seawards, while the Harwich force was at the same time holding a waiting brief in their direction, the attack on Zeebrugge itself consisted of three separate and, at the same time, simultaneous efforts on our part. *Vindictive*, *Daffodil*, and *Iris* were despatched to the Mole to draw the fire of all possible batteries, while the Block ships *Iphigenia*, *Intrepid*, and *Thetis* were to steam in during the full blast of this inferno, and endeavour to block the Bruges Canal.

To cut off enemy reinforcements rushing to the Mole, two submarines were also despatched to blow a breach in the inner or wooden portion of the Mole.

\* Since the above went into print these despatches have been published.

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

Which ships had the place of honour in this glorious attack? It is difficult to say. Those seeking the Mole undoubtedly bore the brunt, and their losses were enormous; but it must be remembered that all on board the Block ships were passengers without return tickets, and it was left to the motor launches, or what is called the yachting portion of the Navy, to rescue them.

While *Vindictive* attacked the Mole and the Block ships were making for the Canal, destroyers and C.M.B.'s were sent into the harbour seeking whom they might devour. From Commander Bury's account, the *North Star* fired off all her fish, and the C.M.B.'s claimed at least one German destroyer.

During this time it was up to the motor launches, not only to guide the Block ships in, but to screen them with their smoke screens, and eventually to rescue any of the crews that might be found on board. And right gallantly did they do their work, for, of the six V.C.'s awarded, two fell to the men of the motor launches—one to Lieut.-Commander P. T. Deane, now M.P. for Preston; the other to Lieut.-Commander G. H. Drummond, both of the R.N.V.R.

## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

And what about the submarines? One broke down, but the other achieved a most glorious success under Lieut. R. D. Sandford, R.N., who rushed his ship in between the piles of the Mole, set his fuses, and blew sky-high at least three hundred Huns who had, till then, been jeering at him. On board his submarine he carried a small motor launch, in which he was to have effected his escape, but, unfortunately, in gaining his position, the propeller of this launch was knocked off, and he had to trust to oars to get away. This was, of course, too much for the Huns, and they immediately opened fire on him, but only succeeded in wounding him through the thigh. Curiously enough, he was eventually rescued by his own brother, who was hanging off in a steam pinnace, in the event of his services being required.

It is sad to think that of the six V.C.'s earned in this attack on Zeebrugge, two of the recipients, namely, Lieut. R. D. Sandford of the submarine, and Able-Seaman A. E. Mackenzie of the *Vindictive*, have already succumbed, one to an attack of typhoid, and the other to influenza.

I only wish I could add here an account of

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the splendid work of the Block ships. They were :—

1. H.M.S. *Thetis*, Commander R. I. Sneyd, D.S.O., R.N., since promoted Captain.
2. H.M.S. *Iphigenia*, Lieut. E. W. Billiard-Leake, R.N., since awarded D.S.O.
3. H.M.S. *Intrepid*, Lieut. S. S. Bonham-Carter, since awarded D.S.O.
4. H.M.S. *Sirius*, Lieut.-Commander H. N. M. Hardy, since promoted Commander.
5. H.M.S. *Brilliant*, Commander A. E. Godsal, since awarded D.S.O., and subsequently killed while in command of *Vindictive* on her blocking expedition to Ostend.

*Iphigenia*, *Intrepid*, and *Thetis* are all well and truly laid in the mouth of the Bruges Canal.

*Sirius* and *Brilliant* were, it will be remembered, on their journey to Ostend; but, by a clever ruse on the part of the enemy in altering the position of a certain buoy, just prior to the attack, they were led astray and grounded some few hundred yards to the eastwards of the entrance.

## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

These ships were all more or less out of the limelight, and so far I have seen no account of their exploit. Possibly some one may help me to supply the omission in the second volume.

No. 1.

*Letter from Engr.-Commander W. A. Bury,  
D.S.O., R.N.*

Royal Naval Auxiliary Hospital,  
Peebles, N.B.

25th June, 1918.

MY DEAR ———,

Ever so many thanks for your much appreciated letter. It is indeed high time I answered it, but I have been postponing this in the hope that I would soon be able to sit up and write properly. They say this slow progress is quite normal. I had three half-crowns in my trouser pocket and was struck at such close range (about 30-40 yards) that the bullet took one through with it, and so there was a great deal of tissue, etc., damaged inside the thigh, which has wasted considerably.

But to get on with something more interesting. When I joined up at Chatham nobody could give me any information as to

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

the job, but I was told to report to Captain Davidson, *Hindustan*. On board there I found many Grand Fleet officers collected, all looking very mysteriously at one another, but not daring to ask what the job was, as we understood that all would be made clear by the Admiral, who was to come down to see us that afternoon. When he arrived, the Admiral saw us all in the captain's cabin, weeded out married men, told us all details, and filled us with enthusiasm in his extraordinarily quiet way, told each officer off for his particular job, and left us with a strong sense of assurance. All the executive officers were carefully selected: Harrison, Godsall, Sneyd, Hardy, Bradford, Adams, etc., and a splendid lot they were, but I think all the engineers, like myself, were told off from ships where they could be spared. Being the senior E.O. of the lot, I got the *Vindictive*, and had most of the organization of the engine-room ratings of all ships, which made things interesting until we got into running order.

There was a considerable amount to be done in the *Vindictive* in the way of preparation and outfit, both below and on deck, and

myself and her 1st Lieutenant (Rosoman) were the only officers attached to her for a considerable time. Meanwhile, the bluejacket landing party (about 260 strong), under Harrison, Adams, Bradford, etc., were daily trained up in the fields which the soldiers used. They were taught all the new tactics, including "dirty work" at close quarters with rifles and bayonet, etc., by army experts. E.R. ratings were all put through rifle and bayonet exercises too. The Marine detachments did similar training elsewhere. They were about 730 strong.

Eventually all was got ready, smoke devices fitted, flame projectors fitted, precautionary measures taken in the way of special fire arrangements, splinter protection in the funnels and uptakes, brows fitted, ammunition stored for Stokes guns, Mills grenades, howitzers, machine-guns, etc., etc. A mess was started, and extra accommodation found for the Marine officers who would have to live on board during the period of waiting, so Rosoman's hands were full. We had two 7.5 howitzers, and one 11-inch ditto, two pom-poms in fore top, and three on port side. Many Stokes guns behind sandbags on boat

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deck, ammunition was everywhere, to say nothing of gas flasks, smoke flasks, oil flasks, etc., all on upper deck, so we quite expected to put up a good Brock's Benefit if hit.

Finally the squadron sailed for an isolated spot. *Hindustan* came with us to accommodate the surplus of marines and officers whom we couldn't stow. *Vindictive*, *Sirius*, *Thetis*, *Brilliant*, *Iphigenia*, *Intrepid*, *Iris*, and *Daffodil*. It can be readily understood that as not only the success but the possibility of the enterprise depended almost entirely on the smoke screen and various jobs assigned to small craft, only certain weather conditions (direction of wind combined with state of sea and condition of tide during dark hours) would suit. Eventually such a favourable combination came along, and we started off with all our equipment. All went well until we were within 12-14 miles of Z. when the wind shifted and we had to retrace our steps. The two Ostend craft were only just recalled in time by a C.M.B. The Admiral in the *Warwick* made one letter, I believe, by wireless, and promptly got a reply in the shape of a 15-inch projectile in the vicinity, presumably by D.W. The 16-point turn was



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accomplished by large and small craft, without mishap, notwithstanding the close formation, etc. We saw no enemy craft, though we afterwards heard they were not far off with a destroyer patrol. Of course this nearly broke our hearts. Another attempt was made, but we had to return on account of the sea, after we had been under way only two hours.

The First Sea Lord and First Lord had come down before we sailed to wish us good luck and see the ship. After our first close attempt doubts were entertained as to the possibility of the success of the enterprise, and for an awful day we thought the show was to be quashed—fortunately the Admiral overrode their fears.

Then followed a weary waiting for the next period of tides, the first of which would servé on the night April 22nd–23rd. In the interval we had made certain improvements in the way of protection, etc. The Admiral came to see us again and put to flight any pessimistic rumours. All went like clock-work, and we made all our positions correctly. When we were about 15 or 20 minutes off the Mole, the Huns fired a very bright star-shell which lasted about half a minute, and

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showed up what there was to see, mostly smoke. I had been standing at the top of the E.R. hatch watching the effects of the monitors' bombardment, and as soon as the star-shell died out I went below. There were several shots fired then at us, from where I don't know, but of course we didn't reply. Before we got alongside several shells hit the forepart of the ship. Captain Halahan, R.N., was killed at the top of the E.R. casing, and Colonel Elliot and Major Cordner, both of the R.M.A., on fore bridge.

While we were manœuvring the engines alongside we were rather badly gassed down below, but the use of gas masks rendered it fairly innocuous. The torpedo netting in the uptakes arrested splinters, and no damage was done to the machinery. In the meantime a perfect bedlam of hell broke out all round, and the old ship shook all over. It was impossible to say which were Hun hits and which were our own explosions. Our pom-poms barked away merrily for a while, and then stopped, all the crews being wiped out, as were also the crews of the 7.5 howitzers. Not so the 11-inch on the Q.D., however, which got off 36 healthy rounds into a

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battery ashore. Captain Carpenter coned the ship in from the foremost flame house, and had just left it when it was riddled with shrapnel. The *Daffodil* nosed us in against the wall and held us there, and discharged her marines into us. The *Iris* went ahead of us and tried to secure to the parapet with grapnels—almost an impossibility on account of the motion alongside. Bradford climbed the spar and, taking the grapnel in his hands, he jumped on to the parapet and secured it; all the time he was being shot at, the bullets striking the funnel behind him, and those below warning him to slide down. He took no notice, and was shot dead just as he reported "secure" to Gibbs. The grapnel broke away with the motion, and Hawkins did exactly the same thing, and was also shot.

I had made a plasticine model of the Mole, harbour, forts and lock-gates, etc., for general guidance (from aerial photos and confidential plans), also a larger model of the portion of the Mole which we were to go alongside, showing supposed guns, etc., and so soon as the engines were finished with I meant to dash on to the Mole to see how it tallied. When I reached the upper deck I found the

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brows nearly all shot away, and the crowded marines falling down on their faces all round me, so that I was much too frightened to look for a ladder, but directed my attention to business on the upper deck (where there were by now practically no officers, all being forward, except one lieutenant). The ship was enfiladed for a while by a destroyer, which came out round the point of the Mole astern of us, and she did a good deal of damage, but was sunk by a C.M.B., and our crews claimed some shots into her too. It did not matter much what portion of the Mole we went alongside, for the whole place bristled with guns. The hull of the ship, as long as we were alongside, was protected from batteries ashore by the curve of the Mole, but the upper deck and superstructures were at the mercy of the guns on the parapet, and the superimposed (4-inch) guns at the end of the Mole (which is a regular fortress), so the fore bridge, funnels, boat-deck, etc., suffered severely.

The bluejackets were the first over the top, led by Harrison,\* who was shot through the face, but, however, kept on, until again shot

\* Both Bradford and Harrison have since been awarded posthumous V.C.'s.

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through the neck. They suffered badly from the machine-guns' cross-fire from Huns under cover. The marines followed, using scaling ladders to drop the 16-feet from parapet to Mole. They did good work bombing destroyers, etc., alongside, and the blue-jackets on the parapet bagged most of the crews with their Lewis guns as they ran across the Mole to try to pull away the marines' ladders. Chamberlain walked down to the after flat unaided, with one of his lungs blown out through his back, but died almost at the foot of the ladder. Walker had his left arm blown off, and much shrapnel in his head and neck, but sat up and shouted encouragement to his men. Rosoman was shot in both ankles, but refused to quit the conning-tower. The men were splendid; no matter what condition they were in they always asked "Did the block-ships get in, sir?" It was a most difficult job dealing with the casualties; the small hatches, steep ladders, and darkness made it so. Never again shall I believe yarns about people rushing about picking up wounded on their backs. I could hardly move some of them, and my chief stoker, a huge strong chap, couldn't lift them.

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Once or twice we were violently pushed along the deck by some mysterious explosion, but got off without a scratch. In the meantime, the *Vindictive* and her landing party having drawn the fire, the *Iphigenia*, *Intrepid*, and *Thetis*, guided towards the gate by Captain Collins in a M.L., steamed into the inner harbour and sank in the narrow canal entrance. *Thetis*, leading, unfortunately fouled one of the submerged nets, and got out of position; she shook herself free, however, and gained quite an obstructive billet before sinking. Their three crews were taken off by two M.L.'s, the other two having misfired.

I think I am correct in saying that no enemy craft attempted any action, except the destroyer before-mentioned. The *North Star* wandered inside and eased off all her fish at the wall where S.M.'s and T.B.'s were alongside, and we believed two craft were sunk. When we had been alongside fifty-five minutes, the retire sounded. Only one brow was left, and a number of wounded were rescued from the Mole. Palmer, a captain, R.M.L.I., went back on the Mole to look for some missing, and refused to come off till he had found them. He was left behind. We

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had a big quarter boom rigged out as a propeller guard, and when they rang down "full speed astern," this took the spring; her nose left the wall (against a sluicing tide) and then we crashed away at 16 knots, switched on the smoke and quickly worked up to 19 knots. There were two big shells which hit us getting away, both forward: in the issuing-room and canteen, above W.L. These shells burst into very small fragments. Two men who were close to, had their clothes stripped right off, but there was not a mark on their bodies: killed stone dead. Most of the salvoes which followed us out were short. All the time we were alongside nothing attempted to torpedo us.

The old "C" boat, full of explosives, did a fine piece of work. She made her way into the butt end of the Mole, where the tide is allowed to pass through piles—the Huns had a searchlight on her and allowed her to come right in, thinking she had lost her way, and no doubt expecting to capture her intact. She got her nose between the piles; about 200 Huns collected right over her to jeer; Sandford set his fuse to five minutes, got away in his berthon boat; then they

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opened fire on him ; he was shot through the thigh. In five minutes the old " C " boat, ten tons of amatol, with about 200 Huns and thirty yards of the Mole, went sky high !

The *Iris* suffered very badly when getting away. Once she left the shelter of the wall ahead of us, they searched her with shell fire, and her casualties were a considerable proportion of the whole. The marines were so crowded on her decks. Poor Gibbs had his legs blown off and only lived a little while. Our doctors had a strenuous time, and did marvellously well ; every cabin had at least three cases in it, and there was not a square inch of deck which had not a stretcher on it fore and aft. Many of the wounds were of a dreadful character, on account of the high explosive. The extraordinary feature which struck me was the length of time that several lived who had large pieces of their heads blown away. One man (quite paralysed) kept on asking me where he was hit, and what was happening, when would we be in, etc.—he was quite clear when we got back : he had no back to his head. We had no room to separate out the dead from amongst the living, so thickly were they



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packed. At daybreak the upper deck was a dreadful sight, truncated remains, sandbags, blackened corpses, represented the howitzer and Stokes gun crews. All but one were blown to bits in the fore top, where they did such good work with their pom-poms. Yet the men gathered round and gave a hearty cheer when we sighted our squadron all complete, and out of danger.

When we got alongside at Dover the gruesome business of removing the wounded and dead was the first job. We made a bee-line for the hotel and a bath, where we met the survivors from the other craft, and very glad we were to see them.

Next day we had forty Press representatives snapshotting and interviewing. Personally I was fortunate enough to avoid them. The Ostend ships were not so fortunate as we were. Had they gone on their dead reckoning they would have made the entrance, but they came across a certain buoy which was *lighted* and had been shifted one mile. This they, unfortunately, shaped their course by, and landed one mile adrift, where they got a hot reception from the shore batteries, and evident anti-landing preparations. The two captains,

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Commander Godsall and Lieut.-Commander Hardy, at once volunteered to take the *Vindictive* over with their crews the next night. Several of my people volunteered to stop on with me, and I kept four E.R.A.'s, having persuaded the Admiral that it was only fair to the new captain to have some one who knew the ship. There were several delays, however, due to unfavourable conditions, etc., and in the end we had to wait for the next tide period. Commander Godsall and myself had, without any difficulty, collected a new volunteer crew of stokers and a few seamen. We went round Dover harbour, visited the captain of each monitor and destroyer, who cleared lower deck for us, and so we collected the volunteers.

During the time we were waiting we removed everything that could be of value to the Hun as far as possible, gave away fittings, furniture, etc., to various offices ashore, and patched up the holes in the sides and funnels, some of which were quite five feet across. When the favourable time came we pushed off quietly, the *Sappho* joining us later, Hardy in command, who had the other Ostend ship before. They had bad luck ;

blew a boiler joint or something, and had to drop out at Dunkirk, where we dropped our surplus stokers, and proceeded with only the bare necessary numbers, about forty-five in all. There was keen competition amongst the stokers to go all the way, and they had to resort to cutting out who should remain behind.

It was a dull night, with just the right wind for the smoke. The entrance to Ostend is quite an insignificant one, and difficult to find. When we got quite close, a genuine sea fog came down and rather defeated us for a little time. We steamed up and down W. and E. past the entrance, without seeing it, but got it fair the third time. The Huns saw us through the fog three times, each time in a different place; hence their yarn about "repelling two cruisers with 'accurate gun-fire.'" Just then we seemed to steam into a barrage of shrapnel, and at the same moment our aircraft fairly bombed seven sorts of hell out of the place, which must have saved us sufficient shelling to sink us, for we got right in without anything penetrating engine-rooms or stokeholds. A little outside the entrance the preliminary message came

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down the telephone to clear the stokeholds ; but as it was quite evident from down below that they were getting in a lot of direct hits on the upper deck and superstructure, I delayed sending the stokehold hands up till as late as possible.

The captain's arrangements were to turn the ship with her starboard side out to seaward : our cutters were that side, and the men were told off for each of them. I was to use my discretion about sending the hands up. This preliminary warning was to give us an idea down below where we were ; the final order " Abandon engine-room " (which we had several alternative ways of transmitting), of course meant that the ship was in position, and having seen every one out, I was to proceed to touch off the after group of mines, this being the signal to those in the conning-tower that every one was up, and they would then touch off their group forward. We had about 1500 lbs. of amatol in different places : there was a double charge in the port engine-room. The helm was put to starboard, and we felt the ship bump. This was the last order poor Godsal gave ; undoubtedly he meant to port the

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helm immediately afterwards, but he stepped out of the conning tower to see better, and was killed.

A short while before we bumped, the man on the steering engine got a feeble message from the sub-lieutenant in the after steering control "All out here." They were on the top of the engine-room casing. Nothing was seen of this after control party again, as shortly after we had cleared the E.R. the place where they were was blown over the side. Then we got the order "abandon engine-room," and the engines were left running full astern port, half ahead starboard. Every one went up. I waited in the E.R. till each petty officer reported his part cleared, and then went up myself. There was a fearful din on the upper deck, as well as shrapnel; the machine-gun bullets were making a noise just like pneumatic caulkers. Several of our people never got further than the escape doors, and all made for the cutters, which were just touching the water. Seeing that the ship was not slewing (our port propeller had been damaged against Zeebrugge Mole), and also there was a danger of the falling funnels and things cutting the electric leads, I made my way aft,

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to the dynamo-exploders, and fired the after mines. Several portions of the port engine shot up into the air, and the poor old ship sat down on the mud with a loud crash, at an angle of about 30 degrees to the pier, where her bows touched, and on a fairly even keel.

Then I got down the sea gangway and into a cutter, which was all splintered by a pom-pom or something, and to my intense surprise and relief, saw there was a motor launch alongside, and scrambled over her bows somehow. She was in a sinking condition, and had very little freeboard forward. Nearly all our people were already in her. Of course they switched machine-guns on to us; star shells made the place bright, and many of us were hit. It is uncomfortable when you can see the bullets coming; they used tracers, red and green. They must have been 1870 gunners, because the launch passed fairly close to the pier, and none of us should have been missed getting over the ship's side. They followed us out into the smoke with various calibres, lots of spray and sparks, but no more hits. We closed the *Warwick* just in time, for we were on fire as well as

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sinking, and to make sure of her we blew up the M.L. Not long after, we walked on a mine which badly damaged us aft, so we had to clear out and board *Velox*. These shifts did the badly wounded folk no good. Finally we were hoisted on board the *Liberty*, where the doctors had a field-day cutting up uniforms, doping with chloroform, etc. The captain of the M.L. (Drummond) was badly wounded before he came alongside the *Vindictive*, and had two of his people knocked out; notwithstanding which he remained standing on one leg, and holding on with one hand all the time till he was lifted out into the *Warwick*. He gets a V.C.

There are of course many details which I must not write, but I hope to have the pleasure of telling you of them personally when you come near again.

I do hope this wandering yarn may be of some little interest; if you have heard nothing, then perhaps it will, but I fear the descriptive faculty is not mine.

With kind regards, and every good wish for the best of luck.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) WM. A. BURY.

# DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

No. 2.

*Letter from Commander Rosoman to his  
Brother.*

Admiral's Office,  
Dover.  
23rd November, 1918.

DEAR COXON,

I really cannot turn myself into a historian; I am too old a dog to learn new tricks.

I enclose the copy of a letter I wrote to my brother. If it is of any use to you, by all means use it. If not, please return it.

Yours very sincerely,  
(Signed) R. R. ROSOMAN.

COPY OF A LETTER TO MY BROTHER WRITTEN  
ON AN UNKNOWN DATE, FROM

Miss McCaul's Nursing Home,  
52, Welbeck Street,  
London.

DEAR OLD CHAP,

Many thanks for your congratulations on my safety after our Zeebrugge picnic.

You have asked me for my account of the exploit and what my part of the show was. It is very natural you should take an interest





*Photo by Bassano*

COMMANDER ROBERT R. ROSOMAN, R.N.



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in the proceedings, but you know I am more accustomed to handle ships and boats than pens and paper; therefore you will know you have invited me to do a job I don't like, and one at which I am not *au fait*.

I notice you inquire how I got into it, all questions which I must try to answer, so here goes. You know I was commanding *Canning*, and not pleased with her passive job, but naturally one serves where one is appointed. We were alongside a repair ship having oxygen bottling plant installed, and I was on leave prior to my knowledge of any new appointment. When I returned, my 1st Lieut. received me at the gangway and said how sorry he was that I was vacating my command. I had no knowledge of this, and asked him what he was talking about? He proceeded to explain; all of which was nothing to do with Zeebrugge or *Vindictive*; therefore I cut it out.

My relief arrived. I handed over the command and came down to London, with no orders whatever. My relief's appointment was vice me; but, at the expiration of a 14-days' balloon course at Roehampton, he turned up too early because he did roughly

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48 hours there and came north, hence no news as to my disposal. No use going on with details. I arrived in London with no orders; therefore reported myself at the Admiralty. No news there owing to this gap which I have mentioned. I was invited to proceed on leave pending appointment, which I did, leaving address. First telegram was: Report to 1st Sea Lord's Office on a certain Monday, but cancelled before the Monday arrived. Second information: appointed to *Arrogant* additional. Somewhat, or shall we say still puzzled, I proceeded to Dover and went on board *Arrogant* about 8 p.m., where I met Ralph Collins, who I think you know, 1st Lieut. of *Kent*, I think, when I was out in China. He is Flag Captain now to Vice-Admiral Dover Patrol. I asked about my appointment; but he could give me no information, except that he had applied for a 1st Lieut., and imagined I was the answer to it. As I had been in command for two and a half years, naturally it did not seem the sort of thing that I should be appointed to. I mentioned it, asking why additional? Collins naturally suggested I should see V.A.D.P. in the

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morning, and this was fixed. Being puzzled and worried, I went into the Admiral's office the next morning, feeling as if I was carrying about two bower anchors on my back; but when I came out it seemed to me there was at least two feet of air between my feet and the pavement.

I had never met the Admiral before, but, to save my poor old pen and paper in war-time, I will only tell you that I was very much impressed with his direct way in dealing with things. To cut it short, he told me he had no command for me, but wanted me to be 1st Lieut. of *Vindictive*, and introduced me to Carpenter. We left for Chatham the same afternoon, never having met before. Carpenter was on V.A.D.P.'s staff at Dover, busy with many things; therefore, your old brother was left to fit *Vindictive* out. The engineer officers arrived from the Grand Fleet for *Vindictive* and block ships.

Bury I knew from China days, so naturally I hoped he would come to *Vindictive*. He did, so we worked hand in glove like a couple of thieves. Splendid chap, Bury. Weather was pretty good, but a bit warm for the time of year, and I found, after my lazy command,

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I was not as bright at dashing round a dock-yard as I might have been, and wanted a smart young Lieutenant to assist me. This was not forthcoming, but one Hilton Young, a Lieut. R.N.V.R., turned up, who assisted me in training the guns' crews, and was full out to do all he could, but not being a Lieut. R.N., or shall we say a sailor, could not do all he would have loved to do.

In due course we were ready to leave Chatham, and then Carpenter joined up, and off we went down the Medway to a somewhat isolated anchorage, where I could get the landing brows rigged out, which I could not do in Chatham yard, owing to many eyes observing. As we passed out of the lock, we collected a Lieut. R.N., Ferguson, which pleased me very much. The monotonous days in the isolated anchorage, I will pass over.

We were a well-prepared infernal machine by this time, with our frightfulness on board: flame projectors, bombs of all descriptions, and our own ammunition all on deck; because shell-rooms and magazines were stuffed up with buoyancy. Before proceeding, I must tell you about our P.M.O., McCutcheon. He joined with no idea of what we were

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playing at, and asked me if I could tell him how many casualties he was to be prepared for. I asked him if he knew anything about the show. He did not, except that he understood he had joined a Suicide Club. I thought a bit, and told him I had no authority to tell him what it was. As he was coming along and must keep quiet, I decided to tell him. I told him. His reply was simply ripping: "It is not a Suicide Club at all! No, I can do a lot of good work and save many lives." And, by Jove, he did. His organization was magnificent.

Our stay at the isolated anchorage was very trying, but we had lots of work to do which, of course, was done by everybody. The accommodation for officers and men was never intended to house the quantity we shipped, because, you know, we had Blue-jacket storming parties and Marine storming parties on board. I double-banked the cabins and did all I knew to make people as comfortable as possible. Bury and I camped out together, because we knew each other, and had so much to deal with together; also I knew he did not snore.

I will pass over this period forthwith;

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but could tell you of many distinguished visitors who came on board, if we could quietly meet, which I hope we shall some day. In due course, tide, time, and weather favoured us, so we received orders to sail. The gunnery lieut., Bramble, serving in *Hindustan*, very full out to come along (I don't think you know him), joined up to help; and very glad I was. Osborne, Commander G. on V.A.D.P. Staff, joined up to do G. duties, just a few days after leaving Chatham; also a valuable asset. In fact, the whole outfit was present, and off we fussed.

Very funny procession, we towing the two ferry boats, *Iris* and *Daffodil*, in command of, as you know, Gibbs and Campbell—both splendid seamen. I must not forget to add the Chaplain, Peschall—splendid fellow, who volunteered to blow along, and V.A.D.P. fixed permission.

We proceeded down the Thames Estuary, followed by the block ships. Off the Kentish Knock we met all the light forces and received on board Brock, the Flight-Commander, who was the clever devil who invented the smoke-screen upon which the success of the venture hinged to a great extent.



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The skipper, Carpenter, being an expert navigator, saw to the navigation, upon which the whole thing really depended. He is a wonderful chap, and I hope you meet him some day. I am not going to enlarge on him, or else I should be run in for extravagant use of paper in war-time, so will leave that till we meet.

We proceeded. Splendid conditions as far as we knew. At the eleventh hour luck was against us; a slight wind came off shore, which put the hat on carrying out the expedition, and the V.A.D.P. turned us back. I have often thought what a difficult decision it was to make, but he very wisely made it, and back we turned our comic flotilla, which was somewhat of a bobbery pack. If I had not been present, I should never have realized it possible to get within sixteen miles of a hostile port and turn round, which, mark you, took some time, without being interfered with by hostile patrols. It was a very sad return, because you may realize when you are in for a sort of death-or-glory stunt, to have to defer it is not an easy matter to deal with—certainly not from the executive officers' point of view.

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We returned, anchored and waited, coaled, etc., etc. Once more we got under way, but I think several of us were convinced weather conditions were against us. They were, and we returned quite soon and anchored. Another monotonous period occurred here, owing to having to wait until the next favourable times of tides.

I gleaned that the Powers-that-be up London-side nearly put the hat on the venture; but thanks to V.A.D.P. and Carpenter knowing, among other things, how miserably disappointed we should be if it did not come off, kept it still a going concern. The very first day of the next period, 22nd April, all seemed favourable, and we were ordered to weigh. It was with a great sense of relief that I received this order because, by this time, I was feeling that the difficult conditions under which we were living could not last much longer. We proceeded, and the bobbery pack formed up, as before. The night was a somewhat bad one for observation purposes, owing to what is generally known as a Scotch mist; hence, no aerial bombardment, which, by the way, I have not mentioned before, but was in the complete

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organization. The wetness caused by the said Scotch mist pleased me, because I was somewhat afraid of fire, owing to the large amount of wood in the ship—assembling platforms, ramps, brows, etc., which I had drenched down with some anti-fire mixture supplied by the R.N.A.S., but of the value of which I knew nothing. You also know that old ships have not the same very complete anti-fire arrangements that modern ships have.

All went well as we approached our objective. At a certain spot we were to slip the ferry boats, ditto hawser, and other things had to happen. They did. It was my duty to slip the ferry boats, and before proceeding forward I went to my cabin for something, I don't remember what, but why I mention it is because I met Halahan, whom I think you knew, and much to my surprise he had a piece of gauze stuck over his left eye. I asked what had happened? and he told me he had gone on the quarter-deck to look round and had forgotten the towing hawser over which he had tripped, and had come down, cutting his eyebrow, with the result it had been mended by a few stitches put in by the medicos. I expressed regret

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

at this, because it was rather a bad handicap for a man starting on a desperate bit of work.

I proceeded to the conning-tower, and the skipper went into the flame-projector house to con the ship. It had been made into a very nice little bullet-proof corner by the able hands of Hilton Young, whom I had detailed for the job because he was somewhat versed in defeating the busy bullet. Soon we observed the smoke-screens ably put up by the M.L.'s, and then the Hun started putting up star-shells. If you have never seen a star-shell you cannot realize how brilliantly they light up their surroundings. I was in the conning-tower, as I have mentioned, when the first went up, and my cox'n, of *Delphinium* and *Canning*, was at the helm, a man I knew I could thoroughly rely upon. The skipper was in the flame-house in direct communication with me by voice-pipe. The cox'n remarked: "We shall get it in the neck now, sir." I said: "Yes, I expect so;" but we didn't. I wondered why. Soon I realized that the smoke-screen was so good we could not see the star itself until it had climbed over the artificial fog-bank, and so realized the Hun could not see us. We sighted the Mole about

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800 yards off. Carpenter said, "Can you see the Mole, No. 1?" I had just seen it, and said, "Yes, sir," when the Hun saw us, and we got it good and hearty. Fortunately the skipper was not hit, and soon we were tucked under the Mole, where the ship's vitals were very much protected. As we arrived alongside the skipper told me to nip down and stand by the anchor, which I did, and let go in accordance with orders, nipping up again to get the wall anchors in place.

I am going into too many details. *Daffodil* pushed us alongside; wall anchors were never placed on account of derricks for placing same being too short, but we had a great effort for it. Adams, commanding landing-party, jumped on jetty and with a few men struggled hard to haul the foremost one in place on parapet, but it couldn't be done. *Daffodil*, wonderfully handled, held up to the wall, and the landing-parties went out, Adams going off to take charge of his men. I may mention here that I was on the fore-bridge during this stage, and well above the Mole parapet, looking upon the Mole, and saw a very different sight to what I

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expected. The machine-gun fire and shell-fire were terrific, but not a Hun to be seen, and I had expected to see crowds of the brutes. The landing of storming-party was difficult, owing to the rise and fall of ship about four feet. I had better tell you that there were many casualties among officers and men before we got alongside.

The only thing we had to hit back with, as we tucked up under the Mole, was the fore-top, which mounted two pom-poms, and some Lewis guns, manned very ably by Blue Marines. Osborne was up there looking after the shoot, ably assisted by Rigby, who, I regret to say, was killed—practically all gun-crews were killed. Sergeant Finch, although badly wounded, kept firing as long as he could. Splendid chap; got V.C. Osborne, fortunately, came down before the fatal shell came into the top, otherwise it is likely he would have been done in.

The skipper went aft as soon as we were getting out the storming-party to loose off the rockets to guide the block-ships in, and the work was well and ably done, as you know from published reports. The explosion of the submarine was a fine affair, and did in

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many Huns ; also prevented reinforcements coming on the Mole.

After the picnic had been going on for some time and we knew the block-ships had gone in, I met the skipper on the fore-shelter deck. While we were discussing the advisability of shoving off, owing to the fact that the heavy shore batteries were getting on to us, something landed in amongst a heap of Stokes ammunition and caused a few explosions, also a small fire. My coxswain, Petty-Officer Youlton, who was doing coxswain to Carpenter, was in attendance, and at once got busy with it. I got a bit of something through my right knee which stung a bit, but I joined Youlton, who was trying to stamp it out, and threw what I thought was a sandbag on it. It wasn't, as I knew when I lifted it. The skipper decided it was time the emergency recall was sounded ; this was done by the ferry-boats' whistles, as *Vindictive's* sirens were out of action, and steam shut off in consequence. The storming-parties came in, and after waiting for five minutes after the last man had come in, on account of great fear of leaving anybody behind, the Captain told me to go down and slip the cable. This

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

was not easily done because, while lighting people in with an electric torch, I was hit again above left ankle, which was not agreeable. It turned out this severed some tendons and splintered a bone. The slipping was done, but cable would not run out, so I had to nip back to conning-tower to say so, and we steamed the cable out; ably assisted by *Daffodil*, who plucked us off the wall as previously arranged. When clear, we fussed off, *Daffodil* slipping the tow. Smoke was made to cover our departure, and we went up round Thornton Ridge and so home. The Captain was very anxious to get me out of the conning-tower when he knew I was wounded; but this I refused to do because it was my billet, and the medicos had many men to deal with who wanted help far more than I did. Aft there, I could not help them; sitting down in the conning-tower I could do my job. Compasses were badly upset, but we got a destroyer to lead us. After passing West Hinder, I went aft to off boot because my left foot had swollen up a good deal, and the thing was painful. Was helped aft, and I may tell you the decks were not a pleasant sight. Off boot, on dry sock,



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and bedroom slipper; back to conning-tower, which I left when Dover was sighted. Great reception in Dover. *Warwick* flying V.A.D.P.'s flag, passed *Vindictive* as I was coming aft. Loud cheers; she looked very smart and splendid. Here I took no further active part in the proceedings. We were berthed and wounded taken out. Some of us proceeded to Chatham hospital, where we received very necessary attention. After a short period, I think ten days, amongst others I was removed here, where everybody is awfully good to us; they really are splendid. I am now getting on well, and I don't think, when I am properly fixed up, I shall even be lame.

I have only told you about *Vindictive* and myself, which I understand you want, but I will not conclude without drawing your attention to the splendid work of block-ships, which really did their job.

The failure of the Ostend block-ships to reach their objective was due to the Hun having shifted the Strombank Buoy to the eastward. This, unfortunately, put them on the beach to the eastward of Ostend, which is rather a difficult place to find in times of

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

peace, as many yachtsmen have told me when racing across there, and all being done to point out the finishing line after dark, the first yacht to find the finishing line generally being the winner, although, may be, not the first to arrive.

Best of good luck to you.

Yours always,

(Signed) R. R. ROSOMAN.

No. 3.

*Letter from Commander E. S. Osborne, D.S.O.,  
R.N., to a friend*

V.A.'s Office,

Dover.

29th April, 1918.

MY DEAR RENOUF,

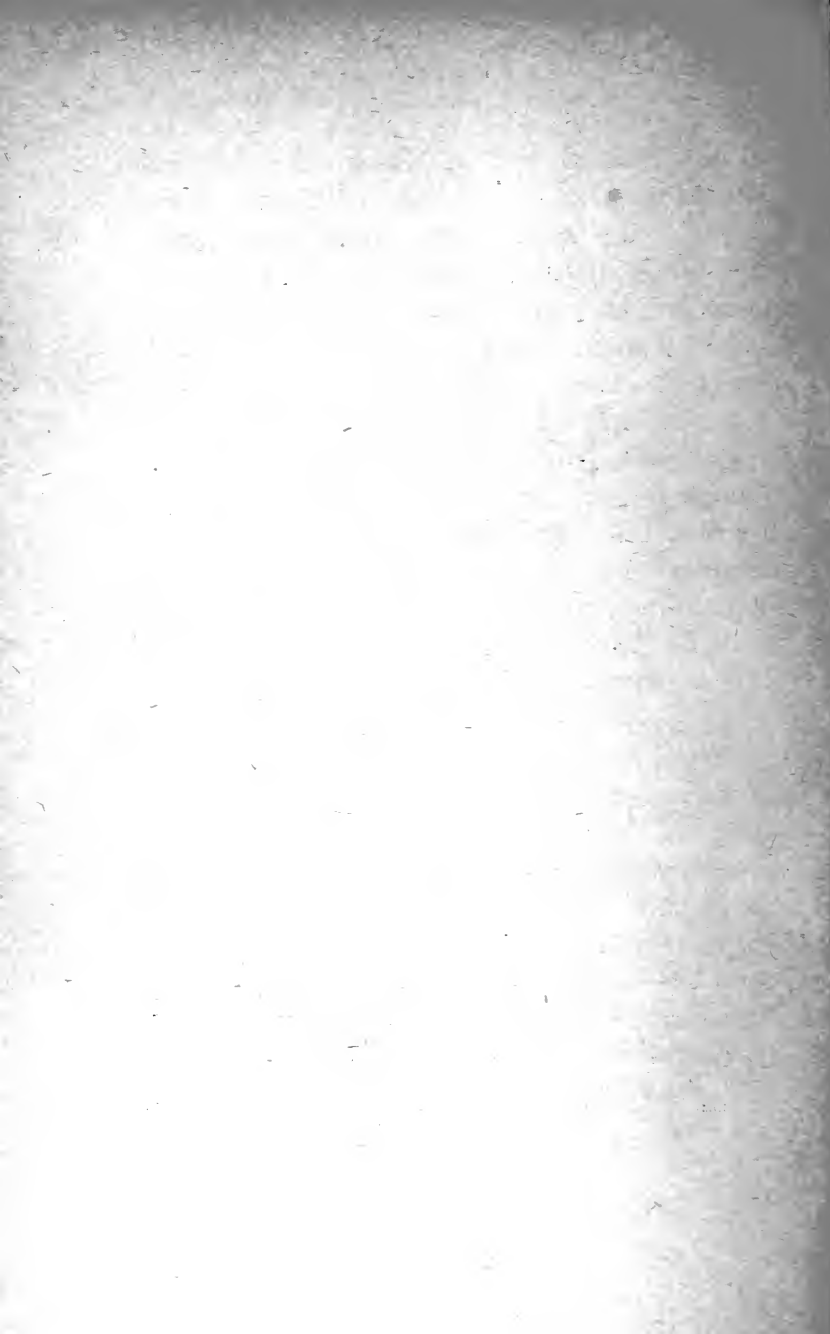
Your very apt remark "Do it now," compels me to take pen and write quickly, and of course also the old crowd must at once be informed of one of their late member's doings.

Well, as soon as I got down here, this business was going on, and I was given charge of gunnery outfits of *Vindictive* and five blocking ships and two ferry steamers. Then the V.A. was going in *Vindictive*, and I asked



*Photo by Lafayette*

COMMANDER EDWARD OLIVER BRUDENELL SEYMOUR OSBORNE, D.S.O., R.N.



## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

to be with him, and he consented. When he altered his plans and went in *Warwick*, I was left as "G" of the expedition and 2nd to Halahan and 3rd to Carpenter in *Vindictive*, Conceive the armament of the good ship *V.*, who incidentally carried the *Conqueror's* old crest which I changed to last year; mind you, I am not one bit superstitious, but, when I saw the good crest and perceived that though not in *Conqueror* I was in her nearest affinity, I was bucked. Those who have left the good ship *Conqueror* and come up against it, have not fared too well, have they? Two 6" B.L., two 6" Q.F., one 11" howitzer, two 7.5" howitzers, five 2½-pdrs. pom-poms, 16 Stokes' mortars, 12 Lewis guns.

Well, early in April this collection left Chatham, and we proceeded to get squared up. We made two previous efforts, first cancelled owing to unfavourable wind, and lastly bad weather. In the first case we got within about an hour's run. Another wait for a week or so and we came to Monday, every one fearfully pleased that we should get it over and all very merry and bright. We started about 1 o'clock and gradually collected a multitude of craft: destroyers

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

towing submarines and C.M.B.'s, motor launches, and the old *V.* finally towed the *Iris* and *Daffodil*. Some photos taken, some gin consumed, and then dinner. We sat down five in the Captain's fore cabin: Halahan, Col. Elliott, Major Corder, Lt.-Comdr. Brock, and myself: six hours later I was the only one left. After dinner we closed up two foremost 6", and at 11 p.m. "Action Stations: Fall in the Landing Parties." All tows had been slipped by now, and I was in fore-top with Rigby, a young R.M.A. sub., 8 R.M.A.'s and my petty officer. An occasional B.F. loosed off a rifle, not greatly to the joy of the remainder.

About 11.45 the monitor started bombarding, and then the motor launches and C.M.B.'s streaked ahead and put up the most wonderful smoke screen. Suddenly there was a crash and a star-shell burst—*ma foi*, a goodly star-shell, which seemed to illuminate us all; but our smoke screen hid us. More bursts, more star-shells. When the real shell started, I am not quite sure; but suddenly the smoke cleared and we saw the Mole. Fore-top opening fire was the permissive to

## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

all guns. Each gun-layer on a model had been shown his target, 500 yards, half-way up wall and alter point of aim as necessary. Allow, my "hereditary enemy" (he was a torpedoman, and I a gunner), that this was a simple and unbreakable control. We had decided not to fire till we were sure they had spotted us. Well, a shell burst close to fore-top when we were about 200 yards off, I should say, and pinked Rigby and self very slightly in the face; so turned to the guns' crews of the F. top (2 pom-poms, 6 Lewis guns) and told them to open on the enemy's battery. The port battery, I'm glad to say, had no delay in opening fire, possibly one-fifth of a second later. "What electrical communications!" you will remark. Thank heavens we had no insts. or telephones.

Well, we now had about two or three hundred yards to go, and they knocked out a number; - but our battery, I am told, silenced them. Owing to din in fore-top, and number of weapons being fired, I did not see. Alongside rather a swell, all but two of our landing brows smashed by gunfire: but, as soon as I had gone and *Daffodil* had shoved us in, over they went, and no easy

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

matter with brow lifting about four feet clear of coping as ship rolled.

When men had started to go out, I left Rigby in F. top, and told him only to fire when absolutely certain where our own men were. Rather a job getting the Marines over the brows and ladders passed out, owing to roll, as when on the Mole parapet there was another 15 ft. drop, at least, to get on to the Mole proper. On board shells were now bursting on the funnels, bridges, and showers of splinters coming on to the upper deck. We fired rockets to show blockers way in, and as soon as we saw they were in, the recall (emergency) was made, "Ks" on siren, if we were compelled to leave earlier than expected. Twenty minutes later we had got all the men back and shoved off. *Daffodil* towed our bow off; we let off smoke boxes on bows and quarters and went like hell, 16½—wonderful work by stokers. Sheets of flame coming out of the funnels. I can't describe the state of the ship; she was an absolute shambles. A few minutes after leaving top, a direct hit came, and poor Rigby and five were killed, and two badly wounded. When alongside we bombarded



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*Goeben* battery with our 11" how. and the dock gates with our midships 7.5", and I believe jotted *Goeben* some. The centre bow had her percussion gear shot away; whilst replacing it half crew were wiped out. The unfortunate forward how. had two crews wiped out.

Well, we went like Hades, and the Huns kept on plastering the water 200 yds. astern of us, thank God! The poor old *Iris* ran up alongside the Mole; but the swell prevented her from landing her men: poor Bradford and Hawkins were killed trying to make her fast. The *Conquerors* were in *Iris*, and I hear the conduct of all hands when she got plastered with shell for only two or three minutes, and got 65 killed and 102 wounded, was wonderful! My luck was in, old son; only three bruises, one on chest, one on left arm, and one on heel, and a small cut on face; but one shell burst in my face. My steel helmet was as near as a touch penetrated by the right temple; goggles shattered, gas apparatus shot away; one clean shell-hole in right lapel of coat, one clean shell-hole in left arm of coat, and right heel of boot shot.

## DOVER DURING THE DARK DAYS

Our casualties were high, almost all from shell-fire and machine-gun fire at close range. On the jetty F.-top pumped pom-pom into two destroyers and two sheds and landing party bombed destroyers, some dug-outs and knocked out some guns; but abreast the ship there were not many Huns close to. We fired a lot of Stokes bombs, also the C.M.B.'s fired all they had on board at the air-sheds.

The behaviour of the men was wonderful; because, you must remember, that before we got alongside Halahan, Walker, Chamberlin (I believe), Edwards, and half the seamen landing party in *Vindictive* were already down; Col. Elliott, Brigade-Major, and several Marine officers also down; only two brows left and a continuous stream of shell and a good deal of machine fire.

Enuff, old son. I've spun a long enough yarn. Give my love to all my old shipmates and remember me to Kelly and the ship's company, and tell them they may well be proud of their representatives. All during the training I kept asking Bradford how the *Conquerors* were doing, and he swore by them: not the smallest thing had he ever to say against one of them.

## H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE"

All luck to you in regatta. What about the ward-room officers? They must retrieve the laurels of 1916. They can do it, if they make up their minds.

Thanks for your governor's letter. Please ask him to give my love to Laura, an old pal of mine.

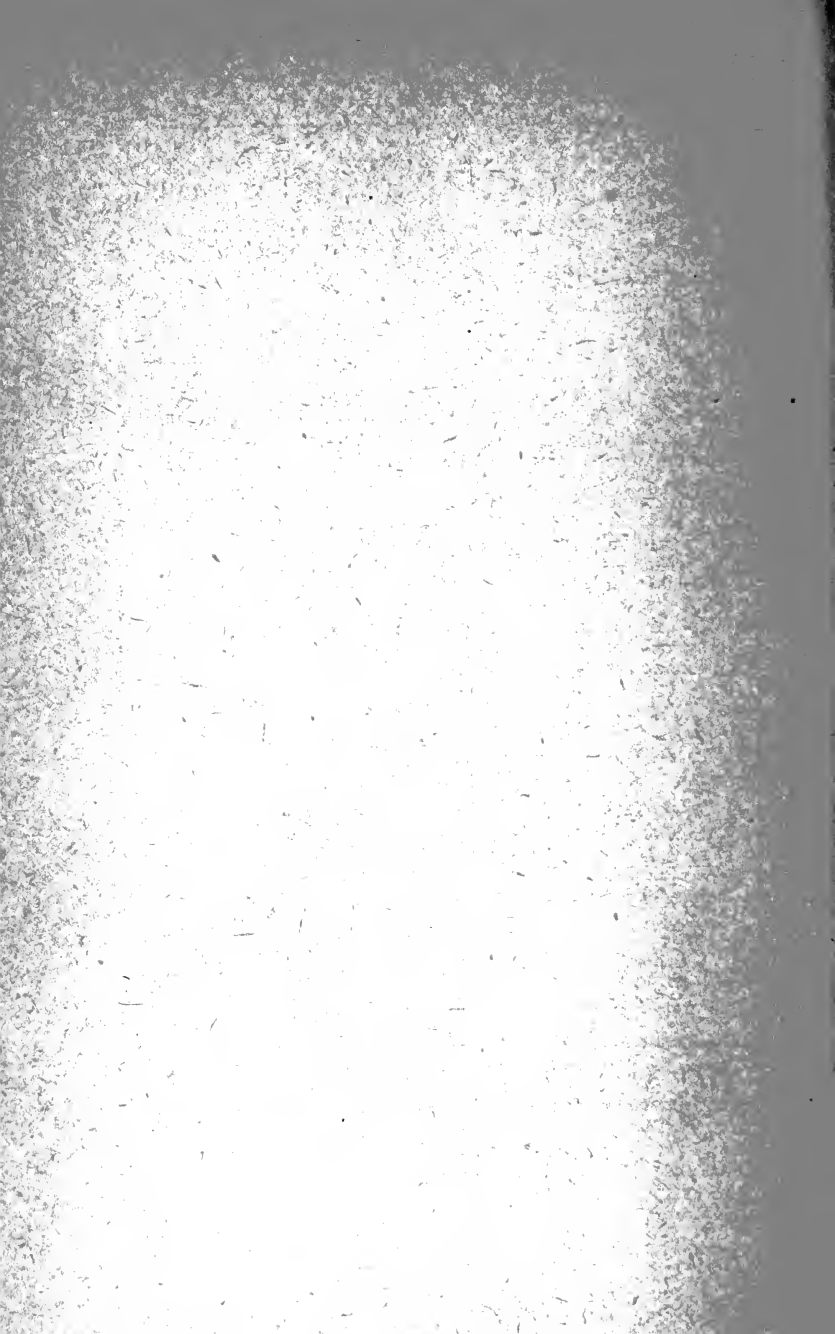
Please remember me to the captain and congratulate him on his appointment.

Yours,  
(Signed) E. S. O.

In bed just at present with a bit of a cold, and feeling a bit tired like. I find my sleep at night not too great as yet.

On the way back, rum, whisky, chicken broth, more rum, more whisky, etc., etc.

THE END



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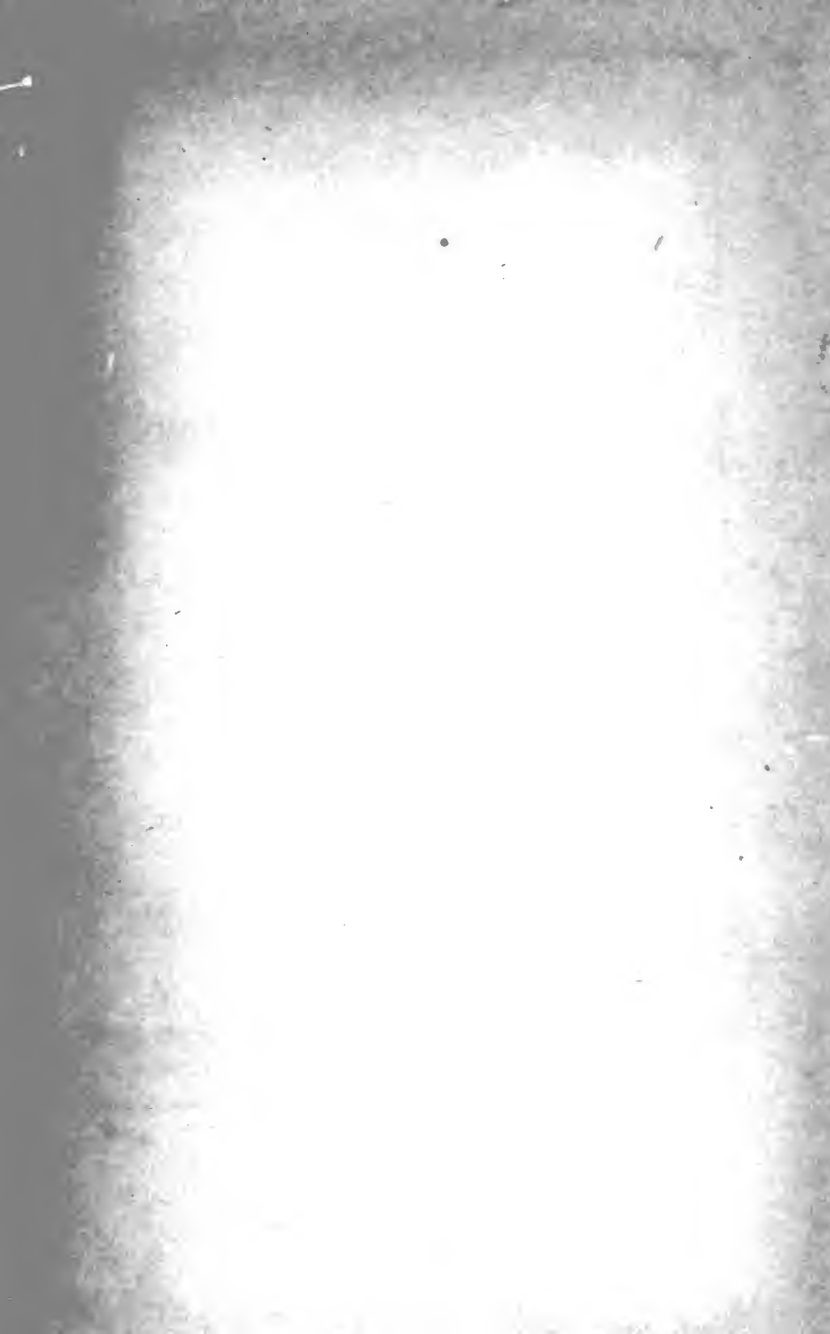
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