



A  
MERCHANT FLEET  
AT WAR



ARCHIBALD  
HURD

# MAP SHEWING INCIDENTS, DETAIL



The X indicates position of incidents referred to in the text.

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A MERCHANT  
FLEET AT WAR





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“AQUITANIA” LEADING  
THE TRANSPORTS



# A MERCHANT FLEET AT WAR

By

ARCHIBALD HURD

Author of "The British Fleet in the  
Great War," "Command of the Sea,"  
"Sea-Power," etc. etc.



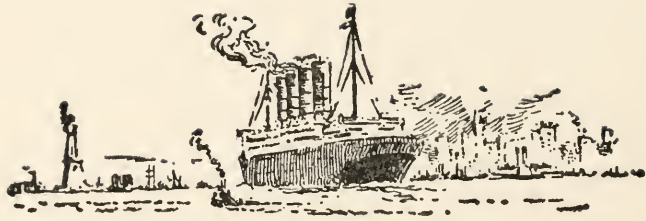
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*Over the warring waters, beneath the wandering skies,  
The heart of Britain roameth, the Chivalry of the sea,  
Where Spring never bringeth a flower, nor bird singeth  
in a tree,  
Far, afar, O beloved, beyond the sight of our eyes,  
Over the warring waters, beneath the stormy skies.*

ROBERT BRIDGES.



## P R E F A C E

DURING a war, which was at last to draw into its vortex practically the whole human race—the issue depending, first and foremost, on sea power—there was little time or opportunity or, indeed, inclination on the part of British seamen to keep a record of their varied activities. The very nature of many of the incidents recorded in the following pages precluded the preparation of detailed reports at the time. Nor can we forget that many of the officers and men, to whose resource, courage, and devotion this volume bears testimony, have joined the great silent army of the dead to whose exploits the freedom of conscience of every man and woman in the British Empire, as well as their state of material comfort, bear witness.

This book has been written under not a few difficulties, and it owes whatever merit it possesses to many individuals—captains, officers, engineers, pursers and other ministers to British sea-power—who have assisted in its preparation, whether by recounting incidents in which they took part, by placing written records at my disposal, or by

## *Preface*

lending photographs from which the illustrations have been prepared. I would especially emphasise that the illustrations have been made from photographs of all sorts and shapes, taken by all kinds of cameras, though for the most part of pocket size. Many of the pictures were snapped under dull and forbidding skies, and some were secured in the very presence of the enemy in mad pursuit of his piratical policy. Some of these pictures were soaked with sea water, and other were recovered from destruction at the last moment. The value of the illustrations lies not so much in their perfection as in the knowledge that they were taken "on active service."

Finally a word should be said, perhaps, of another difficulty which confronts any one who endeavours to tell the story of what merchant sailors did during the Great War. These men dislike publicity and their modesty disarms the inquisitor. Like their comrades of the Royal Navy, they are content if they can feel that they have done their duty. They would leave it at that. But were silence to be maintained, later generations would be robbed, for the progress of humanity depends, in no small measure, on

## *Preface*

the manner in which the memory of great deeds is preserved, and handed down from age to age. No man can live unto himself.

The story of the contribution which British seamen have made to the happiness and well being of the world can never be half told, and these pages form merely a footnote to one of the most glorious epics in human annals. They go forth in the hope that they may help to perpetuate those sterling virtues which find increasing expression in the British race throughout the world. James Anthony Froude once declared that all that this country has achieved in the course of three centuries has been due to her predominance as an ocean power. "Take away her merchant fleets; take away the navy that guards them; her empire will come to an end; her colonies will fall off like leaves from a withered tree; and Britain will become once more an insignificant island in the North sea." So I hope this book may be regarded not merely as a footnote to history, but may remind all and sundry of the priceless heritage which our seamen of all classes and degrees have left in our keeping.

ARCHIBALD HURD.





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## FOREWORD

THERE was never a time in our history when the value of the Mercantile Marine to our national life was as apparent as it is to-day. After passing through the crucible of war, we are what we are, mainly, because we are the possessors of ships.

When the Great War came, we possessed only a small, though highly trained, Army, and the guns of our Navy extended little further than high-water mark. How could we, a community of islanders, in partnership with other islanders living in Dominions thousands of miles away, hope to make our strength felt on the battlefields of the Continent of Europe, where the military Powers were mobilising conscript armies counted not by thousands, but by millions? The original Expeditionary Force, as finely tempered a fighting instrument as ever existed, was at once thrown across the Channel in merchant ships and it held in check the victorious army of Germany, saving by a miracle, the Channel ports; then, having mobilised on the eve of the declaration of war, the Royal Navy, the great protective force of

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the British peoples, we mobilised also the Merchant Navy, their essential sustaining force, bridged the oceans of the world, and concentrated on the conflict the enormous and varied powers of the 400,000,000 inhabitants of the Commonwealth. In Belgium and France as in the Pacific, in Gallipoli as in Eastern Africa, in Salonica as in Mesopotamia, and in Italy as in Palestine, British troops were soon confronting the forces of the Central Alliance; every ocean was dominated by British men-of-war. The enemies had the advantage of interior military lines, but by the aid of ships—carrying troops, munitions, and stores—we gradually forged a hoop of steel round them and slowly but irresistibly drew it tighter and tighter until, their economic power having been strangled by sea power, their naval and military power was weakened and they were compelled to sue for peace. If it had not been for our ships—ships of commerce drawing strength from the seas, and ships of war, efficiently policing those seas—the Allies could not by any possibility have won the Great War and Germans would to-day be the dominant race, not only in Europe, but in both hemispheres.



## *Foreword*

It is a common error to think of sea power in terms only of battleships, cruisers, destroyers and submarines. The secret of the spread of Anglo-Saxon civilisation, with its ideals of fair play, tolerance and personal liberty, its hatred of tyranny and love of justice, is not to be found as much in these emblems of organised violence as in merchant ships. Out of our island State the Merchant Fleet, a purely individualistic institution, developed by the compulsion of geographical necessities; the British people could not exist without ships even in days when their numbers were small and the standard of living was relatively low. The population has trebled in the last hundred years and the level of comfort of all classes has risen, and to-day the very existence of the 45,000,000 people of the British Isles, as well as their commercial and social relations with the other sections of the Empire, depends on the sufficiency and efficiency of the Mercantile Marine.

We possessed a trading Navy, with fine traditions of peace and war, long before we had a Fighting Navy. The owners of merchant ships for many centuries defended this country from

## *Foreword*

raids and invasions, just as it was the early merchant-adventurers who laid the foundations of the Empire. Thus as far back as the reign of Athelstan, we find this Saxon king granting a Thaneship—or, as one might say, a knighthood—to every merchant who had been three voyages of length in his own trading vessel. It was largely with the ships of merchant owners that in 1212 the English, by raiding France, prevented a French invasion, and that in 1340 one of the greatest British naval victories was won over vastly superior forces at the battle of Sluys. And though, by the time of the Armada, merchant ships were but as it were the core of the fleets that fought and destroyed the threatened world domination of Spain, they played an exceedingly important part in that epoch-making struggle, which marked the emergence of this Island as a world power. Similarly the Indian Empire, the early American Colonies, and many other British Possessions all over the world, were founded by merchant shipping enterprise alone. From time immemorial, the British merchantman has carried the flag to the outermost parts of the world and thus helped to maintain its prestige.

## *Foreword*

The Mercantile Marine and Navy have always been so closely knit that it is often difficult to separate their histories. The Mercantile Marine was in reality, as has been said, the parent of the latter. As the State grew, and civilisation became more complex, a process of separation between the ships of commerce and the ships of war was inevitable, and the Navy became more and more a distinct Royal Service. The increasing difficulties of the problems of defence, armament, and so on, led to a process of specialisation, and could only be adequately studied and the Empire's growing needs supplied by a State Department. On the other hand, the Mercantile Marine remained, and still remains, individualistic, each merchant ship-owner, or company of ship-owners, building the sort of vessel best adapted to the particular enterprise in hand. Thus we have sailing from our ports, ships of all descriptions, ocean-going liners carrying passengers, cargoes and mails, as well as tramps, colliers, cold-storage vessels, and an infinity of other types.

But while this process of separation, or specialisation, has been both inevitable and fruitful, the Mercantile Marine has, in every war, been

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called upon by the Navy to provide transports, auxiliary cruisers, hospital and munition ships, and, in the recent Great War, minesweepers, submarine chasers, 'Q' ships, and many other equally vital subsidiaries. Similarly, in the personnel of the Mercantile Marine, the Navy has always had a powerful reserve, not only of experienced sailors, but of actual navally-trained officers and men. Without these, it is safe to say that the Navy could never have undertaken, or accomplished, those vast and world-wide, and many of them unforeseeable, tasks, so magnificently and successfully carried out; and it is equally true that but for the Mercantile Marine, the armies of the whole Alliance would have been paralysed.

In no history, however long and laboriously compiled, would it be possible to do full justice to the war-work of the British Mercantile Marine, but the present volume supplies, at any rate, an index to the scope and value of what it performed. In the re-action of one unit, of one old, honourable, and successful merchant shipping Company to the demands of the world war, it is perhaps possible to realise more clearly than by

## *Foreword*

making a wider sweep of research, the amazing accomplishments of the whole; and where all rose, with magnificent unity, to heights of service never surpassed in our annals, none excelled either in the prescience or organizing ability of its directors, in the courage and resource of its captains and crews, or in the loyalty and ingenuity of its skilled and unskilled employees, the record of the Cunard Steamship Company.



# A MERCHANT FLEET AT WAR

## CHAPTER I

### Mobilisation

*Oh hear! Oh hear!  
Across the sullen tide,  
Across the echoing dome horizon-wide,  
What pulse of fear  
Beats with tremendous boom?  
What call of instant doom,  
With thunder-stroke of terror and of pride,  
With urgency that may not be denied,  
Reverberates upon the heart's own drum  
Come! ... Come! ... for thou must come!*

HENRY NEWBOLT.

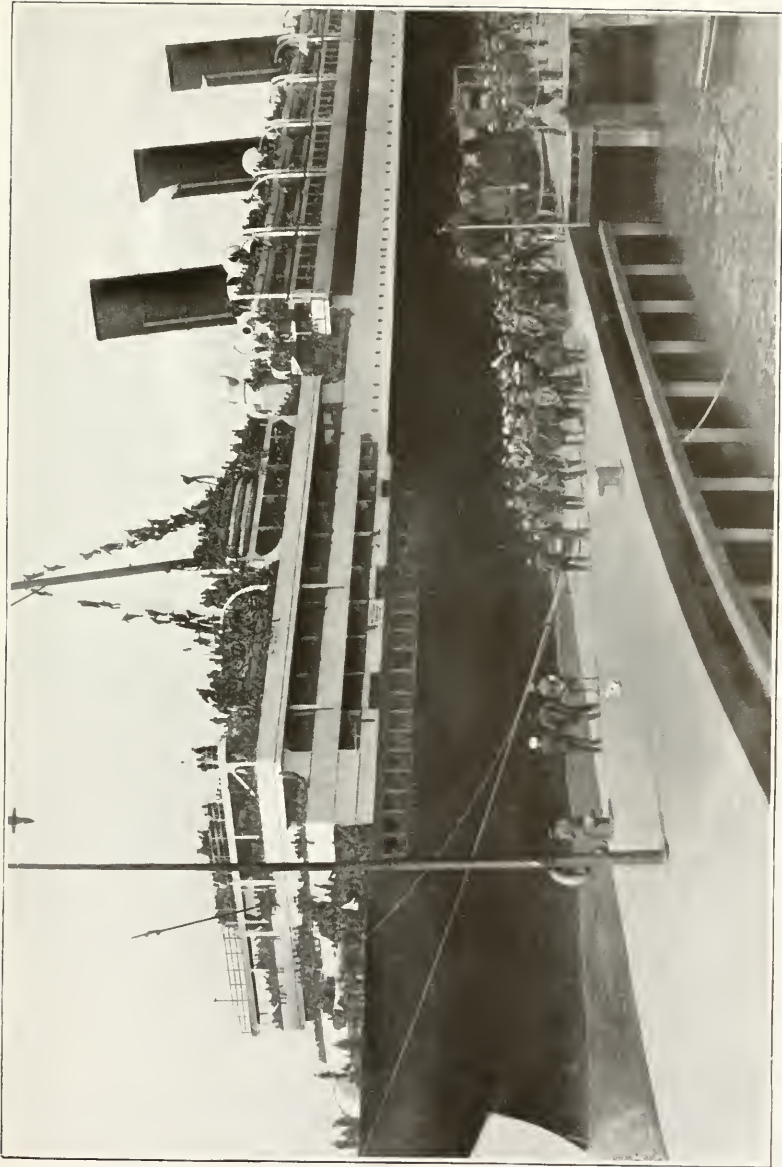
IN order to obtain the truest conception of what the Cunard Company stood for in 1914, it will be well not only to consider very briefly its first origin and steady growth, but to refresh our memories by recalling one or two of the tidemarks of ocean-going navigation. Thus it was in 1802, in the year, that is to say, following Nelson's great victory at Copenhagen, in the year of the

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Peace of Amiens, and three years before the Battle of Trafalgar, that the first successful, practical steamer was launched. This was the *Charlotte Dundas*, built by William Symington on the Forth and Clyde Canal, and fitted with an engine constructed by Watt, which drove a stern wheel. This vessel proved to be an inspiration to Robert Fulton, who in 1807 built the *Clermont* at New York, a wooden steamer 133 feet long, engined by Bolton and Watt. In the autumn of that year, this vessel made a trip from New York to Albany, a distance of 130 miles in 32 hours, returning in 30 hours, and thenceforward maintained the first continuous long distance service performed by any steam vessel. Five years later Bell's famous steamer, the *Comet*, began the earliest, regular steamer passenger service in Europe.

In 1814 the *Marjory*, the first steamer to run regularly on the River Thames, began her career; but it was not until 1819 that the *Savannah*, a wooden sailing ship of American construction, but fitted with engines and a set of paddles amidships, crossed the Atlantic, arriving at Liverpool after 29½ days. In the following year





"AQUITANIA" AT SOUTHAMPTON  
WITH CANADIAN TROOPS



### *Mobilisation*

the *Condé de Palmella* was the first engined ship to sail across the Atlantic from east to west, namely from Liverpool to the Brazils.

These were but tentative experiments, however, and the Transatlantic Steamship Service, as we see it to-day, did not really begin till the year 1838, when the steamers *Sirius* and *Great Western* sailed within a few days of each other from London and Bristol respectively. Both ships crossed without mishap, the *Sirius* in 17 days, and the *Great Western* in 15. In the same year, the *Royal William* and the *Liverpool* crossed from Liverpool to New York in 19 days and 16½ days respectively.

It was now clear that a new era in transatlantic navigation had dawned, and the Admiralty, who were then responsible for the arrangement of overseas postal contracts, and had hitherto been satisfied to entrust the carrying of mails to sailing vessels, invited tenders for the future conveyance of letters to America by steam vessels. One of their advertisements, as it happened, came into the hands of Mr. Samuel Cunard; he was the son of an American citizen of Philadelphia, who had settled in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

which city he had been born in 1787. For some time the idea of developing a regular service of steamers between America and England had been simmering in Mr. Cunard's brain. He was already in his 50th year, a successful merchant and ship owner; and he now resolved to visit England with the intention, if possible, of raising sufficient capital to put his ideas into practice. Armed with an introduction to Mr. Robert Napier, a well-known Clyde shipbuilder and engineer, he went to Glasgow, after having received but little sympathy in London. Through Mr. Napier he became acquainted with Mr. George Burns, a fellow Scotsman of great ability and long practical experience as a ship-owner, and through him with Mr. David McIver, also a Scotsman of sagacity and enterprise, then living at Liverpool. Between the three of them the necessary capital was obtained, and Mr. Cunard was able to submit to the Admiralty a tender for the conveyance of mails once a fortnight between Liverpool, Halifax, and Boston, U.S.A. His tender was considered so much better than that offered by the owners of the *Great Western* that it was accepted, and a contract for seven years was



“AQUITANIA” ESCORTED  
BY DESTROYERS



### *Mobilisation*

concluded between the Government and the newly formed British and North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, as it was then called.

Such was the beginning of the Cunard Company in the shape of four wooden paddle-wheel steam vessels, built on the Clyde, the *Britannia*, *Acadia*, *Caledonia*, and *Columbia*; and its history from then until 1914 was one of steady and enterprising, cautious and daring, development. This is not the place to linger in detail over the technical strides made since 1840 by the Cunard Company's directors, but one or two of the more important milestones should perhaps be noted. In the year 1804, John Stevens in America had successfully experimented with the screw-propeller, and in 1820, at the Horsley Iron Works, at Tipton in Staffordshire, Mr. Aaron Manby had designed and built the first iron steamer. It had always been the policy of the Cunard Company to keep in touch with every new marine experiment, but at the same time it had been their wise habit, both from the commercial point of view and that of the safety of their passengers and crews, to move circumspectly in the adoption of new devices. It was not, therefore, until

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

1852 that the first four iron screw steamships were added to their fleet, namely the *Australian*, *Sydney*, *Andes*, and *Alps*, four vessels that were also the first belonging to the Company to be fitted with accommodation for emigrants. For the next ten years, however, it was found that passengers still preferred the old paddle-wheel system, and side by side with their iron screw steamers, the Company continued to build these until, in 1862, the *Scotia* proved to be the last of a dying type. Meanwhile, in 1854, the Government was to realise another side of the value to the nation of the Cunard Company. During the Crimean War, in response to a strong Government appeal, the Company immediately placed at the Admiralty's disposal, six of their best steamers, the *Cambria*, *Niagara*, *Europa*, *Arabia*, *Andes*, and *Alps*; later adding to these their two most recent acquisitions, the *Jura* and *Etna*. Throughout the campaign these eight vessels were continuously employed upon various important missions, supplying the needs of the military forces.

Perhaps the next most important era began with the invention in 1869 of compound engines,





EMBARKATION :  
"ARE WE DOWNHEARTED?"



TRANSPORT IN SOUTHAMPTON WATER :  
COLONIALS' FIRST VIEW OF "BLIGHTY"



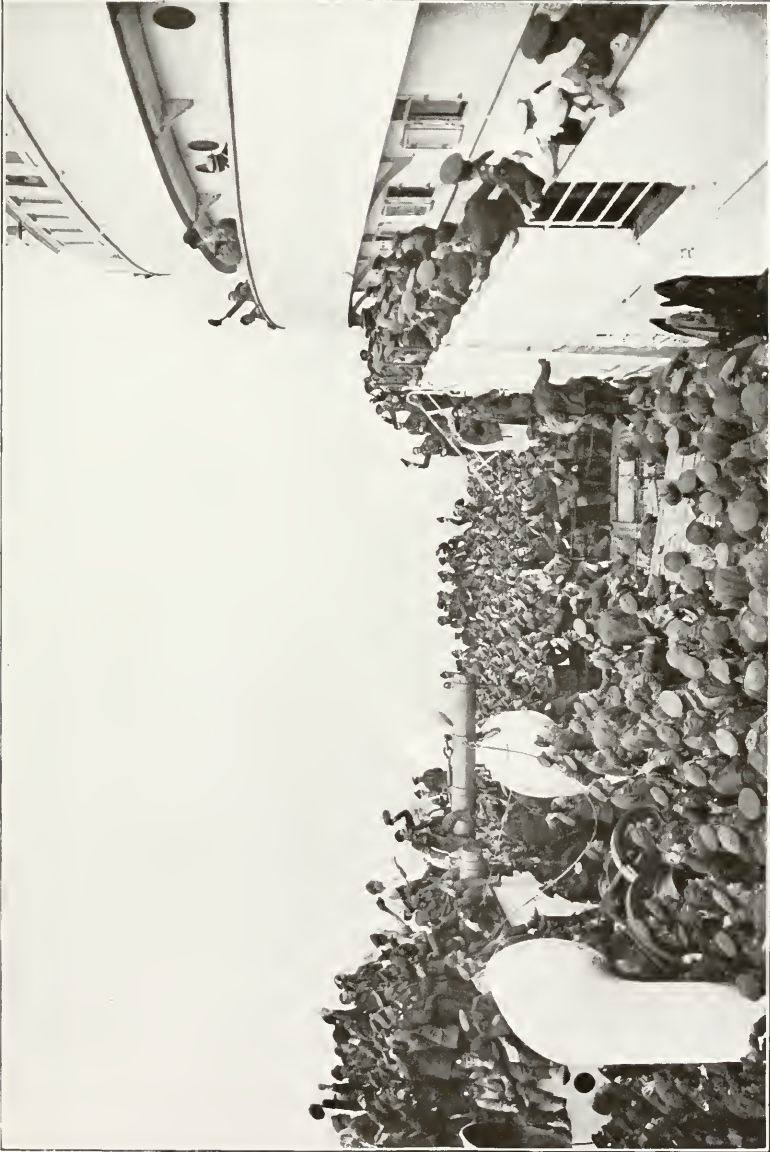
### *Mobilisation*

and in 1870 the *Batavia* and *Parthia* were fitted with these, and proved extremely successful, maintaining good speeds, with a reduced consumption of fuel. The Company was now sailing one vessel under contract with the General Post Office every week from Liverpool to New York, calling at Queenstown, and from New York to Liverpool, also calling at the South Irish port, and receiving a certain subsidy for so doing. They were also maintaining services between Liverpool and the principal ports in the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Levant, Bosphorus, and Black Sea, and between Liverpool and Havre. In 1881 the first steel vessel, the *Servia*, was built for the Cunard Company. This was the most powerful as well as the largest ship, with the exception of the famous *Great Eastern*, that the world had then seen. She was followed in 1884 by the *Etruria* and *Umbria*, the former of which in August, 1885, set up the record for speed from Queenstown to New York, the journey being accomplished in 6 days 6 hours and 36 minutes. In the meantime, research work, in the construction of marine engines had been continued, and Dr. Price had invented the triple expansion engine,

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

which effected further considerable economies in the consumption of fuel; and these were fitted by the Cunard Company into the two great twin-screw vessels, the *Campania* and *Lucania*, built in 1893. With the *Campania* we shall deal again, as she performed valuable services in the late war, and it is interesting to note that it was on board the *Lucania* in 1901 that Mr. Marconi carried out certain important experiments in wireless telegraphy, this vessel being the first, under the Cunard management, to be fitted with a wireless installation.

Through all these years the Cunard Company had of course been submitted to very great competition in the transatlantic trade, not only by British lines, but by American and Continental shipping companies also; and in the year 1900 with the *Deutschland* and in 1902 with the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, what has been called the "blue ribbon" of the Atlantic passed to Germany, these vessels having an average speed of  $23\frac{1}{2}$  knots. It was then decided that the supremacy in this respect, should, if possible, be regained by Great Britain, and, with Government help, and in return for certain definite prospective services if required,



CANADIAN TROOPS ON "CARONIA," BEING  
ADDRESSED BY THEIR COMMANDER



### *Mobilisation*

the Cunard Company laid down the *Lusitania* and the *Mauretania*. In 1907, these vessels making use of Sir Charles Parsons' turbine engines, were put into service and soon afterwards attained a speed of over 26 knots, and the mastery, in respect of speed, of the Atlantic.

Enormous as were the proportions, however, of these huge vessels, they were yet to be eclipsed by the Cunard Company's later and most recent giant, the *Aquitania*, a vessel that might more fitly be described as a floating city of palaces, libraries, art galleries, and swimming baths, than the steamship child of the little *Britannia* of 1840. Let us for a moment compare them, remembering that only the ordinary span of a human life-time intervened between them. The *Britannia* was 200 feet long, a wooden paddle-wheel steamer of 1,154 tons, 740 horse-power, and a speed of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  knots. The *Aquitania* is 902 feet long, of 46,000 tons, with quadruple screws driven by turbine engines of a designed shaft of 60,000 horse-power, maintaining a speed of 24 knots. With her Louis Vith staircase, her garden Lounge, her Adams drawing-room, her frescoes, her Palladian lounge, her Carolean smoking-room, and her

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Pompeian swimming bath, she can carry in the comfort of a first-class hotel more than 3,200 passengers, together with a crew of over 1,000.

Such then has been what one may best call, perhaps, the technical advance of the Cunard Company, and in 1914, at the commencement of hostilities, it had in commission 26 vessels, apart from tugs, lighters, and other subsidiaries. Of these, since we shall presently deal with their individual adventures, the following list may be found convenient:

Name of Ship.	Tonnage. Gross.	Name of Ship.	Tonnage. Gross.
AQUITANIA ..	45,646	ULTONIA .. ..	10,402
MAURETANIA ..	30,703	PANNONIA ..	9,851
LUSITANIA ..	30,395	ASCANIA .. ..	9,111
CARONIA .. ..	19,687	AUSONIA .. ..	8,152
CARMANIA ..	19,524	PHRYGIA .. ..	3,353
FRANCONIA ..	18,149	BRESCIA .. ..	3,235
LACONIA .. ..	18,098	VERIA .. ..	3,228
SAXONIA .. ..	14,297	CARIA .. ..	3,032
IVERNIA .. ..	14,278	CYPRIA .. ..	2,949
CARPATHIA ..	13,603	PAVIA .. ..	2,945
ANDANIA .. ..	13,404	TYRIA .. ..	2,936
ALAUNIA .. ..	13,404	THRACIA .. ..	2,891
*CAMPANIA .. ..	12,884	LYCIA .. ..	2,715

\* This vessel was sold for breaking up a few weeks prior to the outbreak of war. Her career as a warship is referred to in these pages.





THE "CAMPANIA" SINKING IN THE  
FIRTH OF FORTH



### *Mobilisation*

From this it will be seen that the total tonnage possessed by the Cunard Company in 1914 was considerably over 300,000, and the Company was operating services not only between the United Kingdom and the United States of America and Canada, but also between the United States of America and the Mediterranean, as well as from Liverpool and other British ports to the Mediterranean and France.

## CHAPTER II

### Combatant Cunarders

*Sleep on, O Drake, sleep well,  
In days not wholly dire!  
Grenville, whom nought could quell,  
Unquenched is still thy fire.  
And thou that hadst no peer,  
Nelson, thou needst not fear!  
Thy sons and heirs are here,  
And shall not shame their sire.*

WILLIAM WATSON.

WITH the war now over, and after five years, during which the public mind has been accustomed to emergency arrangements of all sorts, nothing is more difficult than to reconstruct the enormous and unprecedented activities that were called so suddenly into being in the first war weeks of 1914; and in these the Cunard Company had a typical and vitally important part to play. Of the number of navigating officers in their employment, namely 163, no fewer than 139 were in the Royal Naval Reserve, and as such were immediately mobilised, being instructed to report themselves for naval duty upon their arrival in



“MAURETANIA” ESCORTED  
BY DESTROYERS



### *Combatant Cunarders*

a British port; and by the end of the year 131 of these officers had actually done so. Nor was this the least of the problems that the Company had to face, in that, at a time when not only every reliable officer and man was worth his weight in gold to them, so large a proportion of their best and most highly trained servants had thus to be yielded up to the senior service.

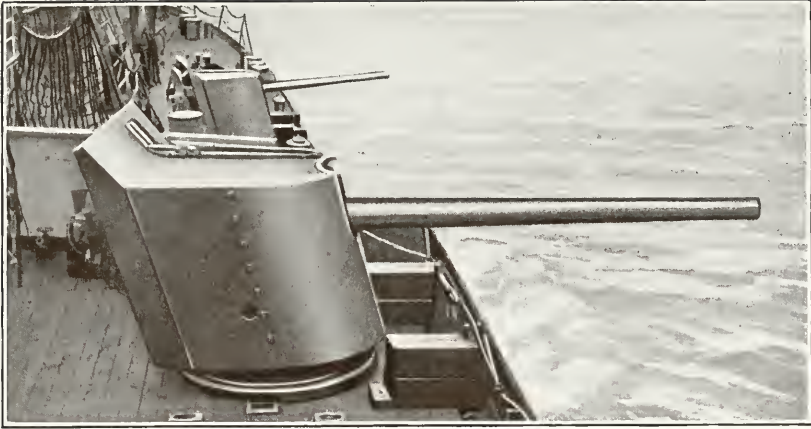
In the latest agreement arrived at with the Government in 1903, the whole of the Cunard Fleet was, in time of war, to be placed at its disposal, and there was considerable uncertainty at first as to the various purposes to which the ships might be allocated. In the present chapter we shall confine ourselves to dealing with those of the Cunard vessels that were commandeered by the Admiralty for strictly combatant purposes, of which the more important were the *Aquitania*, *Caronia*, *Laconia*, *Campania*, and *Carmania*; and since the *Campania* had only just passed from Cunard control, it may be well, perhaps, in view of her distinguished and lengthy service under the Company's flag to deal with her first. She became a seaplane carrier; after having at first however, taken a large share in repatriating

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Americans stranded in the British Isles owing to the exigencies of war. Her after funnel was removed and a smaller one put abreast of the forward funnel; and this alteration, together with the dazzle paint with which she was at a later date covered, rendered her almost unrecognisable even to the old Cunarders who had been familiar with her for many years. Throughout the war she was fortunate in escaping injury both from enemy gunfire and submarine attack, and her honourable career only came to an end at the conclusion of the armistice, when she was accidentally sunk in collision with H.M.S. *Revenge* in the Firth of Forth.

Turning now to the other vessels, the *Aquitania* and *Caronia*, these were fully dismantled and fitted out as armed cruisers in the first days of August, 1915. This, of course, meant the ruthless stripping out of all their luxurious fittings and those splendid appointments to which reference has been made in the last chapter; and for all these articles storage had to be found on shore at the shortest notice. Some idea of the work involved in this conversion can best be gathered perhaps, by realising that no less than 5,000 men were employed upon this herculean task, and





THE "CARMANIA'S" STARBOARD  
FORWARD GUNS



ROPE PROTECTION ON "CARMANIA"  
AGAINST SHELL SPLINTERS



### *Combatant Cunarders*

that more than 2,000 waggon loads of fittings were taken ashore from these two liners. While these two ships were thus being fitted, yet a third, the *Carmania*, arrived in port to be similarly transformed; and a brief account of what took place on board this famous vessel may be taken, perhaps, as typical of what occurred in all three.

Arriving at Liverpool landing stage at 8 o'clock in the morning of August 7th, 1914, she was almost immediately boarded by Captain Noel Grant, R.N. and Lieutenant-Commander E. Lockyer R.N., who were to be respectively her Captain and First Lieutenant under the new conditions. At that moment she looked about as unlike a man-of-war as she could well have done. From half a dozen gangways, baggage was being landed at express speed, while first and second class passengers were also going ashore from the overhead gantries. Owing to the fact that there were known to be Germans amongst the passengers on board, a considerable number of police and custom officials were present upon the vessel; and this necessitated the detention of a large number of third-class passengers, who had to be carefully scrutinised and sorted out.

## *A Merchant Fleet at War*

While all this was going on arrangements for the new equipment and personnel of the vessel were already being discussed, and the proportions of Cunarders and Naval ratings for the *Carmania's* future war service being determined. It was decided that the engine staff was to be Cunard, the men being specially enrolled for a period of six months in the Royal Naval Reserve, while the Commander of the ship, Captain J. C. Barr, was to remain on board as navigator and adviser to Captain Grant, with the temporary rank of Commander R.N.R. The Chief Officer, Lieutenant Murchie, with certain other officers, also remained on board, Lieutenant Murchie, owing to his special knowledge of the ship, ranking next to Lieutenant-Commander Lockyer for general working purposes. The ship's surgeon, her chief steward and about 50 of the Cunard ratings for cooks, waiters, and officers' servants, were also retained, as well as the carpenter, who was kept on board as Chief Petty Officer and given six mates, the cooper, blacksmith, plumber, and painter, being also retained with the same rank.

Leaving the stage about noon, the *Carmania* was immediately docked at Sandon, where after



LIFE ON A TRANSPORT (i):  
KIT INSPECTION



LIFE ON A TRANSPORT (ii):  
RIFLE DRILL



### *Combatant Cunarders*

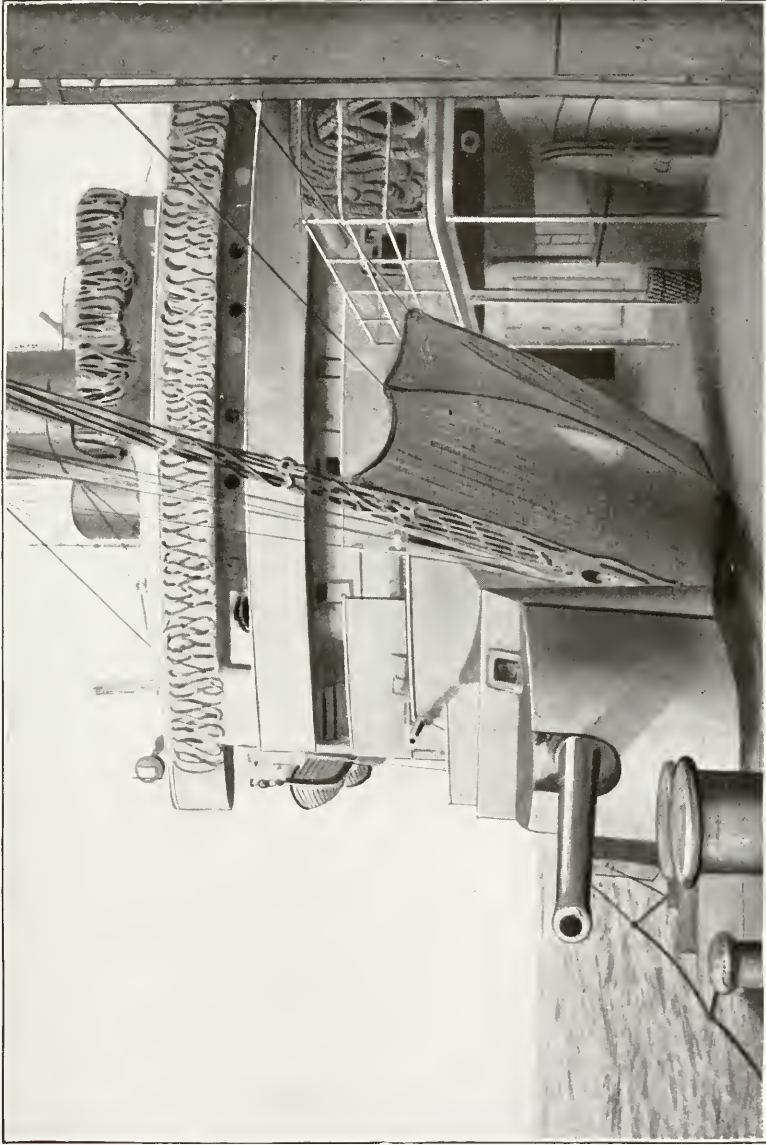
some further delay the third-class passengers were landed. Owing to the fact that the *Caronia* was already in the *Carmania's* proper berth, being fitted out as an armed cruiser, and that both she and the *Aquitania* were already well on the way to completion for their new task, the *Carmania* could for the moment neither discharge her cargo nor bunker owing to the shortage of labour. As many painters, however, as could be assembled began at once to alter her hull and funnels, blackening out her well-known red and black tops, while a gang of shipwrights started to cut out the bulwarks fore and aft on the 'B' deck, in order to allow of the training to suitable angles of the guns that were to be placed in position there. Other Cunard stewards and joiners also concentrated at once upon the task of clearing out passenger accommodation from the vessel. During Saturday and Sunday the *Carmania* remained in the basin, and it was on this day that her future midshipmen turned up, and had to be provided with accommodation in the midst of the existing confusion. On Monday she was able to get an empty berth, where she began at once to discharge her cargo, and to

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

bunker at express speed. Armoured plates were now being put in position upon all her most vulnerable parts, and these were also being re-inforced with coal and bags of sand by way of extra protection. All the woodwork in the passengers' quarters was being taken away; two of her holds were being fitted with platforms and magazines were being built on them; while means for flooding were also being installed, speaking-tubes fitted in the aft steering gear room, control telephones being run up, and her eight guns placed in position.

These were all of 4.7 inch calibre and with a range of about 9,300 yards. In addition a 6 ft. Barr and Stroud range-finder was being fitted, together with two semaphores. Two search-lights were being mounted on slightly raised platforms on the bridge ends, while two ordinary lifeboats and eighteen Maclean collapsible boats were retained for war purposes. By Wednesday all the coal was in, all the bunkers being full, and the protection coal was in place. At 5 o'clock the next morning, the Naval ratings in charge of Lieutenant-Commander O'Neil, R.N.R., arrived from Portsmouth, most of them being





THE "CARMANIA" READY  
FOR ACTION



### *Combatant Cunarders*

R.N.R. men, but a good many belonging to the Royal Fleet Reserve, while the Marines on board were drawn in equal proportions from the Royal Marine Artillery, and the Royal Marine Light Infantry. The able seamen were for the most part Scotch fishermen of the finest type.

On the same day messing, watch, and sleeping arrangements were made, ammunition was taken aboard and stored in the magazines, together with a limited number of small arms, in addition to the marines' rifles: and so unremitting had been the work of all engaged, and so efficient the organisation evoked by the crisis, that the *Carmania* was actually at sea as a fully equipped armed cruiser by Friday, August 14th, only a week after she had entered port as an ordinary first-class Atlantic liner. With her later adventures we shall deal in a moment, but before doing so let us follow the adventures of the other three vessels that were converted into armed cruisers.

The *Aquitania*, fitted with 6-inch guns, sailed on August 8th, but unfortunately was damaged in collision and on returning to port was dismantled at the end of September. From May to August, 1915, she was employed in carrying troops, when

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

she was fitted out as a Hospital Ship, in which capacity she continued to work until April of the following year. She was again requisitioned as a Hospital Ship in September, 1916, plying between England and the Mediterranean until Christmas. She was then laid up by the Government for the whole of 1917, and in March, 1918, was again put into commission by the Admiralty as a transport, and played an important part in bringing American troops to Europe at that critical time.

The *Caronia* had a somewhat longer career as an armed cruiser. She was commissioned on 8th August, 1914, by Captain Shirley-Litchfield, R.N., with Captain C. A. Smith, Cunard Line, as navigator. She sailed from Liverpool on August 10th, for patrol duties in the North Atlantic, being attached to the North American and West Indies Station, under the command of Rear-Admiral Phipps-Hornby, with Halifax (N.S.) as base.

She was employed on the usual patrol duties, stopping, boarding and examining shipping. In the very early days of the war, she captured at sea and towed into Berehaven the four-masted barque *Odessa*, and, some little time after, she

### *Combatant Cunarders*

took over from a warship and towed to Halifax a six thousand ton oil tanker.

Eight 4.7-in. quick-firing guns were originally mounted in the *Caronia*, but, on her return to England for refit in May, 1915, they were replaced by a similar number of six-inch.

She was at sea again in July, 1915, for another commission on the same station, with Captain Reginald A. Norton, R.N., in command, and Captain Henry McConkey, Cunard Line, as navigator. She remained away until August, 1916, when she returned to this country to pay off.

The *Caronia* was then employed in trooping between South and East Africa and India until her return to the Company's service.

During the whole of this time, she was manned chiefly by mercantile marine ratings, enrolled for temporary service in the R.N.R. for the duration of hostilities.

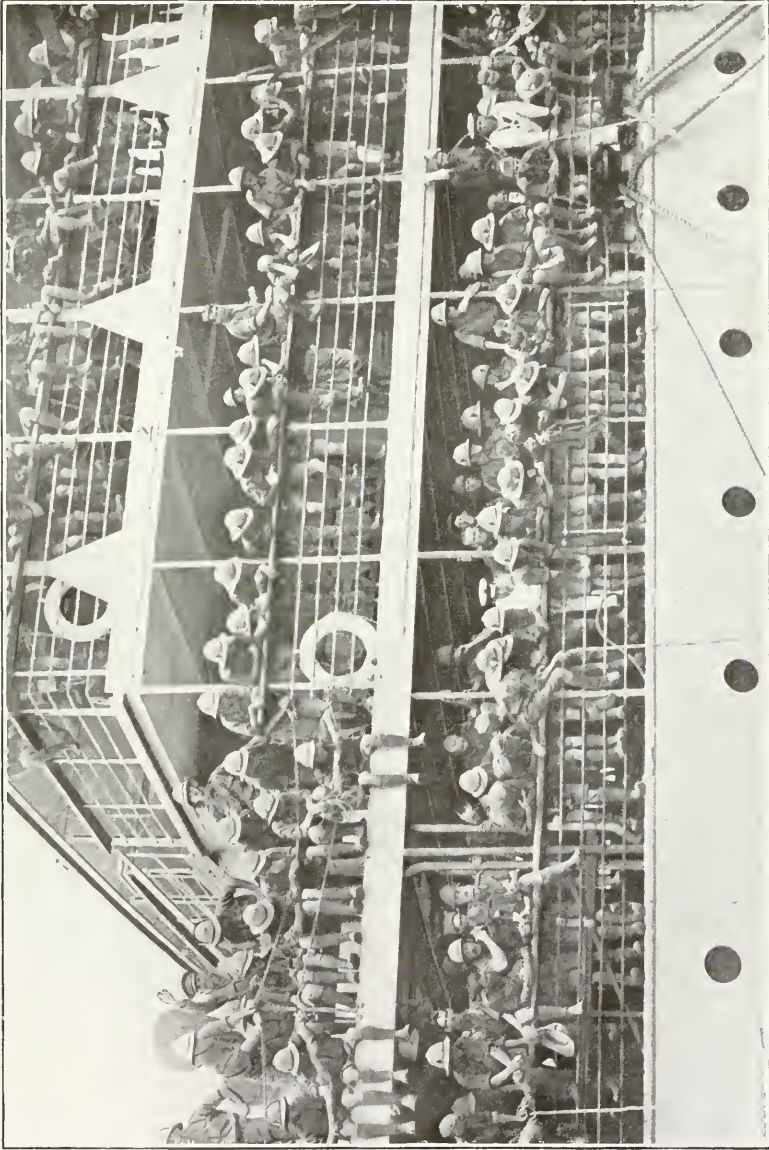
The *Laconia*, for the first two years of the war was also used as an armed cruiser, seeing special service on the German East African Coast, and taking part in the operations which ended in the destruction of the German cruiser *Konigsberg* in the Rufigi River. She was then taken out

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

of commission, and returned to the Company's transatlantic service. She was finally sunk by a German submarine on the 25th February, 1917, American lives being lost aboard her. There is no doubt that this was the "overt act" that helped to confirm the decision of America to enter the war on the side of the Allies.

It is safe to say that all these vessels maintained in their new naval roles, not only the best traditions of the Cunard Company itself, but those of the Mercantile Marine of which they had once been so distinguished a part, and the British Navy of which they became not the least useful and honourable units. To the *Carmania*, indeed, fell the singular honour of being the only British armed auxiliary cruiser to sink a German war vessel in single armed combat; and the five years war at sea produced few more kindling and romantic stories than that of her duel with the *Cap Trafalgar* in September, 1914, near Trinidad Island in the South Atlantic.

Leaving the Mersey, as we have seen, on Saturday, August 15th, she first went up the Irish Channel examining merchant vessels, on her way to the Halifax trade route; where she



SOUTH AFRICAN INFANTRY ON BOARD  
THE "LACONIA"





### *Combatant Cunarders*

was to carry out her first patrol duties. Having kept this track, however, for twenty-four hours without adventure, she received orders to sail for Bermuda, and on her way there seized the opportunity of dropping a target and carrying out some practice, firing which not only proved that her gun-layers were exceptionally skilful, but which gave all on board considerably greater confidence in the ship as a fighting unit. On the evening of August 22nd, she sighted the searchlights off St. George, Bermuda, and early next morning performed the difficult task of navigating a channel that no vessel of anything like her great size had ever before been through. Here for the next five days she coaled, while officers and men were able to obtain certain articles in the way of tropical clothing, that they had not had time to procure at Liverpool.

On August 29th she left the Bermudas, and on September 2nd passed through the Bocas del Dragos, at the mouth of the Gulf of Paria. Here, amidst scenery new and entrancing to many on board, she approached the Port of Spain, whence after a couple of days' coaling, she left to join Admiral Cradock's ill-fated squadron, which was

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

then searching the coast of Venezuela, and the mouths of its rivers, for the German cruisers *Dresden* and *Karlsruhe*. To this squadron she became attached about a week later, and soon received orders to investigate Trinidad Island in the South Atlantic. On September 11th, however, while on her way there, she received orders to try and intercept, in conjunction with the cruiser *Cornwall*, the German collier *Patagonia*, which was supposed to be leaving Pernambuco that night; but she was not found, and, as a matter of fact, did not sail for another three days, when she succeeded, in the absence of the *Cornwall*, in getting away. Before this, however, the *Carmania* had received orders to continue on her original mission, namely the examination of Trinidad Island, and she accordingly headed down for it. This is a small and lonely piece of land, about 500 miles distant from the South American coast, rising to a height of some 2,000 feet, and being only some 3 miles long by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles broad, but with a good anchorage on its south-west side. Though often sighted by sailing vessels homeward bound from Cape Horn, this island was well out of reach of any ordinary steamer,



THE "CARONIA" LEAVING  
DURBAN



### *Combatant Cunarders*

and was thus an extremely likely place for an enemy vessel desiring to coal in a convenient and unobserved position. Moreover, although both Great Britain and Brazil had at various times attempted to form small settlements there for the purpose of cultivating the castor oil plant indigenous to the island, these attempts had never been successful, and the island was uninhabited.

It was at nine in the morning of Monday, September 14th that the *Carmania* sighted the island ahead; and soon after 11 a.m. a large vessel was made out, lying on the island's westward side. It was a bright clear day, with a gentle north-easterly breeze blowing, and the mast of the unknown vessel showed distinctly above the horizon, two funnels becoming visible a little while later. It was at once concluded that she must be an enemy, since it was known that there were no British war vessels in the neighbourhood, and that no British merchant vessel was at all likely to be here. Her exact identity, however, remained a problem that was not to be solved, as it happened, until several days afterwards. The only enemy vessels that might possibly be in the neighbourhood according to the knowledge of those on board

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

the *Carmania*, were the *Karlsruhe*, with four funnels, the *Dresden* with three funnels, the *Kron Prinz Wilhelm* with four funnels, and the *Konig Wilhelm*, an armed merchant cruiser which had one funnel. Even had the funnels been altered it could not have been any of these, since the outlines of all these vessels were known to one and another of the experienced and widely travelled observers on board the *Carmania*, and this uncertainty added to the excitement of a peculiarly thrilling occasion. The sudden pouring out of smoke from the strange vessel's funnels showed at once that the *Carmania* had been sighted and that the enemy was getting up steam, while the position of the island added further to the thrilling possibilities of the situation.

It was true that there were no other vessels in sight, but the *Carmania* had approached so as to head for the middle of the island, in order that any observer who might be on the look out should be unable to tell on which side the armed cruiser meant to pass. This meant, however, that the greater part of the island's lee side was out of sight, and behind its shelter other enemy vessels such as the *Karlsruhe* or *Dresden*, might well be lying in



H.M.S. "MERSEY" ALONGSIDE THE "LACONIA,"  
OFF THE RUFIGI RIVER





### *Combatant Cunarders*

wait—the visible vessel merely acting as a decoy to the approaching Britisher. That other ships were indeed present, became manifest almost at once, as a smaller steamer, a cargo vessel, as it appeared, of about 1,800 tons, was now seen backing away from behind the enemy ship. This vessel at once began steaming away to the south-east, probably in order to discover whether or no the *Carmania* was accompanied by consorts at present hidden by the land. There were also to add to the anxiety of the *Carmania's* commanding officer, two more masts appearing above the side of the unidentified ship that obviously belonged to a vessel still out of sight. Fortunately, however, this proved to be only another small cargo boat, who very soon detached herself and steamed away to the north-west.

This left them up to the present only the one big vessel as an opponent, a vessel of some 18,500 tons, and an armed cruiser like the *Carmania*. It promised, therefore, as regards numbers at least, to be an equal fight, and in preparation for it dinner was ordered for all hands that could be excused duty, for the hour of 11.30, in accordance with the old naval principle—food

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

before fighting. Meanwhile every endeavour was being made to identify the mysterious enemy, and the conclusion arrived at was that she must be the *Berlin*, a German vessel of 17 knots. She was, as a matter of fact, although those on the *Carmania* were not to learn this for several days, the *Cap Trafalgar*, the latest and finest ship of the Hamburg South American Line—a vessel of 18 knots that had as yet only made one voyage. She had been built with three funnels, one of them being a dummy one used only for ventilation, and this had been done away with, reducing the number to two. She had been in Buenos Aires when war broke out, and had left that port, as it chanced on the very day that the *Carmania* had sailed from Liverpool, her destination being unknown and her cargo one of coal.

The *Carmania* had by this time gone to “General Quarters,” and all on board were ready for the encounter. The largest ensigns floated both from the flagstaff aft and the mastheads, and the *Cap Trafalgar* now ran up the white flag with the black cross of the German Navy. It was still, however, not quite certain that the enemy was armed, and it was therefore necessary that



TORPEDOING OF THE  
"IVERNIA"



### *Combatant Cunarders*

the usual formalities should be attended to. Well within range, Captain Grant ordered Lieutenant Murchie to fire a shot across her bow, and the shell, very skilfully aimed, dropped about 50 yards ahead of this. The reply was immediate, the enemy firing two shells which only just cleared the *Carmania's* bridge, and dropped into the water about 50 yards upon her starboard side.

The fight had now begun in earnest, and the firing on both sides was of a high order, although the first round or two from the *Carmania* fell short, while those of the *Cap Trafalgar* erred a little in the opposite direction. Quite soon, however, hits were being made by both sides, and soon one of the *Carmania's* gun layers lay dead, his No. 2 dying, and almost the whole of the gun's crew wounded.

For the first few minutes of the duel, only three of the *Carmania's* guns could be brought to bear, but soon by porting a little she was able to bring another gun into action, and some very successful salvos at once followed. The British gun-layers, firing as coolly as if they had been at practice, were now hitting with nearly every shot, and the vessels were closing one another rapidly,

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

when at about 5,500 yards the new and sinister sound of machine-gun firing began to thread the din of the bursting shells. By this time a well placed enemy shell had carried away the *Carmania's* control, so that it was no longer possible for ranges to be given from the bridge to the guns by telephone, and it was evidently the *Cap Trafalgar's* intention to disable the bridge entirely, shell after shell hitting its neighbourhood, or only just missing it. It was at once clear to those on board that if the enemy's machine-gun could now get the range, the guns and ammunition parties on the unprotected decks of the *Carmania* would be inevitably mown down. The order was therefore given to port, and the *Carmania* wore away in order to increase the range. This brought the enemy astern and another of the *Carmania's* guns into action, and for a brief moment she had five guns bearing upon the *Cap Trafalgar*. Still porting, however, the guns on that side ceased to fire, and the turn came for the starboard gunners to take their hand. The enemy now also ported, and as she did so, it became clear that she was visibly listing to starboard; she had already been set on fire foreward, but this fire seemed to have been extinguished.



THE "CARMANIA" APPROACHING TRINIDAD  
(“Cap Trafalgar” to the right)



ONE OF THE "CARMANIA'S" GUNS





### *Combatant Cunarders*

The *Carmania's* gunners, on the soundest principles, were steadily aiming at the *Cap Trafalgar's* water line, and there was no doubt that as a result of this policy she was already beginning rapidly to make water. It was by no means, however, the case of the honours resting with one side entirely, and the enemy was constantly registering hits on the *Carmania's* masts, ventilators boats, and derricks, and it is an amazing fact, considering that at one time the range was not more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, that her casualties should have been so few. The *Carmania's* gunners were now firing so fast that the paint was blistering off the guns, and at the same time she herself was on fire to an extent that might have proved very serious. The main pipes having been shot away, no water could be got through the hose pipes and brought to play upon this fire, and reliance had therefore to be placed upon water buckets handled under the most difficult conditions of smoke and heat.

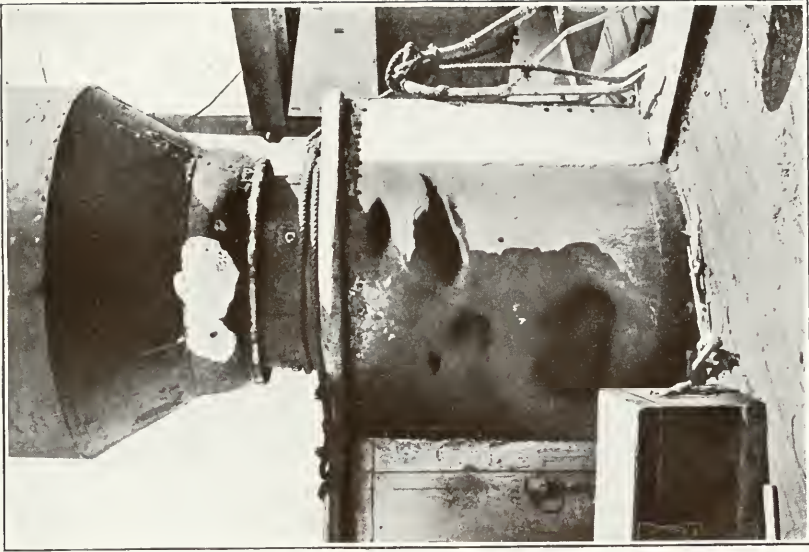
It was now evident that the *Carmania's* bridge would in a very short time be untenable, and her Captain therefore ordered the control to be changed to the aft steering position, and this was accordingly

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

done, the enemy being kept at about the same bearing. The bridge was now well alight, and the flames were licking upward with increasing ferocity. The port side of the main rigging was hanging in festoons from the only remaining shroud. The wireless gear had been shot away in the first moment of the action. Many of the ventilator cowls were in ribbons, and a large hole yawned in the port side of the aft deck.

Battered as she was, however, it was now clear that the *Cap Trafalgar* was in a far worse case. She was listing heavily, and her firing, though still rapid, was becoming wild. She was badly on fire, and almost wholly wrapped in smoke. Suddenly she turned abruptly to port and headed back for the island, leaning right over with silent guns, and already beginning to get her boats out.

Upon this all the *Carmania's* hands, except the gun layers, were employed in trying to extinguish the fire. Bucket gangs were formed, and at last a lead of water was arranged from the ship's own fire main once more. It was, of course, hopeless now to attempt to save the bridge and the boat deck cabins, but there was still a hope of preventing the fire from spreading, and



AFTER THE FIGHT



"ABANDON SHIP" DRILL AT SEA



### *Combatant Cunarders*

in order to stop the draught the engines were slowed down. It was a fierce task, and one that demanded every energy on the part of all on board, but it was one in which they were encouraged, as they toiled and sweated, by the sight of their heeling enemy, from whose sides half a dozen boats had already cleared, pulling towards one of her smaller colliers who was standing about 3 miles away.

More and more the big liner fell over until at last her funnels lay upon the water, and then, after a moment's apparent hesitation, with her bow submerged, she heaved herself upright and sank bodily. It had been a good fight and she had fought honourably to the end and gone down with her ensign flying, and when, as she vanished, the men of the *Carmania* raised a cheer, it was hardly less for their own victory than as a tribute to the enemy.

By now, thanks to their unremitting exertions, the crew of the *Carmania* had overcome the fire, but a new danger was already reported and necessitated prompt action on the part of her Commander. Smoke had been reported on the northern horizon, and soon afterwards four funnels

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

appeared, the new comer being undoubtedly another enemy, probably summoned by wireless by the *Cap Trafalgar*. Crippled as she was, and with nearly a quarter of her guns' crews and ammunition supply parties either killed or injured, it would have been the sheerest madness for the *Carmania* to risk another action at that moment, and she accordingly increased her speed, shaping a course to the south-west, and steering by sun and wind, until she could assemble what was left of her shattered navigating gear. Afterwards it was learned that the enemy sighted was the *Kron Prinz Wilhelm*, who, on learning by wireless of the *Cap Trafalgar's* fate, decided that discretion was the better part of valour and did not approach any nearer.

During the night the *Carmania* succeeded in getting into touch with the cruiser *Bristol*, with whom she arranged a rendezvous for the next morning, and under whose care, and afterwards that of the *Cornwall*, she came to anchor near the Abrolhos Rocks at eight o'clock on the morning of the day after. Here, with the aid of the *Cornwall's* engineers, the worst of her holes were patched up, and with what navigating gear she

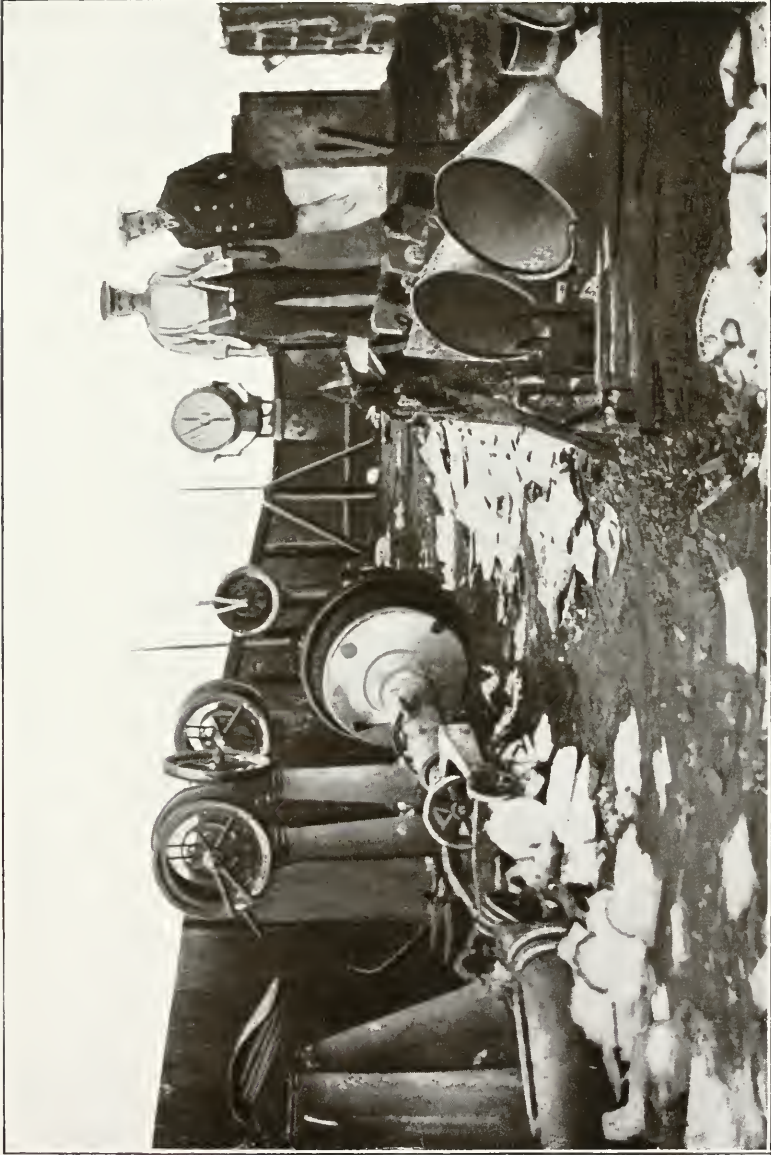


CHART-HOUSE AND BRIDGE OF THE "CARMANIA"  
AFTER THE FIGHT





### *Combatant Cunarders*

could borrow, and in company with the *Macedonia*, the *Carmania* set out for Gibraltar at 6 p.m. on September 17th. Well did she deserve, as she did so, the hearty cheers of the *Cornwall*, and the two accompanying colliers, and those of the old battleship *Canopus* whom she passed early on the morning of the 19th.

She arrived at Pernambuco on the same afternoon, leaving there Captain Grant's despatches for the Admiralty, and reached Gibraltar nine days later. Her re-fitting took several months, but she remained as an armed cruiser until May, 1916, when she was again restored to the Cunard Company's service. Her casualties in this brilliant action amounted to nine killed or dying of wounds, and four severely and twenty-two slightly wounded. There were no Cunarders among the casualties. Besides other honours conferred upon participants in this fight, his Majesty the King decorated Captain Barr with the well deserved Companionship of the Bath, in recognition of his splendid services in what was to prove a unique action of the war at sea.

Twelve months later, on September 15th, 1919, there was an interesting sequel on board the

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

*Carmania*, which had then returned to the Cunard Company's service. A piece of plate which belonged to Lord Nelson, and was with him at Trafalgar, was presented to the ship in commemoration of her very gallant fight. Twenty-four of these pieces of plate came into the possession of the Navy League who asked the Admiralty to allocate them to various ships. The *Carmania* was the only merchant vessel to receive this honour. In notifying the Company of the presentation, the General Secretary of the Navy League stated that "the Navy League realises that while every unit of the fleet has rendered service in accordance with the best traditions of the Royal Navy, *H.M.S. Carmania* has been able to render herself conspicuous amongst her gallant comrades, and in accepting this souvenir, the Navy League trusts that you will recognise it as an expression of gratitude to the glorious fleet of which that ship was so distinguished a representative."

The veteran Admiral, the Hon. E. R. Fremantle who was present, stated that there never was a single ship action which reflected greater credit, both on the R.N. and on the Mercantile Marine, and more especially on the R.N.R. It had very aptly



“CARMANIA” SINKING  
“CAP TRAFALGAR”



### *Combatant Cunarders*

been compared with the fight of the *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake*.

Captain Grant was unfortunately unable to be present, but in a letter read at the function he claimed that "this action was the only one throughout the war in which an equal, or as a matter of fact, a slightly inferior vessel annihilated the superior force. . . . . I shall always feel proud of the fact that it was my great good fortune to command a ship in action in which the glorious traditions of the British Navy were upheld by every soul on board."

Captain Barr, who retired from the Company's service in 1917, said that the Captain of the *Cap Trafalgar* put up a very gallant fight. "I do not know his name," he said, "but he is the only German I would care to meet."

## CHAPTER III

# Carrying On

*The lofty liners in their pride  
Stem every current, every tide :  
At anchor in all ports they ride.*

*The menace of the berg and floe,  
The blindness of the fog and snow.  
All these the English seamen know.*

*And still they calmly jog along  
By Bay and Cape, an endless throng.  
As endless as some dog-watch song.*

MORLEY ROBERTS.

WE have confined ourselves so far to the adventures of the Cunard vessels that were used in the early stages of the war for purely combatant purposes. They were, as has been seen, merely a small, though important, fraction of the whole fleet, and indeed the distinction that we have drawn is a somewhat difficult one to maintain. Thus, from acting, as we have shewn, as purely combatant cruisers, the *Aquitania*, *Caronia*, *Laconia* and *Carmania* passed to different and even more valuable work ; and at the same time many other



THE "LACONIA" AT DURBAN



FINAL OF THE S.A.I. HEAVY-WEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP  
ON THE "LACONIA"





### *Carrying On*

Cunard vessels were upon the outbreak of war withdrawn from their usual avocation for more or less militant purposes. We find the *Mauretania*, for example, originally intended for employment as an armed cruiser, converted into a troopship in 1915, and from this into a Hospital Ship in 1916, while in 1917 she again became a Transport, fitted with 6-in. guns. In all these capacities she did magnificent work, not without imminent risk of destruction, and it was only by the brilliant seamanship of Commander Dow, one of the Cunard Company's oldest and most trusted skippers, that she escaped being sunk while plying between England and Mudros, in her role of Troopship. Attacked by a submarine, Commander Dow noticed the wake of the approaching torpedo on his starboard bow, and immediately ordering the helm to be flung hard aport the torpedo was missed by not more than 5 feet, the *Mauretania's* great speed fortunately thereafter placing her beyond range of the enemy.

The *Franconia* and *Alaunia* were also employed in carrying troops from September, 1914, onwards until both of them were sunk, curiously enough within a few days of one another in October, 1916.

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

During this period they carried troops not only from Canada to England, but made several voyages to India and various parts of the Mediterranean. It was while she was on her way from Alexandria to Salonica, though fortunately after she had disembarked 2,700 soldiers, that the *Franconia* (Captain D. S. Miller), was torpedoed, about 200 miles N.E. of Malta. Twelve of her crew were killed by the explosion. The ship sank fifty minutes after she was hit, the survivors being picked up by H.M. Hospital Ship *Dover Castle*, whose R.A.M.C. Surgeon, Dr. J. D. Doherty chanced himself to be one of the Cunard Company's Medical Officers. The *Alaunia*, again, as it happened, having landed her passengers and mails at Falmouth, after a voyage from New York, was torpedoed on her way to London, about two miles south of the Royal Sovereign Light Vessel. Captain H. M. Benison, in command, hoped to beach the ship, but unfortunately the water gained too rapidly, and the necessary tugs did not arrive in time. Two members of the crew were found to be missing, probably as the result of the explosion, the rest being saved by patrol boats and destroyers and the *Alaunia's* own lifeboats.



PLATE FROM LINA NELSON'S GREEN SERVICE, PRESENTED BY THE NAVY BOARD IN RECOGNITION OF  
THE GREAT SERVICES RENDERED BY H.M.S. CARMANIA DURING THE WORLD-WAR, 1914-1918.

THE NELSON PLATE PRESENTED  
TO THE "CARMANIA"



### *Carrying On*

The *Andania*, *Ascania*, *Ivernia*, and *Saxonia*, were all for several months used as prison ships in 1915, each of them providing accommodation for nearly 2,000 German prisoners. They were afterwards employed as Transports, both to India and the Mediterranean, the *Ivernia*, *Ascania* and *Andania*, in the end, all being sunk by enemy submarines. These losses represented a heavy sacrifice by the Company, particularly in view of the post-war needs of navigation.

It was on January 27th, 1918, that the *Andania* was torpedoed without warning, having sailed the day previously from Liverpool, *via* the North of Ireland, with 51 passengers and mails. Captain J. Marshall, in command, immediately ordered her boats to be lowered with the result that within a quarter of an hour all the passengers and crew were clear of the ship, except the Captain himself, the Chief, First, Second and Third Officers, who made a special request to the Captain to be allowed to remain on board. The manner in which the boats were thus speedily lowered and filled and navigated to positions of safety was an evolution which reflected favourably on the organisation of the ship. Captain Marshall then made an examination

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

of the ship and called for volunteers from the nearest boat. The response was immediate and unanimous, and the Chief Engineer, Purser, Wireless Operator, and two Stewards, with two Able Seamen at once returned on board with a fine carelessness to their own safety and rendered valuable assistance in getting out hawsers forward and aft. At half-past two, these men were again ordered to leave the vessel, and, with the occupants of the other boats, were picked up by patrols. Captain Marshall himself and his Chief Officer (Mr. Murdoch) boarded a drifter and stood by the *Andania* until 4 o'clock in the evening, when they again returned on board to make her fast to a tug which had just arrived, still entertaining the hope that it might be possible to save her. Unhappily their efforts were of no avail, the vessel sinking about half-past seven. Seven lives were unfortunately lost, probably as the result of the explosion.

On the morning of the 28th December, 1916, the *Ivernia* left Marseilles with a crew of 213, 94 officers and 1,950 troops. Shortly after her departure from Marseilles Captain Turner received orders to proceed 11 miles south of Damietta



CREW LEAVING THE "FRANCONIA"  
AFTER SHE WAS TORPEDOED





### *Carrying On*

(Malta), but prior to altering course he received further orders to proceed north of Gozo Island (Malta), where the *Ivernia's* escort, *H.M.S. Camelia* (Destroyer), was relieved by *H.M.S. Rifleman* (Destroyer). On approaching the Adriatic, Captain Turner was instructed not to pass through the danger zone in daylight. As the *Ivernia* was proceeding she received a signal from the escort that permission had been requested and granted from the Admiralty at Malta to proceed through the danger zone at daybreak.

There was a fresh breeze which accounted for a heavy swell, the morning sun was shining brightly on the starboard side, when Captain Turner observed the wake of a torpedo approaching his vessel, too late to enable him to do anything to avoid it. The torpedo struck the *Ivernia* on the starboard side, abreast the funnel, and consequently rendered the engines out of commission, owing to the bursting of the steam pipe, by the explosion. This explosion accounted for the loss of 13 stewards and 9 firemen.

Fortunately, at the time, all troops were mustered on deck and were standing by boat stations. The boats were immediately lowered clear of the water.

## *A Merchant Fleet at War*

The destroyer *Rifleman* immediately manœuvred for the purpose of locating the submarine, by which time several of the *Ivernia's* boats were in the water. At this juncture an unfortunate incident occurred. The destroyer dashed by the port quarter at full speed without having an opportunity of avoiding a collision with the ship's lifeboat, containing Chief Engineer Wilson and Dr. Parker, among other members of the crew, the boat sinking immediately. Dr. Parker was picked up but died almost immediately from injuries received. Chief Engineer Wilson was not seen.

Two steam trawlers came alongside the *Ivernia*, after the destroyer had left with 600 survivors on board, which took the remainder of the Military and Crew, which apparently left only Captain Turner and Second Officer Leggett remaining on board. The Second Officer, however, went round the decks and discovered a soldier on the after deck who had sustained a broken thigh. Two soldiers were immediately ordered aboard for the purpose of assisting in strapping a board to the man's damaged thigh, he being eventually lowered on to one of the trawlers by means of a bowline, where he was placed in charge of the R.A.M.C.



TORPEDOING OF THE  
"AUSONIA"



## *Carrying On*

The Second Officer then went aboard the trawler, later followed by Captain Turner, who first of all made sure that the vessel was sinking.

The trawlers then cruised around among the boats and wreckage picking up survivors.

One of the trawlers unfortunately became disabled owing to the ropes fouling her propellers, which necessitated her being towed by the other.

The trawlers proceeded to Crete, where the survivors were billeted for 14 days, after which time they were taken on board the P. & O. s.s. *Kalyan* and conveyed to Marseilles, from which port they were sent overland to England.

The *Ausonia* was another of the fine Cunard vessels which the enemy succeeded in destroying. In February, 1915, she had taken over 2,000 refugees from Belgium to La Pallice, being afterwards employed as a Troopship from February to May, 1916, working to Mediterranean and Indian ports. She was then returned to the Cunard Company's service, and was sunk on the 30th of May, 1918. Once before, this ship had been struck by a torpedo, off the south coast of Ireland, in June, 1917, while on a voyage from Montreal to Avonmouth. In this case she was fortunately

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

salved, and her valuable cargo of food stuffs safely discharged. On the second occasion, while sailing from Liverpool, she was less fortunate. The *Ausonia* was some 600 miles west of the Irish coast at 5 p.m. on May 30th, when a torpedo struck her, causing a terrific explosion. As her Commander, Captain R. Capper, afterwards said, he saw rafts, ventilators, ladders, and all kinds of wreckage coming down as if from the sky, falling round the after part of the ship. Captain Capper who, at the moment, was at the entrance of his cabin, at once went to the bridge, put the telegraph to 'Stop'—'Full Speed Astern' but received no reply from the Engine Room. All hands were at once ordered to their boat stations, and the wireless operator tapped out the ship's position on his auxiliary gear. Ten boats were lowered, and, within a quarter of an hour after the ship was struck, they had safely left her. When about a quarter of a mile astern, Captain Capper mustered them together and called the roll. It was then discovered that eight stewards were missing, having been at tea in a room immediately above the part of the ship struck by the torpedo.



SCENE ON BOARD AFTER THE TORPEDOING  
OF THE "IVERNIA" (i)





### *Carrying On*

Half an hour after the vessel was torpedoed, a periscope was sighted on the port bow, and an enemy submarine came to the surface and fired about 40 shells at the ship, some of these dropping within fifty yards of the boats. After the *Ausonia* had sunk, the submarine approached the boats, and Captain Capper, who was at the oars was ordered to come alongside. Upon the submarine's deck several of her crew were lounging, laughing and jeering at the shipwrecked survivors. After enquiring as to the *Ausonia's* cargo, the submarine commander ordered the boats to steer in a north-easterly direction; in callous disregard of the peril which confronted the *Ausonia's* crew the submarine herself then made off northwards.

Captain Capper gave orders to the officers in charge of the boats that they were to keep together, and endeavour to get into the track of convoys, the weather being fine at the time. Until midnight the boats were successful in remaining in each other's company, but the wind, having risen in the night, two boats, one of them in charge of the first officer, and the other in charge of the boatswain were, on the following morning, not to be seen. Captain Capper had

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

assembled the survivors in seven boats, and he now gave orders to the remaining five that they should make themselves fast together. In this formation, they continued throughout the following day and night, when the ropes began to part. They were also retarding progress and were therefore cast off, the boats, however, still continuing to remain pretty well together.

On Sunday, January 2nd, to add to the misery of their occupants, the weather became bad, heavy rain falling and soaking them all to the skin. On Monday and Tuesday, conditions improved a little, but on Wednesday a storm broke, and by mid-day a heavy sea was running, and a gale blowing from the north-west. The boats were now running before this, with great seas breaking over them and saturating everybody on board. These conditions continued until Friday the 7th, when land was at last sighted, turning out to be Bull Rock. A wise and strict rationing had been enforced, only two biscuits a day and one ounce of water having been allowed for the first two days, and one biscuit and a half and four tablespoons of water the subsequent ration. The crew were approaching the extremities of exhaustion when



SCENE ON BOARD AFTER THE TORPEDOING  
OF THE "IVERNIA" (ii)



### *Carrying On*

hope of deliverance was awakened in them. Fortunately, on sighting land, the wind fell a little, but it was another fifteen hours before the unhappy survivors were picked up by H.M.S. *Zennia*, an American Destroyer also assisting. Captain Capper's boat had only 25 biscuits left together with half a bucketful of water—but one day's meagre supply when the terrible ordeal ended. The little boats, it was calculated, had covered 900 miles since the *Ausonia* disappeared before their eyes. Under these conditions the conduct of the Cunarder's crew was of the highest order, that of the stewardess, Mrs. Edgar, of Orrell Park, Aintree, the only woman on board the vessel, being particularly courageous.

Special mention must also be made of the butcher's boy, Robinson. At the moment of the explosion, together with the pantry boy, Lister, he was in one of the cooling chambers, and the explosion made it impossible for the two boys to get out. Robinson had several wounds on his hips and thighs, and his left arm was lacerated. Both boys, in addition, had both legs broken above the ankle. Robinson, however, managed to crawl out on both his hands and knees and

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

secure a board and place it across the gaping hole in the deck, thus enabling Lister also to reach a place of comparative safety. The two boys then crawled on hands and knees up two sets of ladders to the boat deck, and were placed in the boats. The doctor attended to the boy Robinson's injuries, as far as was possible, but it was not for 30 hours that Captain Capper was able to transfer him to the boat in which Lister was lying, so that he also might receive medical aid. In spite of their experiences and injuries, both boys remained calm and cheerful, and indeed in high spirits, but it is sad to record that Robinson subsequently succumbed in hospital, as the result of his injuries.

More, however, to Captain Capper than to any one man, was the salvation of the five boat loads due, and it was in recognition of his dogged determination and splendid seamanship that his Majesty the King afterwards bestowed upon him the Distinguished Service Cross.

The *Ultonia*, in August, 1914, was the means by which some of the old "Contemptibles" were brought from Malta to England, and she then proceeded to India with Territorial troops. She



THE TORPEDOING OF THE "IVERNIA":  
SURVIVORS AFLOAT ON RAFT





### *Carrying On*

was subsequently returned to the Company's Service and was finally sunk in June, 1917. She was at this time eastward bound, and about 350 miles west from Land's End. She disappeared in ten minutes, so deadly was the blow she received. Fortunately, she was at the time, being escorted by one of the "Q" boats, by whom her crew was picked up and safely landed the next day at Falmouth, one man unfortunately being killed during the operation of leaving the ship. Captain J. Marshall was in command.

Meanwhile, with their ordinary carrying power thus depleted, the Cunard management had been looking about for reinforcements, and had entered into negotiations with certain other lines for additional vessels. Thus they took over from the Canadian Northern Steamship Company (The Royal Line and The Uranium Steamship Company), the *Royal George*, and three other vessels, which they re-christened respectively the *Folia*, *Feltria*, and *Flavia*. They also purchased five additional vessels which they re-christened the *Vinovia*, *Valeria*, *Volodia*, *Valacia*, and *Vandalia*.

Now during the years 1915 and 1916, merchant shipping, apart from those ships especially chartered

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

by the Government, continued under the direction of its various owners. In 1917, however, the Liner Requisitioning Scheme, came into being, and a Shipping Controller was appointed.

Under this scheme all British shipping came under the control of the Government, the object being, in view of the shortage of tonnage caused by the depredations of the submarines, to confine steamers to those trades necessary for providing the Allies with the essential foodstuffs and munitions of war. The greatest percentage of these had, of course, to be obtained from America, and in consequence many steamers which had been trading to other parts of the world, were diverted to the North Atlantic, and placed under the management of the Companies already established on these particular routes. The owners of these transferred steamers were given permission to allot their ships to any of the lines so established, and it came about that the Cunard Company, in addition to their own ships, had the management of a large number of vessels thus diverted. It is estimated, in fact, that the number of additional steamers so handled by the Company, amounted to more than 400. In addition to this, the Company



TORPEDOING OF THE  
"LUSITANIA"



## *Carrying On*

managed several prize steamers captured from the enemy and neutral steamers that had been placed at the disposal of the Allies, and it thus happened that the Cunard management found itself in charge of vessels from the Indian, China, South African, and Australian trades, assembled from the ends of the earth in this vital emergency.

Some idea of the magnitude of the work thus carried upon the shoulders of the Cunard management may be gathered from the facts that in one year alone not less than 200 sailings were made from American and Canadian ports, and that over 10,000 tons of cargo were often carried in one steamer.

With the entrance of America into the war, the carrying problem became at once more complicated and greater in bulk; and in its solution the Cunard Company may once more justly be said to have played a major part. Let us consider first its work in the carriage of troops. The Cunard organisation was responsible for the transport during the war of over 900,000 officers and men. This excludes the big total repatriated after the Armistice was signed. When it is remembered that this aggregate is greater than

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

the total population of either Liverpool, Manchester or Birmingham; that 900,000 men, marching in column of route in sections of fours would take, without halting, nearly six days to pass a single point, it becomes possible to visualise the immensity of the task represented by these bald figures. When it is further remembered that the total British Expeditionary Force first thrown across the English Channel in August, 1914, was only 80,000; that this was less than one-tenth of the number carried during the war by the Cunard Company; and that the number so carried was equal to not less than one-eighth of the whole British Army at its greatest strength, the nation's debt to this great Company can be estimated.

Nor was the mere provisioning of these troops while *en route* a negligible feat of transport. Taking an average voyage as ten days, the food required to feed this number of men amounted to no less than 9,750,000 pounds of meat, 11,250,000 pounds of potatoes, 4,500,000 pounds of vegetables, 9,575,000 loaves of bread, 1,275,000 pounds of jam, 900,000 pounds of tea and coffee, and among other things 900,000 pounds of oatmeal, 600,000 pounds of butter and 127,000 gallons of milk.



THE TORPEDOING OF THE "IVERNIA":  
SURVIVORS BEING TAKEN IN ONE OF THE BOATS





### *Carrying On*

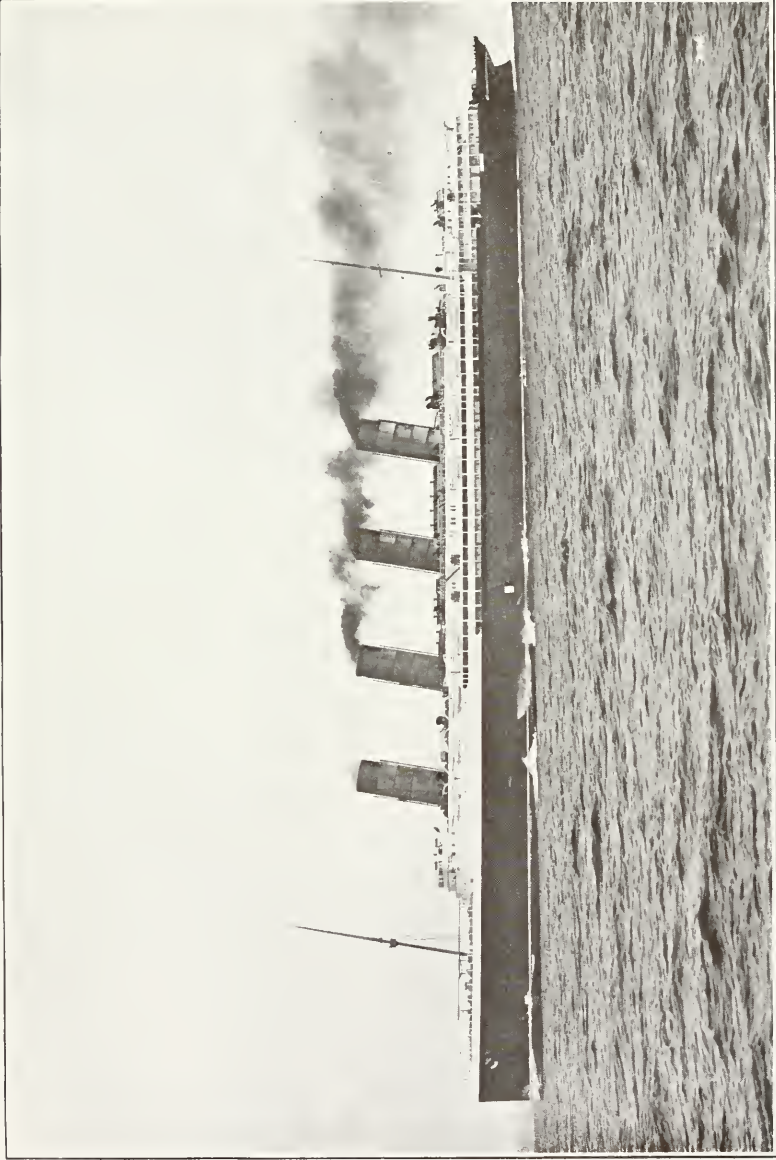
Vast as these figures are, however, they are dwarfed when we begin to consider what was accomplished during the five years of war in the way of cargo carrying—in the humdrum performance of an unadvertised and often little appreciated service, upon which, fundamentally, our whole war structure rested. Between August, 1914, and November, 1918, 7,314,000 tons of foodstuffs, munitions of war, and general cargo were carried from America and Canada to the British Isles; over 340,000 tons from the British Isles to Italy and the Adriatic; over 500,000 tons from the British Isles to other Mediterranean Ports; nearly 320,000 tons from this country to France; and nearly 60,000 tons from France to this country. In addition to this, huge quantities were also carried westwards from this country, amounting to a total, in the same period, of more than 1,000,000 tons.

Not the least important service rendered in this way was connected with the supply of oil fuel, of which the stocks in this country were seriously depleted—so seriously that at one time they were insufficient to supply the needs of the Navy for more than a few weeks ahead. In this

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predicament the Admiralty, realizing the danger, approached Sir Alfred Booth, Chairman of the Cunard Company, and asked him to put the matter before other leading ship-owners. He readily consented to do so, and all owners running ships in the North Atlantic, at once agreed to take the necessary steps to allow of oil being carried in the double bottoms of their ships, the Cunard Company themselves adapting for this purpose the double bottoms of the *Andania*, *Carmania*, *Carpathia*, *Pannonia*, *Saxonia*, *Valacia*, *Vandalia*, *Valeria*, and *Vinovia*, each of which brought on each voyage to this country, about 2,000 tons of oil. The Cunard Company alone, in a little over a year, thus brought over 100,000 tons of oil across the Atlantic.

During all this time, of course, it must be remembered that the Cunard Company, as throughout the war, plied in a zone particularly exposed to hostile attack by enemy raiders and submarines; and as we have already shown, and shall show again, a very heavy toll of their vessels was taken by hostile torpedoes. How greatly the Cunard steamers were concentrated upon dangerous routes will be seen on reference to



THE "LUSITANIA"



### *Carrying On*

the map,\* which indicates the most important services of Cunard Steamers during the war. Finally, let it be stated that from August, 1914 to November, 1918, without taking into account such outside steamers as were working under the Cunard Company's direction, its own steamers steamed not less than 3,313,576 miles, with a consumption of 1,785,000 tons of coal. This distance is equivalent to the circum-navigation of the world no less than 132 times.

\* This map will be found in the inside front cover of the book.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Ordeal of the *Lusitania*

*Oh, have you ever seen a foundered horse,  
His great heart broken by a task too great  
For his endurance, but unbroken yet  
His spirit—striving to complete his course,  
Failing at last, eyes glazed and nostril wide,  
And have not ached with pity? Pity now  
A brave ship shattered by a coward blow  
That once had spurned the waters in her pride.*

N. N. F. CORBETT.

WITH the subsequent progress in infamy of Germany's submarine campaign it was natural that the sensibilities of the civilised world, so shocked by the ruthless sinking of the *Lusitania*, should have become somewhat dulled. But it is clear, in retrospect, that this tragic event marked an epoch in the slow gathering of the non-combatant world's condemnation. Upon the general events preceding the loss of this world-famous vessel, this is not, perhaps, the place to dwell. It will be remembered however, that from February 18th, 1915, the German Government announced that it proposed to consider the waters round Great Britain and



THE "MAURETANIA" AS A HOSPITAL SHIP, OFF NAPLES HARBOUR  
(The "Mauretania" was a sister ship of the "Lusitania")





## *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

Ireland and the entire English Channel as what they described as a "War Zone," stating that they would "endeavour to destroy every merchant ship found in this area of war, without its always being possible to avert the peril that thus threatens persons and cargoes."

To this the British Government issued a reply on the following March 1st, that the German announcement was in fact a claim to torpedo at sight, regardless of the safety both of the crew or passengers, any merchant vessel under any flag. The British Government proceeded to remind Germany and the world, that by all the accepted traditions of the sea, and under the terms of international law, it was the duty of an enemy vessel to bring a captured ship to a Prize Court, where all the circumstances of the case could be impartially investigated, and where neutrals might recover their cargoes. The sinking of prizes was therefore, as the British Government pointed out, always a questionable proceeding, and could only be justified in exceptional circumstances, and after full provision had been made for crews and passengers. The legal responsibility of verifying the status of any vessel always rested with the

## *A Merchant Fleet at War*

attacking ship, while the obligations of humanity required adequate provision to be made for the safety of all crews and passengers of merchant vessels, whether enemy or neutral.

It is now both common and tragic knowledge that these protests, as well as all the canons, so long established, of sea chivalry, were entirely ignored by the German Government, and it was on May 7th, 1915, that this became finally and startlingly clear to every intelligent observer in the civilised world. That the German Government possessed any special spite towards the *Lusitania* may not perhaps have been the case, but, as we have seen, it was by means of the *Lusitania* and her sister ship the *Mauretania* that the "blue ribbon" of the Atlantic, in the matter of speed, had been wrested from German hands.

Built in 1907 for the Cunard Company by Messrs. John Brown & Co., of Clyde Bank, she had been constructed under Admiralty Survey, and in accordance with Admiralty requirements, and was classed 100 A1. at Lloyds. Built throughout of steel, she had a cellular double bottom, with a floor at every frame, the depth of this on the centre line being 60 inches, and



“PURYGIA” SINKING A  
SUBMARINE



## *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

72 inches where it supported the turbine machinery. This double bottom extended up the ship's side to a height of eight feet above the keel. All her decks were steel plated throughout, and the transverse strength of the ship was largely dependent on the 12 transverse water-tight bulkheads which had been purposely strengthened and stiffened to enable her to stand the necessary pressure in the event of accident. Inside her hull was a second "skin," running the whole length of her vital parts, so that she was virtually a ship within a ship.

Her length all over was 785 feet. She was 88 feet in breadth, and nearly 60 feet in depth, with a gross tonnage of over 30,000 tons, and a load draft of 36 feet. Including the hold she had nine decks, with accommodation for 523 first class, 295 second class, and 1,300 third class passengers, together with a crew of about 800. She had turbine engines of 63,220 horse power, four for ahead and two for astern motion, and her speed in 1914 was from  $24\frac{1}{2}$  to 25 knots. Her four great funnels rose to a height of 154 feet above the keel, and the diameter of each being not less than 24 feet. Her masts were 210 feet high, while the navigating bridge stood 110 feet above

## *A Merchant Fleet at War*

the keel. At a moderate estimate, the cost of running her to New York and back, including wages, victualling and fuel, was in 1914 about £30,000, and she was operated, under the terms of the agreement with the Admiralty, by a crew of which at least three-quarters had to be British subjects.

She was provided with boat accommodation for 2,605 persons, the number of persons on board during her last voyage being 1,959. She carried 48 life-boats, 22 of which were ordinary boats hanging from davits, with a total carrying capacity of 1,323. The remaining 26 were collapsible boats, with a total carrying capacity of 1,282. In addition, the ship was provided with 2,325 life jackets and 35 lifebuoys, all of these being conveniently distributed on board.

Now at the beginning of the war it had been a very difficult question for the directors of the Cunard Company to decide as to whether the transatlantic traffic, under the new and unprecedented conditions, would be sufficient to justify the continued running of two such large and costly vessels as the *Lusitania* and the *Mauretania*. It was decided, however, after much consideration,



THE "ALAUNIA" AS AN EMERGENCY  
HOSPITAL SHIP





### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

that the *Lusitania* could be run once a month, providing that her boiler power was reduced by one-fourth. The consequent saving in coal and labour of this would, the Directors considered, enable them to run the vessel without loss, although with no hopes of making a profit. Six of the *Lusitania's* boilers were accordingly closed, and the ship began to run in these conditions in November, 1914, the effect of the closing of the six boilers being to reduce her maximum speed to 21 knots. It is to be noted, however, that this reduction still left the *Lusitania* very considerably faster than any other transatlantic steamer.

Nor had she lacked in exciting experiences before the fatal 1st of May, 1915, on which she left New York for the last time. On the very day that war was declared in 1914, she had started from New York for Liverpool, under the command of Captain Daniel Dow, one of the best-known and most respected figures in the Cunard Company's service, who retired after 43 years' service in 1919. Within a few hours of leaving New York, an enemy warship was sighted on the horizon, and observed to change her course immediately, with the presumed object of intercepting the *Lusitania*.

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Without a moment's hesitation, Captain Dow set his course for a fog bank to the south, where he was soon lost to sight by the enemy. As soon as he was out of view, Captain Dow swung the *Lusitania* round again and steamed northwards at his highest speed. Having thus out-manoeuvred the hostile commander, he resumed his eastward course again, navigating his great ship by night without lights, and safely reaching Liverpool.

Again in February, 1915, while Captain Dow was still in command of her, the *Lusitania*, on an eastward voyage, received a wireless message to the effect that enemy submarines were cruising in the Irish Sea. He received instructions to fly a neutral flag—a perfectly legitimate ruse—and having on board some 400 Americans, together with the United States mails, he decided to hoist the American flag. Having done so, he crossed the Irish Sea at full speed, without stopping to take up a pilot; steered straight for the Mersey, and once more brought his vessel home in safety. Soon after this, Captain Dow, upon whom the strain of responsibility had been very great, was retained ashore by the Directors for a brief and much needed rest, and Captain W. T. Turner, one



THE "LUSITANIA" PASSING THE OLD HEAD OF KINSALE, WITHIN A FEW MILES  
OF THE SPOT WHERE SHE WAS TORPEDED



## *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

of the Cunard Company's most trusted commanders took his place, with an assistant captain, Captain Anderson, also on board.

That an attempt was to be made upon the *Lusitania* had for some days been current rumour in New York, and on Saturday, May 1st, 1915, her advertised sailing date, the following advertisement appeared in the New York Times, New York Tribune, New York Sun, New York Herald, and the New York World. "Travellers," it stated, "intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her Allies, and Great Britain and her Allies, that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles, that in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her Allies, are liable to destruction in those waters, that travellers travelling in the war zone in ships of Great Britain or her Allies do so at their own risk. April 22nd, 1915, The Imperial German Embassy, Washington, D.C." It is safe to say, however, that but small attention was paid to this notice, very few people contemplating that such a diabolical threat as was

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

implied in this notice would be seriously carried out by any civilised Christian Power. On the 1st May, therefore, the vessel sailed in fine weather, and with a calm sea. The voyage till May 7th was marked by no untoward event. As the danger zone was approached, Captain Turner took all the necessary precautions. All the lifeboats under davits were swung out; all bulkhead doors, except such as were required to be kept open in order to work the ship, were closed, the portholes being also closed; the look-outs on the ship were doubled—two men being sent to the crow's nest, and two to the eyes of the ship; two officers were always on the bridge, and a quartermaster was stationed on either side with instructions to look out for submarines.

Up to 8 o'clock on the morning of May 7th the vessel's speed had been maintained at 21 knots, but at 8 o'clock this was somewhat reduced, the object being to ensure that the *Lusitania* should arrive outside the bar at the mouth of the Mersey at such an hour on the morning of the 8th as would enable her to make immediate use of the tide, thus avoiding loitering in a vicinity where Captain Turner had reason to suppose enemy



THE "WHITE WAKE" THAT STRETCHED  
TO THE BEACHES OF GALLIOLI





### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

submarines might be watching for him. Soon after this reduction of speed the weather became thick, and the fog into which she had run necessitated a further reduction to 15 knots. Just before 12 o'clock, however, the fog lifted, and the vessel's speed was increased again to 18 knots—a speed that was maintained until she was struck by the enemy torpedo.

At the same time orders were sent to the engine-room to keep the steam-pressure as high as possible, so that in case of emergency the *Lusitania* might be able to put on all possible speed, should this be ordered from the bridge. Land was now in sight, about two points abaft the beam, and Captain Turner took this to be Brow Head. Owing to the recent fog, however, he was not able to identify it with sufficient certainty to enable him to fix the *Lusitania* upon the chart. He, therefore, kept her upon her course, which was S.87.E and parallel with the land, until twenty minutes to one, when, in order to make a better landing, he altered the course to N.67.E.

This brought him nearer to the Irish Coast, and he shortly afterwards sighted the old Head of Kinsale. Having identified this, at twenty

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

minutes to two, he altered his course back to S.87.E. and, having steadied her on that course, began ten minutes later to have a four point bearing taken, and this was being carried out when the ship was torpedoed.

This occurred at a quarter past two, when the *Lusitania* was steaming some ten miles off the Old Head of Kinsale, the atmosphere having then cleared and the sea being smooth. A seaman, Leslie N. Morton, seems to have been the first person on board actually to have seen the wake of the torpedo, and he reported it at once to the Second Officer, who in turn reported it to Captain Turner, then on the port side of the lower bridge. Captain Turner looking to starboard saw a streak of foam travelling towards the ship, and immediately afterwards the *Lusitania* was struck full on the starboard side, between the third and fourth funnels, the explosion breaking to splinters one of the lifeboats. Almost simultaneously a second torpedo also struck her on the starboard side, the two having been fired apparently from a distance of from two to five hundred yards. No warning of any kind had been given. Immediately on being struck the *Lusitania* listed heavily to starboard,



TORPEDOING OF THE  
"THRACIA"



## *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

and in less than twenty minutes she had sunk in deep water, carrying to their graves no less than 1,198 men, women and children.

Perhaps the most lucid, and, since he was an American, the most impartial account of the occurrence was that afterwards given by Mr. James Brooks of Bridgeport, Connecticut, one of the saloon passengers. Mr. Brooks, who was making the voyage to England for business purposes, had, in common with most of the other American passengers, read the warning notice issued by the German Embassy, to which we have already referred. Like most of his fellow-countrymen, however, he had decided to ignore it. "No one in America," he said, "ever dreamed that the Germans would dare to carry out their terrible threat to destroy such a magnificent vessel, and with it hundreds of the lives of innocent men, women and children.....A good many passengers were still at lunch when, on Friday afternoon, the attack came in reality. I had just finished a run on deck and had reached the Marconi Deck, when I glanced out over the water. It was perfectly smooth. My eyes alighted on a white streak making its way with lightning-like rapidity towards

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

the ship. I was so high in that position above the surface of the water that I could make out the outline of a torpedo. It appeared to be about twelve feet long, and came along possibly three feet below the surface, its sides white with bubbles of foam. I watched its passage, fascinated, until it passed out of sight behind the bridge, and in another moment came the explosion. The ship, recoiling under the force of the blow, was jarred and lifted, as if it had struck an immovable object. A column of water shot up to the bridge deck, carrying with it a lot of debris, and, despite the fact that I must have been twenty yards from the spot at which the torpedo struck, I was knocked off my feet. Before I could recover myself, the iron forepart of the ship was enveloped in a blinding cloud of steam, due, not, I think, to the explosion of a second torpedo, as some thought, but to the fact that the two forehold boilers had been jammed close together and 'jack-knifed' upwards. This I was told by a stoker afterwards.

“ We had been in sight of land for some time, and the head of the ship, which had already begun to settle, was turned towards the Old Head of



OFFICERS, NURSES AND R.A.M.C. ORDERLIES  
OF H.M.I.S. "AQUITANIA"



"HOMEWARD BOUND"





### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

Kinsale. We must have been from twelve to fifteen miles from land at the time the ship was struck. All the boats on the ship had been swung out the day previous, and the work of launching them was at once commenced. The attempt in the case of the first boat was a tragic failure. The women and children were taken first and the boat was practically filled with them, there being only a few men. The boat was lowered until within its own length of the water, when the forward tackle jammed, and the whole of its occupants, with the exception of three, were thrown into the water. The *Lusitania* was then on an even keel. On the decks of the doomed vessel absolute coolness prevailed. There was no rushing about, and nothing remotely resembling panic. In just a few isolated cases there were signs of hysteria on the part of the women, but that was all.

“Meanwhile the ship had taken a decided list, and was sinking rapidly by the head. The efforts made to lower the boats had apparently not met with much success. Those on the port side had swung inboard and could not be used, while the collapsible boats which were lashed beneath them

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

could not be got at. The ladies were standing quite coolly, waiting on board to enter the boats when they could be released by the men from the davits. The davits by this time were themselves touching the water, the ship having sunk so low that the bridge deck was only four feet or so from the surface of the sea. Losing no time, the men passed the women rapidly into the boats, and places had been found by now for all the people about the midships section. I stepped into one of the lifeboats and attempted to assist in getting it clear. I saw the list was so great that the davits pinched the gear, rendering it improbable that they could be got away when the ship went down, so I stepped on to the gunwale and dived into the water. I had no lifebelt and am not a good swimmer, but I decided to take the risk. I had been wetted right through when the explosion occurred, and I believe that had I gone in dry I should have swallowed so much water that I should not have lasted long.

“ I swam as hard as I could away from the vessel, and noticed with feelings of apprehension the menacing bulk of the huge funnels as they loomed up over my head. I expected them



THE SUN-CURE



THE "FRANCONIA" PASSING THROUGH  
THE SUEZ CANAL



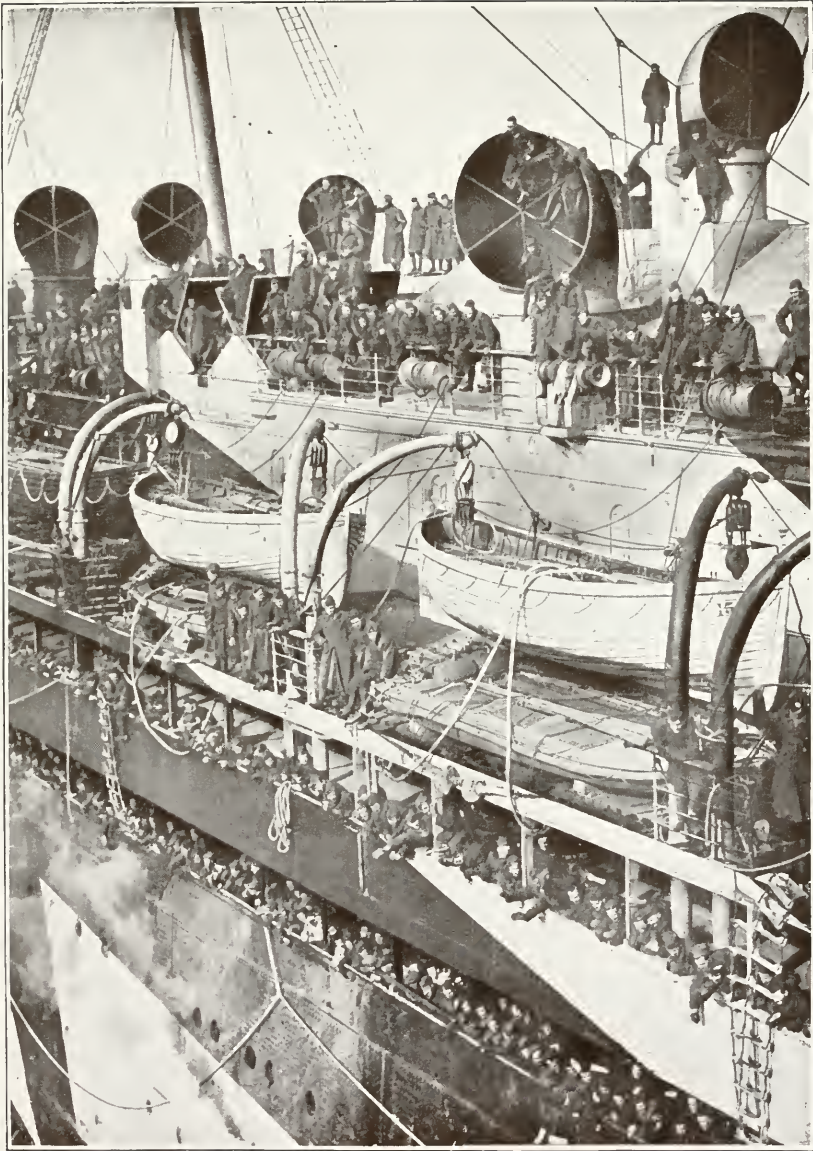
### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

momentarily to fall on me and crush me as I swam, but at last I judged myself to be clear, and I turned round and trod the water in order to watch the great hull heel over. The monster took a sudden plunge, and, noting the crowd still on her decks and the heavily laden boats filling with helpless women and children glued to her side, I sickened with horror at the sight. The liner's stern rose high out of the water; there was a thunderous roar as of the collapse of a great building during a fire, and then she disappeared, dragging hundreds of fellow-creatures into the vortex. Many never rose again to the surface, but the sea rapidly grew black with the figures of struggling men, women, and children. The wireless installation came over with a crash into the sea. It struck my uplifted arm as it fell, and I felt it pass over my body as it sank, almost dragging me under.

“The rush of water over the steamer's decks swept away a collapsible boat, and I swam towards it. Another man reached it shortly after, and after we were rescued I found him to be Mr. James Lauriat, jun., of Boston. Two seamen also managed to swim to the boat and to climb on to

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

it. One had a knife, and the other asked me for mine, and together they set about cutting away the canvas cover of the boat. When they had finished, I climbed inside, and the three of them followed me. We started to rescue the unfortunate people in the water, or at least those of them who were still living. We quickly had about 30 of them in the little craft. Around us in the water were scores of boats. There were no oars in our boats. We managed to raise the sides of the boat as they should be raised when the boat is in use, and we collected five oars from the mass of floating timber in the water. Then we started to row towards the lighthouse, which we could see in the distance. At the time the liner was torpedoed there was absolutely no ship of any kind in sight, with the exception of a trawler—the *Peel 12*, of Glasgow; she was close inshore under the lighthouse, and, owing to the lightness of the wind, she was of no use so far as the rescue of persons actually in the sea was concerned. She came along as fast as she could, however, and was able to pick up about one hundred and ten persons from lifeboats and life-rafts. Her limited capacity was pushed to the utmost, and I even had to sit



AMERICAN TROOPS NEVER FORGOT  
THE "LUSITANIA"





*The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

with one leg hanging over the sides because there was no room to put it on the inside. We took in tow a lifeboat and a raft, which were also filled to the gunwale, and when the occupants were able to be taken out they were cast off. The auxiliary boat *Indian Prince* had by that time arrived from Queenstown. The *Peel 12* was the first boat on the scene, and she was followed by a tramp Greek steamer, which came up from the west, and was able to pick up several lifeboats which had got away."

Such was the experience of Mr. Brooks, and in his moving narrative we can not only divine something of a tragedy beyond the scope of any human pen, but gather also an impression of heroism, of unquestioning devotion to duty, at which every member of the Cunard Company may well thrill with pride.

Particularly noticeable perhaps, was the conduct and sound judgment of the young sailor, Leslie N. Morton, to whom we have already referred, and he was especially commended by Lord Mersey, the Commissioner in charge of the formal investigation afterwards held into the loss of the *Lusitania*. This boy, for he was only 18, had been stationed

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

as extra look-out on the forecastle head, starboard side, during the fatal watch; and it was, as we have said, he who was the first to perceive the approach of the torpedo. This began, as he described it, with a "big burst of foam about 500 yards away." This was followed by a "thin streak of foam, making for the ship at a rapid speed, followed by another going parallel with the first one, and a little behind it." Having immediately reported this through a megaphone to the bridge, Morton made for the forecastle to go down below to call his brother who was asleep, and on the way there he saw what he took to be the conning-tower of a submarine just submerging.

Having called his brother, he went along the starboard side of the main deck and up on to the starboard side of the bridge deck, where he found the starboard boats useless owing to the vessel's heavy list. He then went to his own boat No. 13, and assisted in filling it with passengers. Giving up his own seat, he then went to No. 11 boat, and assisted in filling that one also; and it was in this one that he eventually took his place. Unfortunately, owing it appears to the unskilful action of some of the passengers,

### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

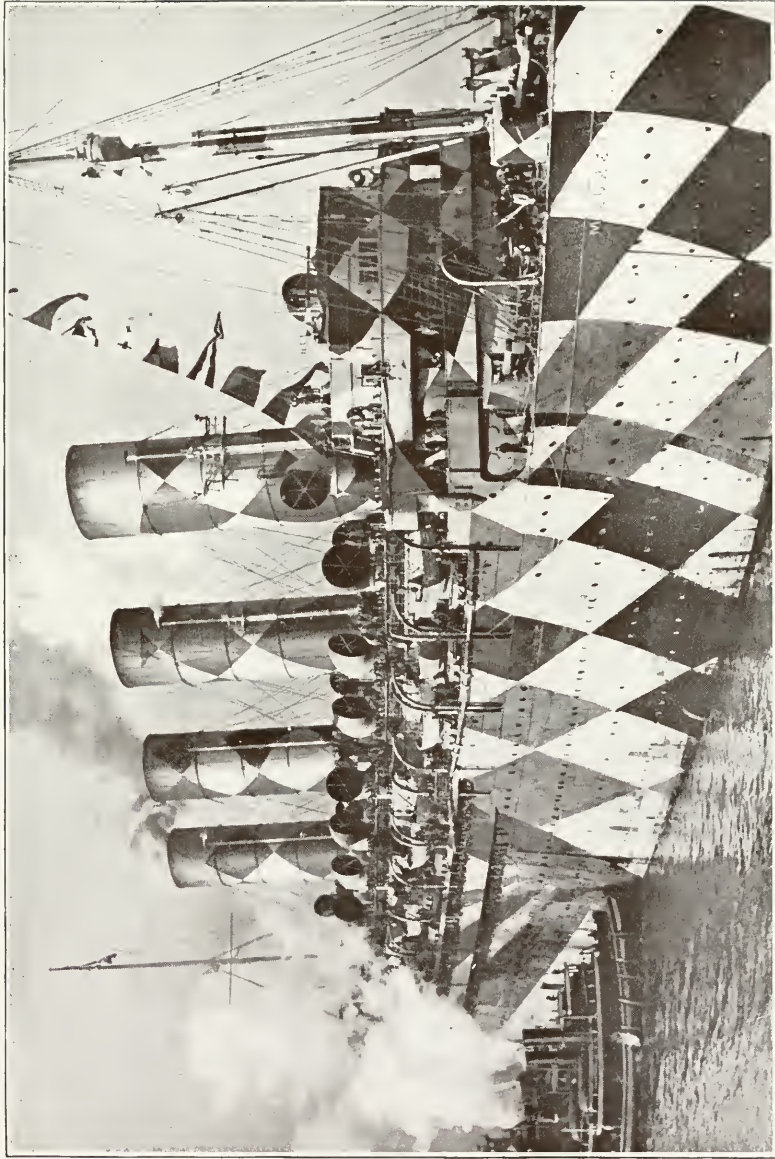
this lifeboat was unable to push away from the ship, and it was eventually sunk. Morton then swam for it and succeeded in reaching an empty collapsible boat, into which he climbed, succeeding with the help of another young sailor, Joseph Parry, in ripping off the cover and rescuing from the water some 50 people. He then made for a fishing kedge about five miles away, and having reached it transferred his passengers to it, and returned for some more, subsequently rescuing about 30 people from a sinking lifeboat—the little collapsible boat being subsequently rescued by a mine-sweeper. These two boys were thus instrumental in saving nearly 100 lives; and in recognition of their bravery they were awarded decorations by the Board of Trade, Morton receiving the Silver Medal for Gallantry, and Parry the Bronze Medal for Gallantry.

Equally heroic was the conduct of the First Officer, Mr. Arthur Rowland Jones, who was in the luncheon saloon when the torpedo struck the vessel. He immediately went to his boat station on the starboard side and began to fill his boat with passengers—a matter of extreme difficulty, owing to the ever increasing angle which the ship

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

was presenting to the sea, which caused the boat to swing away from the tilted surface of the deck. After great efforts, however, he succeeded in getting about 80 passengers aboard before she was lowered into the water, entered her himself when the boat deck was level with the surface of the sea, and only some 15 seconds before the *Lusitania* sank. It was fortunate for the passengers that he succeeded in doing so, since it was only by his skill and coolness, combined with that of two or three members of the crew who had also clambered on board, that the little lifeboat was able to survive the suction and disturbance caused by the disappearing liner.

She did so however, and afterwards transferred some of her passengers into another empty boat, the two boats then putting back in order to attempt further rescues. This they succeeded in doing, and the First Officer again filled his boat up, thereupon pulling off to a little fishing smack, the *Bluebell*, then about five miles distant. Having disembarked his passengers, Mr. Jones once more went back to the scene of the disaster, and after pulling some two and a half miles, fell in with a broken collapsible boat in a bad condition with



IN THE SPRING OF 1918 THE "MAURETANIA" BROUGHT  
33,000 AMERICAN SOLDIERS TO EUROPE



### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

about 35 people inside it. Some of these were lying exhausted in the bottom of the boat and others were injured, so Mr. Jones took them all on board, afterwards transferring them to a trawler. He then pulled off once more and saved yet another 10 people, whom he took to the *Flying Fox*, a Queenstown Tender. By this time it was 8 o'clock in the evening, and his crew were at the last point of exhaustion, having been working hard without food and water. There was too, by this time, a large number of destroyers and patrol boats on the scene, so Mr. Jones and his weary helpers themselves boarded the *Flying Fox*.

Mention must also be made of the conduct of Alfred Arthur Bestwick, the Junior Third Officer, who was responsible for the working of five boats on the port side of the ship, and courageously remained there endeavouring to launch them under practically impossible conditions, until the *Lusitania* went under. He was dragged down with her, but fortunately came to the surface, and succeeded in reaching a collapsible boat, into which, with the help of a companion, he dragged several people from the water. These he transferred to a second and more navigable empty boat that they afterwards

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

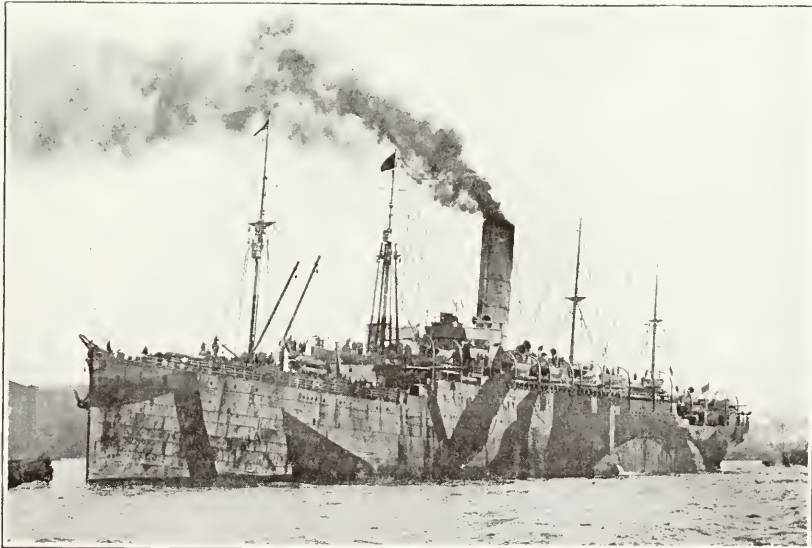
came across; and he then returned and saved three more people whom he had previously noticed supporting themselves by means of a bread tank, besides taking on board several others who were keeping themselves afloat by means of lifebelts.

All this time on every hand deeds of self-sacrifice, recorded and unrecorded, were being performed. A typical one was that of one of the able seamen of the watch, who had been sucked down by the sinking vessel and coming to the surface again had managed to sustain himself by means of a floating piece of wood. Clutching this he then found himself drifting towards a woman struggling unaided in the water, whereupon he pushed towards her his piece of wood, which could only support one person, and swam away himself on the chance of finding some other means of escape. Presently he found a collapsible boat containing one of the ship's officers, and a few other persons, but this unfortunately proved to be extremely unseaworthy. Capsizing again and again, it was only righted by the determination and skill of this seaman and his comrades, and on each occasion, alas, lives were lost until but a few survivors remained to be picked up by another of the ship's boats.





THE "AQUITANIA'S" STAGE



THE "SAXONIA," CAMOUFLAGED, LEAVING NEW YORK  
WITH AMERICAN TROOPS FOR EUROPE



## *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

Such is the story of the greatest maritime crime in history and, now that the war is over, it is well that it should not be forgotten, with its record of heroism and self-sacrifice, of competent seamanship and resourceful initiative, of suffering and death. Lord Mersey's report on the disaster, after he had heard a mass of evidence from officers and men, as well as from surviving passengers, is a document which after generations will read with pride. It contains not the personal opinion merely of a former President of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice, but is a considered judgment in which Admiral Sir F. S. Inglefield and Lieutenant Commander Hearn, both officers of the Royal Navy, and Captain D. Davies and Captain J. Spedding, of the Merchant Service, acting as the four assessors, concurred. The report contained a short, but consolatory statement of the competency with which the sudden emergency was confronted when the ship was attacked. "The Captain was on the bridge at the time his ship was struck," Lord Mersey recorded, "and he remained there giving orders until the ship foundered. His first order was to lower all the boats to the rail. This order was

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

obeyed as far as it possibly could be. He then called out 'Women and children first.' The order was then given to hard-a-starboard the helm with a view to heading towards the land, and orders were telegraphed to the engine-room. The orders given to the engine-room are difficult to follow and there is obvious confusion about them. It is not, however, important to consider them, for the engines were put out of commission almost at once by the inrush of water and ceased working, and the lights in the engine-room were blown out. Leith, the Marconi operator, immediately sent out an S.O.S. signal, and, later on, another message, 'Come at once, big list, 10 miles south Head Old Kinsale.' These messages were repeated continually and were acknowledged. At first, the messages were sent out by the power supplied from the ship's dynamo; but in three or four minutes this power gave out and the messages were sent out by means of the emergency apparatus in the wireless cabin."

Was the *Lusitania* well found? Did she comply with the requirements of the Merchant Shipping Acts? Was she armed? Did she carry war material? Was the conduct of the Captains,



WELCOMING THE FIRST CONTINGENT OF RETURNING AMERICAN TROOPS,  
NEW YORK, DECEMBER, 1918



THE "MAURETANIA" ARRIVING AT NEW YORK,  
DECEMBER, 1918



### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

officers and men consistent with the high traditions of the Merchant Service? To all these questions the report furnished satisfactory answers. The ship was well provided with boats, which were in good order at the moment of the explosion, and "the launching was carried out as well as the short time, the moving ship, and the serious list would allow." Lord Mersey added that he found that the conduct of the masters—for as already stated there were two—the officers and the crew was satisfactory. "They did their best in difficult and perilous circumstances, and their best was good."

And what of Captain Turner, upon whom the chief responsibility for the safety of the ship and the lives of passengers and crew mainly rested? He remained upon the bridge until the very last. He went down with the unhappy vessel and was only rescued by chance after having been in the water for three long hours. The Wreck Commissioner and the Assessors examined his every act from the moment when the *Lusitania* entered the so-called "war zone" until this devoted officer found himself in the water confronted with death. In the opinion of Lord Mersey, Captain Turner

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

“exercised his judgment for the best,” and the report added that “it was the judgment of a skilled and experienced man.” Captain Anderson, whose duty it was to assist in the care and navigation of the ship was, unfortunately, one of the victims of this German crime, but in Lord Mersey’s own words, “the two captains and the officers were competent men and they did their duty”—and higher praise than that there could not be.

“The whole blame for the cruel destruction of life in this catastrophe must rest solely with those who plotted and with those who committed the crime.” The disaster was regarded in all civilised countries with horror. As Mr. Roosevelt said at the time, it represented “not merely piracy, but piracy on a vaster scale of murder than any old-time pirate ever practised,” and a Danish paper, in recording this terrible incident in the war, declared that “whenever in future the Germans venture to speak of their culture the answer will be ‘It does not exist: it committed suicide on May 7th, 1915.’” A Norwegian paper in denouncing the crime remarked that “the whole world looks with horror and detestation on





“VALERIA” SINKING A  
SUBMARINE



### *The Ordeal of the Lusitania*

the event." In fact, throughout the whole civilised world the sinking of the *Lusitania* with merciless disregard for the lives of those on board, was condemned as an act of wholesale murder which, as the *New York American* added "violates all laws of common humanity."

In defiance of the judgment of civilisation, this dastardly act was hailed in Germany as a proud triumph. The *Kolnische Volkszeitung* of May 10th, 1915, stated "The sinking of the *Lusitania* is a success for our submarines which must be placed beside the greatest achievements in this naval war . . . The sinking of the great British steamer is a success, the moral significance of which is still greater than the material success. With joyful pride we contemplate this latest deed of our Navy, and it will not be the last." In the *Cologne Gazette*, of five days later, it was stated that "the news will be received by the German people with unanimous satisfaction, since it proves to England and the whole world that Germany is quite in earnest with regard to her submarine warfare." In the *Neue Freie Presse* of the same date it was remarked, "We rejoice over this new success of the German Navy." The City

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

of Magdeburg immediately proposed to honour the officers and men who had slaughtered so many hundreds of defenceless men, helpless women, and innocent children and brought the anguish of bereavement on so many hundreds of homes on both sides of the Atlantic. And to crown this achievement, which stands in isolation in the annals of the human race, a medal was struck in Munich commemorating this exploit of the German Fleet, which was afterwards to be surrendered and, then, to be scuttled by its own officers in Scapa Flow.



IN VIEW OF THE FATE OF SO MANY HOSPITAL SHIPS, BOAT DRILL WAS  
REGULARLY CARRIED OUT ON THE GREAT CUNARDERS



## CHAPTER V

# The Toll of the Submarines

*But some came not with break of light,  
Nor looked upon the saffron dawn ;  
They keep the watch of endless night,  
On the soft breast of Ocean borne.  
O waking England, rise and pray  
For sons who guard thee night and day !*

CECIL ROBERTS.

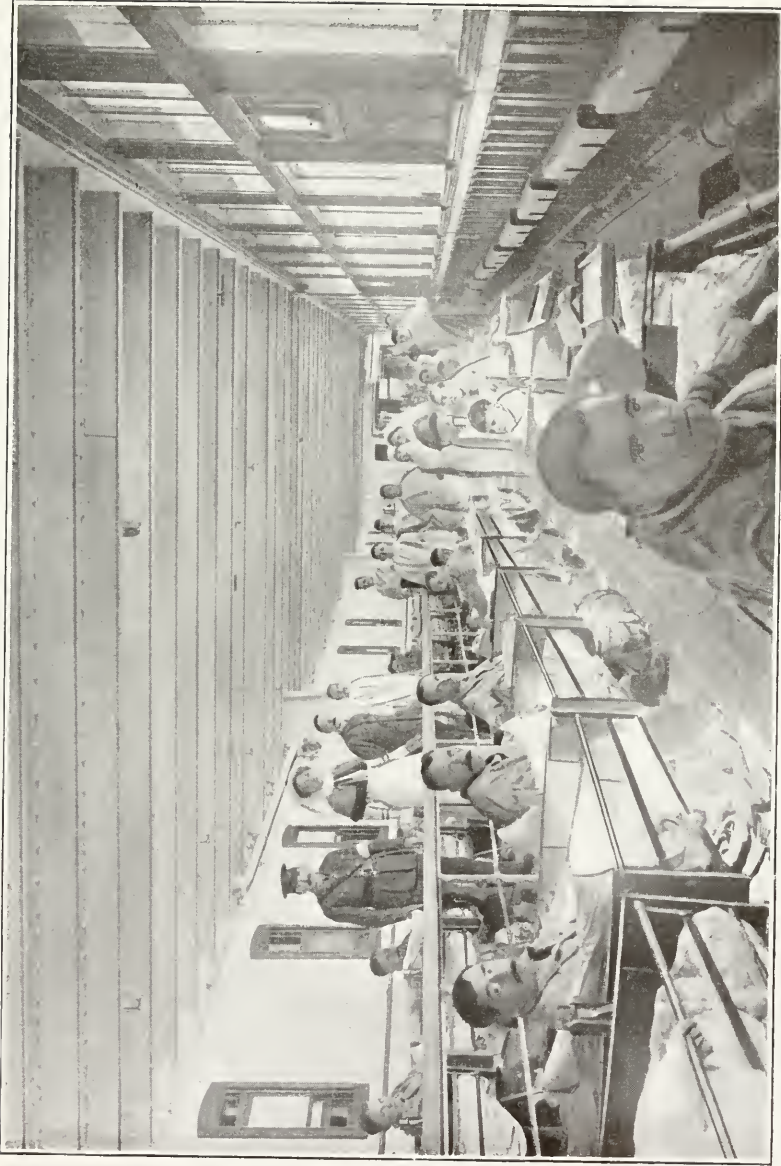
WE have dealt at length in the previous Chapter with the loss of the *Lusitania* not only because, as we have said, her torpedoing marked an epoch in the history of crime at sea, and was perhaps the determining factor in the entrance of America into the war, but because the Cunard Company was thus identified with this world-tragedy, and its servants exemplified then, as always, the noblest traditions of the British Mercantile Marine. Unhappily the *Lusitania*, although the circumstances of her loss brought her, from so many points of view, into the limelight of publicity was, as we have already seen, by no means the only one of the Cunard vessels to be lost at sea in the

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

service of this country, and in the present chapter it is proposed to deal briefly with some other of the Cunard Company's vessels that fell victims, many of them after the bravest resistance, to the submarine menace. It will, perhaps, be the more convenient, for purposes of after reference, to deal with these alphabetically, rather than chronologically.

Thus it was at 5.30 p.m. on February 4th, about 40 miles north of Londonderry that Captain W. R. D. Irvine of the *Aurania* saw a torpedo approaching his ship, which eventually struck her between the funnels. The *Aurania* immediately listed heavily to port, but then righted herself. The boats were immediately lowered and the crew and passengers, with the exception of Captain Irvine himself and some of his officers, were all safely aboard them within ten minutes after the torpedo had exploded. No sooner had they got into the boats, than the *Aurania* was again struck by a second torpedo, a third following in the wake of this, just as the Captain and the remaining officers were coming down the ropes into the last boat. Seven men in the engine-room were killed by the explosions of the torpedoes, and two others were lost by drowning. The crew were in the





THE "AQUITANIA'S" GARDEN-LOUNGE  
AS HOSPITAL WARD



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

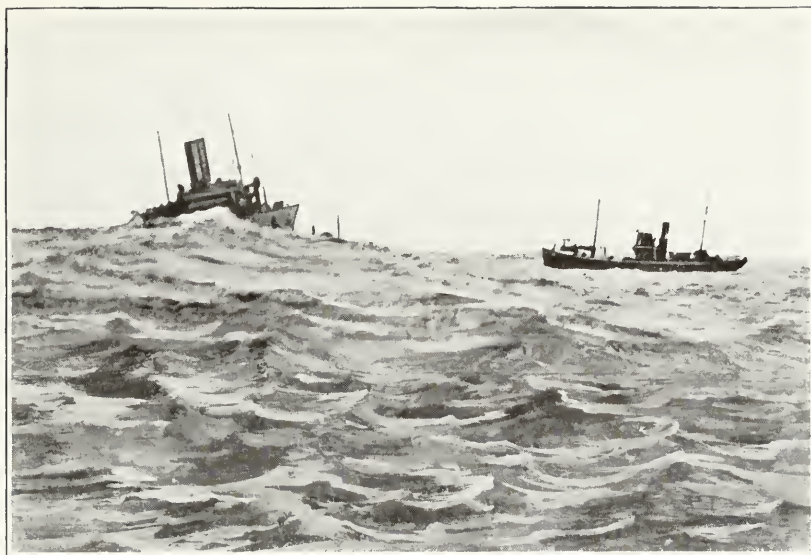
boats for about one and a half hours, when they were picked up by some mine-sweepers.

It was then seen that the ship was not sinking, and Captain Irvine with some of his crew, returned on board and made her fast with hawsers to one of the trawlers that had arrived on the scene. During the night, however, the ship broke adrift, and when day broke she was nowhere to be seen. A message was then received from one of the naval patrols to the effect that the *Aurania* had drifted ashore at Tobermory, nearly 50 miles from the place where she had been torpedoed. Unfortunately, she had grounded at a very exposed position and in the heavy weather that followed she went to pieces, it being found impossible to salve her. She was a particularly severe loss in that she was a new ship, only on her eighth trip.

The *Dwinsk*, one of the steamers being operated by the Cunard Company for the Government, and in command of Captain H. Nelson, was torpedoed on June 18th of the same summer, at about 9.20 a.m., while some 650 miles east of New York, the torpedo striking her on the port side in the region of No. 4 hold. Seven lifeboats were immediately lowered and all the crew successfully embarked.

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

The submarine then came to the surface, and with a heavy calibre gun fired 19 shells into the torpedoed vessel, sinking her about two hours afterwards. A passing steamer then came in sight and firing five shots in the direction of the submarine, passed on her course, the submarine submerging. When the unknown steamer had disappeared, the submarine again came to the surface, and overtaking the boats in which the crew had taken refuge, hailed the one in charge of the Chief Officer, and after interrogating him, moved off in an easterly direction. Meanwhile, during the night, the little group of lifeboats became separated, meeting with various adventures but all except one ultimately reaching safety, their crews being landed as far apart as New York, Bermuda, Newport, and Nova Scotia. As in the case of the *Ausonia's* boats described in Chapter III, they underwent the severest hardships. The First Officer's boat, for instance, after sailing all that day and through the night, sighted a steamer, but, though she showed signals of distress, received no reply. Toiling on, a barque, and another steamer, were sighted in the evening, but again the little boat was unsuccessful in attracting attention.



THE "AURANIA" ASHORE AFTER  
BEING TORPEDOED



THE "IVERNIA" SETTLING DOWN. (Photographed against  
the sun from the rescuing trawler)



## *The Toll of the Submarines*

Fortunately, the weather up to then had remained favourable, and continued to do so through the next day, on which another ship was seen, but again failed to perceive the lifeboat's dejected crew. Early on the following morning an empty boat was sighted, and found to be one of the *Dwinsk's* boats from which the crew had evidently been rescued. On this day the wind began to increase and by the evening a furious gale was raging. At six o'clock a great sea washed over the little boat, carrying one of its occupants overboard, and almost filling the boat with water. On the day after, a Sunday, the wind dropped again, and remained variable until the evening of the following Wednesday, when it again increased to such an extent that by midnight a fierce gale was once more blowing. On Thursday morning this died down, but it was not until half-past nine on Friday that a steamer which proved to be the *U.S.S. Arondo* sighted the now almost famished crew and took them on board, clothed them, and provided them with medical attention. They had then been drifting about in every condition of the weather for no less than ten days, the highest ration allowed being one biscuit and a half glass

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

of water per man per day, for the first six days, reduced on the ninth day to half a biscuit and a quarter of a glass of water. To the invincible optimism and seamanship of the First Officer, who himself steered the boat for the whole of the ten days, the crew unanimously announced afterwards that they considered the saving of their lives to be due.

Of the other boats, one was at sea for eight days, three for three days, and one for a day and a half; one of them was never accounted for, probably having foundered in the storm, with the loss of 22 lives.

It is pleasant to record that the First Officer Mr. Pritchard, as well as the boatswain's mate, who was in charge of another boat, were specially commended in the *London Gazette* for their great services.

Nor must another incident in connection with the saving of the *Dwinsk's* lifeboats go unmentioned although the hero in this case was a gallant officer of the United States Navy, Lieutenant Ross P. Whitmarsh, who was one of the convoy officers to the *Dwinsk* and went into No. 6 lifeboat with another American and nineteen British subjects.





TORPEDOING OF THE  
"VOLODIA"



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

This boat experienced an extraordinary severe storm some four days afterwards, and Lieutenant Whitemarsh volunteered to take the tiller and remained on watch without a break throughout the night until five o'clock the next morning. One man was washed overboard and Lieutenant Whitemarsh then ordered the other occupants of the boat to lie down, two of them taking turns to hold on to this officer's legs to prevent him, while at the tiller, from being carried away. For this Lieutenant Whitemarsh received from His Majesty the King, the Silver Medal for Gallantry in saving life at Sea.

It was three years earlier and in a far distant sea that the *Caria* was sunk, while proceeding in ballast from Alexandria to Naples in charge of Captain J. A. Wolfe. In this case she was not torpedoed; the 'U' boat after signalling to the *Caria* to stop and abandon ship, fired some 10 shots at her, several of which struck her about the bows and the bridge. The *Caria* was unarmed, and Captain Wolfe and his crew had accordingly no alternative than to abandon ship, having first destroyed all confidential papers. This was fortunate, since the submarine, hailing Captain Wolfe's boat,

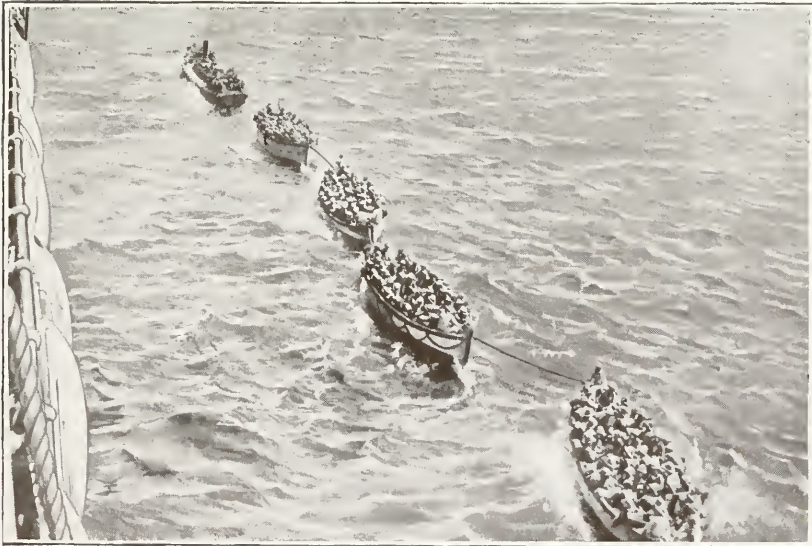
### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

ordered him alongside, and demanded the ship's papers, which were given him. After 12 hours the crew of the *Caria* were picked up by the *S.S. Frankenfels*, ironically enough a German prize vessel in the employ of the India Office, and landed at Malta. There were happily no casualties among the *Caria's* crew.

In this respect the *Carpathia*, which was sunk on July 17th, 1918, was not so fortunate. Travelling in convoy, and at the time of the attack, some 120 miles west of the Fastnet, the escort had left some  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours previously. Two torpedoes struck the *Carpathia* within 30 seconds, one on the port side between No. 4 hold, and the stoke-hold, and the second, half a minute later, in the engine-room. After satisfying himself that there was no possibility of saving the ship, her commander, Captain W. Prothero, ordered everyone to the boats, and saw them safely embarked, a third torpedo striking the ship just after this was accomplished. Three trimmers and two firemen were unfortunately killed by the explosion, but the remaining 218 members of the crew, together with 57 passengers, were picked up by *H.M.S. Snowdrop*, and safely brought to Liverpool. A letter was afterwards



THE "IVERNIA" SURVIVORS  
ARRIVING IN PORT



TROOPS LANDING FROM THE "MAURETANIA";  
TWO DAYS LATER THEY WERE AT SUVLA BAY



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

received from the Admiralty in which the Lords Commissioners stated that in their opinion the discipline and organisation on board the *Carpathia* had been of a very high order, and that Captain Prothero was to be publicly commended in the *London Gazette* in recognition of his conduct in the crisis.

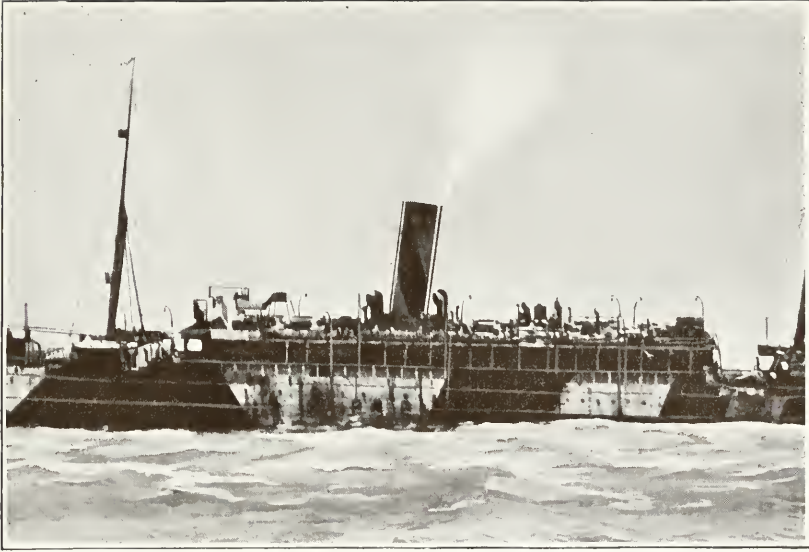
It was on May 5th, 1917, at 7.30 p.m., while *en route* to Avonmouth from New York, that the *Feltria* was torpedoed without warning about eight miles south-east of Mine Head off the Irish coast. A very heavy sea was running at the time. No 1 boat was capsized during launching, and No. 4 boat blown to pieces by the explosion of the torpedo. Boats Nos. 2, 3, 5, and 6 were successful in clearing the ship's side. Most of the crew were in boats Nos. 3 and 5, the captain and chief steward being alone in No. 2 boat, which had also been damaged by the explosion. The last boat away, No. 6, contained the Chief Officer, Second Officer, Purser, and three sailors, and it was this boat that the submarine, coming to the surface, ordered alongside. Having obtained particulars as to the *Feltria* and her cargo, she then left but stopped to pick up Mr. Stott, one of the *Feltria's*

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

engineers, and returned towards the lifeboat. From her deck, he was then assisted into the water. The *Feltria's* Quartermaster, Mr. Burt, with great courage, jumped into the water to meet him, and helped him to the boat's side, where he was taken on board in a very exhausted condition, while huge breakers were washing over the little boat itself. Of the boat containing the Captain, Captain W. G. Price, and Chief Steward, nothing more was seen, their lives being lost, and by midnight, three other members of the *Feltria's* crew in No. 6 boat had died from exposure and exhaustion, one of the victims being Mr. Stott himself. The remaining five in this boat were picked up early on Sunday morning by the *S.S. Ridley* and landed at Barrow; twenty other survivors were landed at Queenstown; but out of a crew of 69 no less than 44 lost their lives, 17 dying from exposure in the lifeboats.

The *Flavia* was the more fortunate in that the whole of her crew was saved, when early on the morning of August 24th, 1918, she was sunk off the Irish coast while on a voyage from Montreal to Bristol. Her commander, Captain E. T. C. Fear, had been below resting at the time, but the





THE "DWINSK" SETTLING DOWN  
AFTER BEING TORPEDOED



SURVIVORS FROM THE "DWINSK" AFTER  
EIGHT DAYS IN THE LIFEBOAT



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

Officer in charge had kept the situation well in hand, and *H.M.S. Convolvulus*, standing by, picked up the survivors from the boats, landing them safely in Ardrossan.

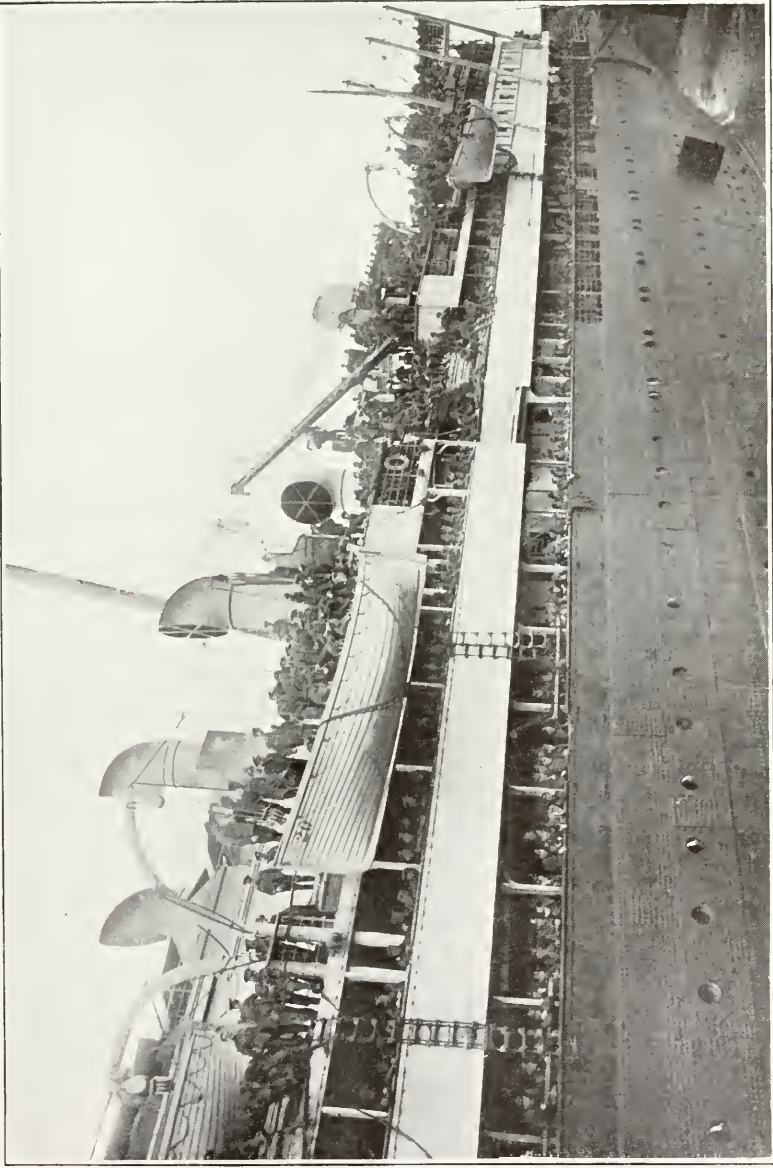
The next loss to be recorded is that of the *Folia*, Captain Francis Inch, which was sunk on Sunday, March 11th, 1917, at a quarter past seven in the morning, off the Irish coast, while on a voyage from New York to Bristol. The periscope of the attacking submarine was first sighted by the Third Officer some 500 feet away and nearly abeam. Immediately afterwards, he saw a torpedo approaching the ship, two of her boats being smashed in the explosion which followed, and the *Folia* herself beginning rapidly to settle. Seven of the crew, including the Second Engineer, were killed by the explosion, but the rest of the officers and men were safely embarked in the four boats which were lowered.

While the lifeboats were still in the neighbourhood, the submarine came to the surface, steamed round the ship and fired four shots into her, following this up with a second torpedo. The Captain then got his boats together and instructed the officers in charge to steer N.W. by compass,

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

three of them making fast by painters so as not to get adrift from each other. About 11 a.m., the Captain, under the fog that had crept up, sighted breakers ahead, and told the other boats to follow in line behind him. Creeping along the edge of the breakers, they at last sighted smooth water at the base of some cliffs, and, pulling into shore, noticed the outline of a house high above them, with people standing in front of it. Shouting in unison, the crew succeeded in attracting attention and learned that the place was Ardmore, Youghal, Co. Cork, and from there they proceeded to Dungarvan, where they arrived at 8 o'clock in the evening, the inhabitants of both places treating the shipwrecked officers and crew with the greatest hospitality.

In all these cases the vessels attacked were either unarmed or so taken by surprise that no resistance was possible. But in the case of the *Lycia*, Captain T. A. Chesters, which was sunk on February 11th, 1917, a most plucky action against odds was fought. It was nearly half-past eight in the morning, and about 20 miles north-west of the South Bishop's Light, that the submarine was sighted, and by the time Captain Chesters had



THE "MAURETANIA" LEAVING SOUTHAMPTON WITH  
HOMeward-bound CANADIAN TROOPS



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

picked her up on the starboard beam, his vessel had already been struck by a shot from her. Captain Chesters immediately altered the *Lycia's* course so as to place the submarine astern, and himself opened fire at about 3,000 yards. His gun, which was of Russian make and of a very light type, was one of the first supplied to merchant ships under the Admiralty scheme, when there was a great shortage of armaments owing to the needs of the Army and Navy, and it misfired several times; the Third Officer, Third Engineer, and Steersman had been already wounded by the fire of the submarine.

In the unequal duel that now ensued, the *Lycia's* funnel, starboard boats, forward cabin, chart room, officers' and engineers' quarters and bridge were all wrecked, and being unable to steer the ship under the growing force and accuracy of the enemy's shells, Captain Chesters at last had no alternative but to abandon his vessel. He, therefore, gave orders to cease firing and stop the engines. As soon as the ship had sufficiently lost way, the crew was safely embarked in the port boat, with the exception of the Captain, Chief Officer, Third Engineer, the Gunner, and one

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

of the boys, who succeeded in scrambling into the starboard boat which was dragging alongside.

When the lifeboats cleared the ship, the submarine herself ceased firing, submerged, and re-appeared alongside Captain Chesters' boat. The submarine commander then ordered Captain Chesters to go on board, which he did, and where, by what, alas, proved to be a rare exception, he was very courteously treated. The commander of the submarine then put three of his crew into the boat together with eight bombs, sent her back to the *Lycia*, and there the Germans hung the bombs on each side of the rigging, and in the engine-room. The ship's papers, the breech plug of her gun, her telescopes and three cartridges, were lowered into the boat, after which the bomb safety pins were removed, and the bombs placed below the water-line. The boat was then ordered back to the submarine. Meanwhile, Captain Chesters had been asked by the 'U' boat's commander why he had fired his gun without flying his Ensign. Captain Chesters pointed out to him that before he could fire the gun, he had to remove the flagstaff; and he was then allowed to return to his boat, the bombs, a few minutes



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

afterwards beginning to explode. The submarine then went in chase of another vessel that had appeared on the horizon, and shortly afterwards the *Lycia* sank, stern first. Her boats were picked up the same evening by two mine-sweepers, and the *S.S. Ireland Moor*, the crew being treated with the utmost hospitality and safely landed at Holyhead. Their conduct had been worthy in Captain Chesters' words "of all the traditions of British seamen."

Happily it now becomes possible to record an equally gallant fight on the part of one of the Cunard Company's vessels, with a successful issue. This was fought by one of the Mediterranean cargo boats, the *Phrygia*, a vessel of 3,350 tons, with a speed of not more than 9 knots. It was at 2 p.m. on March 24th, 1916, when she was homeward bound and off the south-west coast of Ireland, that a submarine, whom she had not previously seen, fired two shots at her, probably with the intention of bringing her to a stop. The skipper, Captain F. Manley, immediately ordered his helm hard aport and the crew to go to "general stations." There was a big sea running at the time, and this was fortunate, since the submarine,

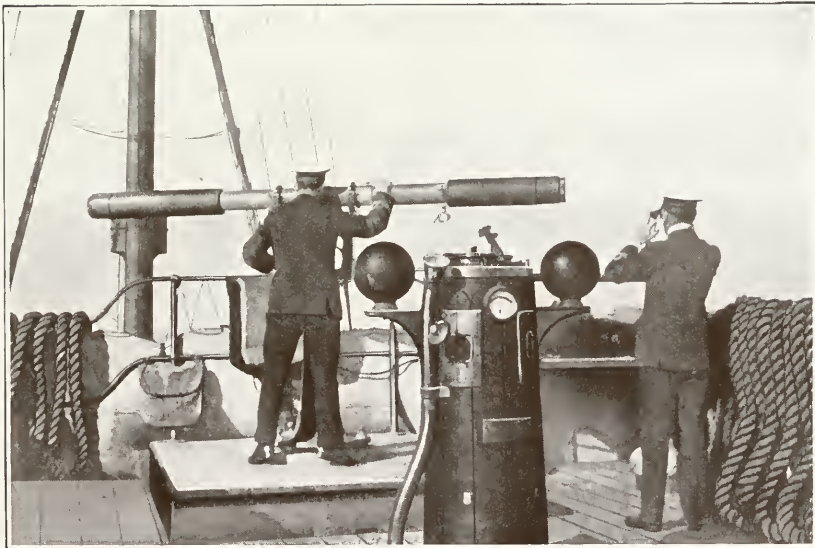
### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

on divining Captain Manley's intentions, had continued to fire at the *Phrygia*. None of her shells, however, struck the steamer. Captain Manley then succeeded in manoeuvring his ship so as to bring the submarine astern, when he opened fire, and there then began a duel lasting for 45 minutes, during the whole of which time, both the submarine and the *Phrygia* fired continuously at one another under the most adverse conditions. Then at last one of the *Phrygia's* shells found its mark; a great rush of smoke poured up from the submarine; her stern suddenly jumped out of the water; and she disappeared, amongst the loud cheers of the *Phrygia's* crew.

In connexion with this incident, the following resolution was passed by the Directors of the Cunard Company at a meeting of the Board in April, 1916. "That the Company place on record their high appreciation of the gallant and successful efforts made by the Captain, Officers, and crew of the *Phrygia* to save their vessel, and of the efficient preparations made beforehand by Captain Manley to deal with such an emergency, which contributed towards this result, and finally extend their heartiest congratulations to all



“FATHER NEPTUNE” CARED LITTLE FOR  
THE PREVING SUBMARINES



AN ARMED CRUISER'S RANGEFINDER



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

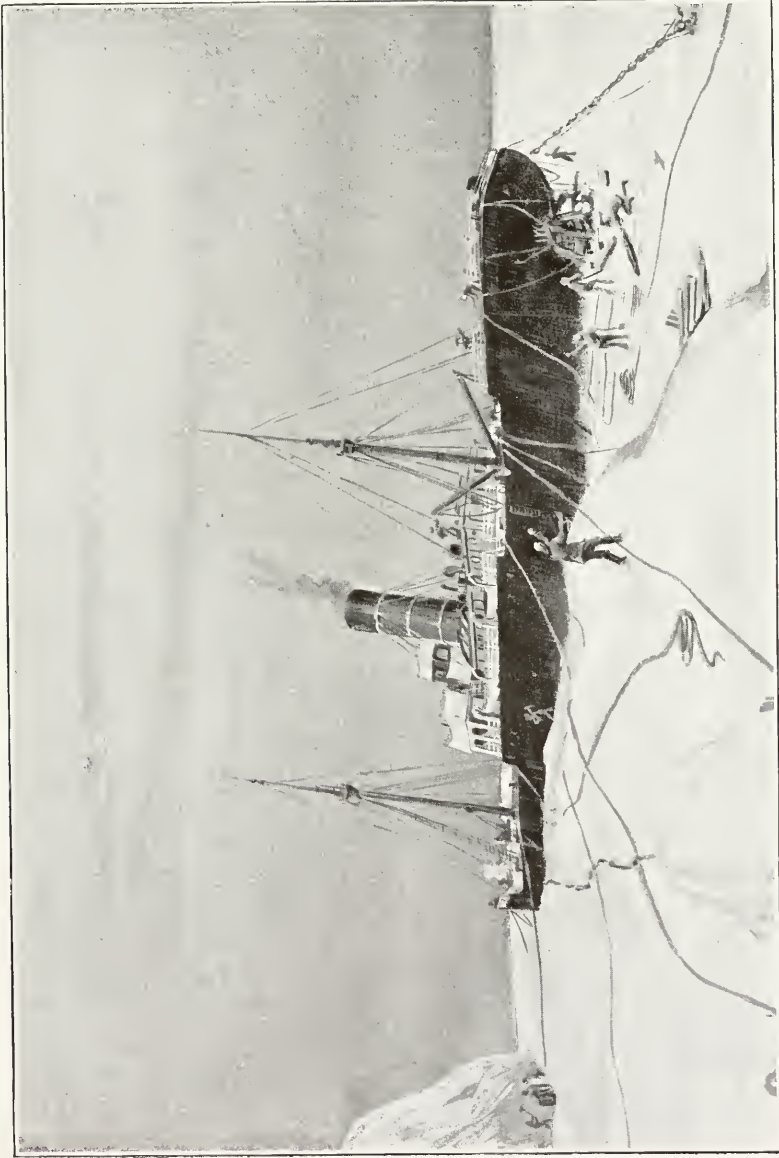
concerned upon the splendid gunnery and seamanship which put the enemy submarine out of action." Captain Manley and the *Phrygia's* crew also received recognition from the Admiralty for their achievement.

It was on March 27th, 1917, at 8 o'clock in the evening, that the *Thracia*, Captain R. Nicholas, while on a voyage with ore from Bilbao to Ardrossan, was sunk at sight and without warning, leaving only one survivor. Disappearing in one minute, those on board were left with no possible chance of saving their lives, and it was only by a miracle that Cadet Douglas Duff, a boy of 16 years of age, was left to tell the tale. He succeeded in saving his life by clinging for sixteen hours to the keel of a capsized boat, during the early part of which time, he was seen and jeered at by the crew of the submarine. One of them indeed raised a rifle and aimed at him, whereupon he shouted, perhaps characteristically of the service to which he belonged "Shoot and be damned to you." He was ultimately rescued by a French destroyer and landed at La Palais, Belle-ile-en-Mer. The body of the Chief Officer was also recovered, and it is touching to reflect that, as a mark of

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

their respect and honour to the personnel of the British Mercantile Marine, a public funeral was accorded to him by the inhabitants of this little French seaport town.

Before her loss, however, the *Thracia* had performed, like all the vessels mentioned, most arduous and important duties, and one of her voyages, since it throws a sidelight upon the multifarious activities of the Company during the war, deserves special mention. She was then under the command of Captain Michael Doyle, and it was on the 27th of December 1914, that she left Liverpool for Archangel with stores for the Russian Government. All the way to the North Cape, she steamed in the teeth of heavy gales, and under stormy skies, and at this point, at this season of the year, entered a region where there was but one hour's so-called daylight in the twenty-four. Entering the White Sea, on the night of the 7th of January, she ran the next day into an icefield, reaching out ahead of her as far as the eye could see. In the hope of breaking through to clear water, Captain Doyle, however, kept her going until, the ice becoming thicker and closer packed, it became impossible for the *Thracia's* engines to drive her through.



THE "THRACIA" FAST:  
CAUGHT IN THE ICE IN THE WHITE SEA





### *The Toll of the Submarines*

After prolonged and arduous exertions, the *Thracia* was at last extracted from her dangerous position in the ice and brought back to the open water harbour at Alexandrovsk. From this port, accompanied by an ice-breaker, she again made an attempt to reach Archangel on January 24th, 1915. Heavy field-ice was once more encountered as soon as the White Sea had been entered, causing the utmost difficulty in steering, and reducing progress to the slowest limits. After covering, with much perseverance, a certain distance, huge floes of ice finally stopped the *Thracia's* progress; the ice-breaker was also in difficulties, and therefore unable to render any assistance. For a considerable time the *Thracia* remained wedged in the drifting ice, and meanwhile a heavy north-east gale had packed the entrance to the White Sea. The action of this wind, however, presently opened the ice in the immediate neighbourhood of the vessel, and a certain amount of further progress towards the south became possible. Here, however, the ice was found to be once more heavily packed, while the north-east gale was choking the entrance with ever more and more drifting floes.

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

The *Thracia's* propeller had by this time become badly damaged, and the ice-breaker herself was finding it all she could do to secure her own safety. It was now clear that to remain in the drifting ice would be bound in the long run to prove fatal, and thereupon Captain Doyle made an effort to drive his vessel close to the land ice, where some degree of shelter might be found from the gales which were constantly driving enormous floes up and down with the ebb and flow of the tides through the narrow neck of the White Sea.

After many days and nights of the heaviest and most unremitting toil, the *Thracia* was finally brought close to land, and a net-work of cables and ropes thrown out to secure her position there. For seven weeks, until the 18th of March, she was held here, during the whole of which time she was being submitted to the severest pressure owing to the alternating flow and ebb of the tides driving the packed ice against her side, under her bottom, and piling it up round her counter to a height of as much as 20 ft. Serious damage was done to her hull, and for three months her pumps had to be kept going constantly in order to keep her afloat, while the greatest skill and ingenuity had



THE "AQUITANIA," HAVING ESCAPED THE FATE OF SO MANY OF HER SISTERS,  
REAPPEARS IN THE MERSEY IN HER PEACE-TIME GUISE



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

to be exercised in order to protect her rudder from the ice pressure under her counter.

So matters went on until the night of the 18th of March, when, owing to heavy off-shore gales, the *Thracia* broke adrift, her anchors, cables, and ropes being lost and her windlass broken. Fortunately, a few days later, the ice began to open here and there, and with the courageous assistance of another vessel, and under her own steam, she succeeded at last in reaching a position inside the bar of the Archangel river on April 9th, when her cargo was landed in good condition on the stationary river ice and conveyed by sleighs to Archangel.

Her troubles, however, were not yet over, for within less than three weeks, the river ice itself began to break, and the outgoing stream, carrying this broken ice to sea, drove the *Thracia* on to the Bar. Her propeller blades were now reduced to the merest stumps, but in spite of this, she succeeded, at high water, in working herself free again by her own exertions. Obtaining ground tackle from another ship, which had come down from Archangel at the first break-up of the ice, the *Thracia* was enabled to come to anchorage in the gulf, and here she remained for about a week

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

until the Dwina river was finally cleared of ice. She then proceeded slowly up river to the town itself, where she arrived on May 9th. So great had been the damage sustained by her, that she was then dry-docked for the necessary repairs to enable her to return to England; and when she at last arrived home, about the middle of August, 1915, it was not until her voyage had lasted some seven and a half months.

After this diversion, let us return to the record of the war experiences of other Cunarders. It was on March 30th, 1917, that the *Valacia*, Captain J. F. Simpson, left London for New York, and it was at 5.30 the next evening that she was struck on the port side by a torpedo, when in the English Channel off the Eddystone Lighthouse. An attempt was made by one of the torpedo boats, of which several happened to be in the neighbourhood, to tow the *Valacia*, whose No. 6 hold, engine-room, and stoke-hold were all full of water. She proved too heavy, however, and tugs were accordingly sent from the shore, the Admiralty officials intending to try and beach the ship. Although a heavy gale was blowing at the time, Captain Simpson, in view of the fact that the



“AQUITANIA” AS  
HOSPITAL SHIP





### *The Toll of the Submarines*

bulkheads were holding, strongly advised that this course should not be pursued, but that an attempt should be made to tow the *Valacia* into Plymouth Harbour. This advice was taken, and as it proved with complete success, the *Valacia* being taken safely into Plymouth Harbour, where she was subsequently docked for repairs, and whence she was enabled, within a few months, to take her place again in the Company's fleet, and do much useful service.

The hole in the ship's side caused by the explosion of the torpedo was no less than 25 feet long by 20 feet deep, and the greatest credit is due to Captain Simpson for his splendid judgment and seamanship in bringing the vessel safely into port, and saving her both for the country and the Company.

To the *Valeria*, under the command of Captain W. Stewart, fell the good fortune to destroy a German submarine on June 20th, 1917, while nearing the end of a voyage from New York. It was at 3 o'clock in the afternoon that both Captain Stewart, who was on the port side of the bridge, and the Second Officer who was on the starboard side, felt the ship quiver as if she had

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

struck something. The Captain immediately crossed the bridge and saw that the object hit was an enemy submarine, the working of her motors being distinctly audible. For a moment the *Valeria's* gun crew were taken aback at this most unexpected appearance at such close quarters to the vessel. Captain Stewart, however, gave prompt orders to fire and the gunners depressing the gun as far as possible, immediately obeyed.

A volume of vapour was then seen to rise up from the 'U' boat, together with fountain-like spouts of water. A second shot was fired, falling short, but the third struck the submarine fair and square, at the base of her conning tower, and caused her to sink. It is believed that the *Valeria*, when she first came into contact with the submarine, probably broke her periscope. Captain Stewart's first impulse was to turn back in order to pick up any survivors, but in view of the fact that German submarines were at this time usually hunting in couples he thought it wiser to continue his voyage, and brought his ship safely back into Liverpool. For this successful action, both Captain Stewart and the crew received special awards from the Admiralty, the Cunard Company, and other



OFFICERS OF THE TORPEDOED  
"FRANCONIA"



A CUNARD CREW BUYING WAR SAVINGS  
CERTIFICATES



## *The Toll of the Submarines*

Associations, the destruction of the German submarine being later verified by Admiralty trawlers.

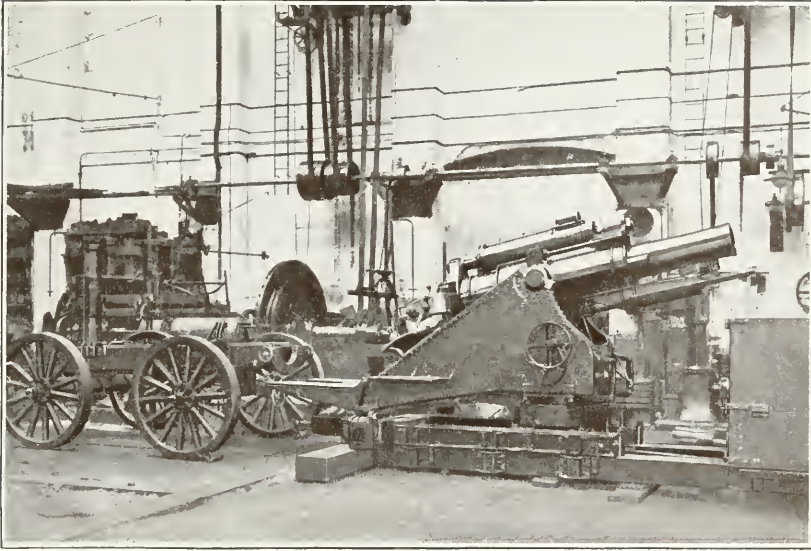
It was perhaps not an unexpected fact, but it was one, nevertheless, of which the whole nation may well be proud, that the rescued officers and crews of these torpedoed vessels, never for a moment hesitated, and indeed were anxious, as soon as possible, to render further service in other vessels. An example of this occurred when the *Vandalia* was torpedoed on June 9th, 1918, her commander, Captain J. A. Wolfe, having already, as has been seen, had a previous vessel, the *Caria*, torpedoed beneath him in the Mediterranean. The *Vandulia* was in a convoy accompanied by six American destroyers, and though she settled down rapidly and was lost within less than two hours, no lives were lost.

The *Veria*, Captain D. P. Thomson, was sunk on December 7th, 1915, in the Mediteranean, having left Patras in ballast for Alexandria on the 3rd. At noon on the same day, when about 50 miles from Alexandria, she had sighted two lifeboats containing the crew of a Greek steamer, the *Goulandris* which had been sunk by a submarine, and at half-past four in the afternoon, it was

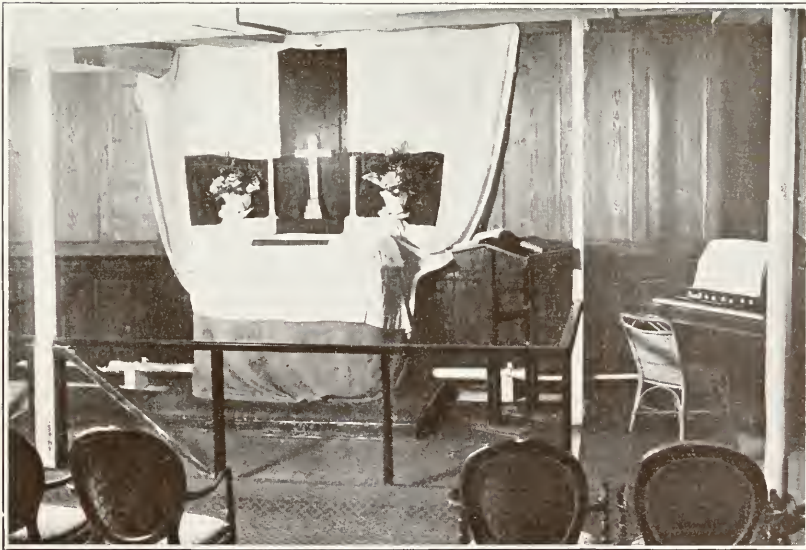
### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

probably the same submarine that was sighted approaching the *Veria* at high speed from a distance of about eight miles. Almost at once the 'U' boat opened fire, dropping a shell about 20 feet ahead of the *Veria*, when Captain Thomson, having no alternative, stopped his ship and ordered the crew to muster at the boats. On a second shell dropping closer to the vessel, Captain Thomson ordered the crew to take to the boats; the submarine continued to fire as she approached, one of her shells destroying the chart house and the bridge, just as the boats were leaving the vessel's side. Captain Thomson had already destroyed the confidential papers, and all that the German commander obtained, was the ship's register. It was at 9.15 p.m. that the *Veria* sank, her boats being not interfered with and arriving at Alexandria next morning, in safety.

The next vessel to claim our attention is the *Vinovia*, and high as was the standard set by, and expected of the Cunard Company's commanders, there were few instances of greater coolness and bravery than that of her skipper, Captain Stephen Gronow, when she was torpedoed in the English Channel on the 19th of December, 1917. She was



ONE OF THE AMERICAN HOWITZERS ASSEMBLED  
AT THE CUNARD WORKS



THE "AQUITANIA'S" CHAPEL.





### *The Toll of the Submarines*

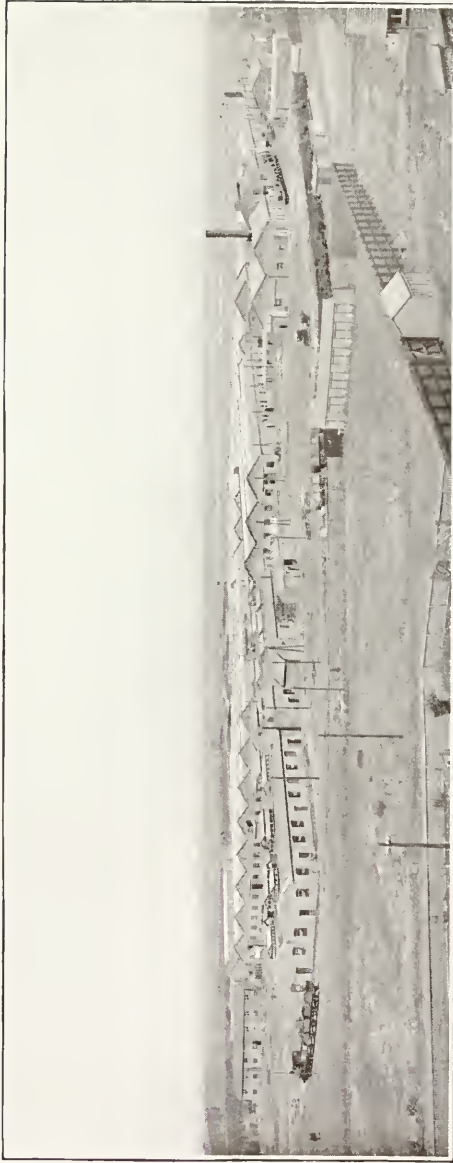
then on her way from New York with a Chinese crew, and it was at half-past three in the afternoon that the torpedo struck her on the starboard side. As the *Vinovia* did not at first appear to be sinking Captain Gronow ordered his engines full speed ahead, and made a gallant endeavour to reach the land. At 4 p.m. a small tug came on the scene and made fast to the *Vinovia*, after some of her crew had left the ship on one of the lifeboats. A patrol boat then came alongside, and the remainder of the crew jumped aboard her. For the next three hours Captain Gronow, the only man left on his sinking vessel, steered her by means of the hand gear. At seven o'clock in the evening a drifter approached and the Chief Engineer returned on board to assist his Captain in making a rope fast, and then returned to the patrol boat. It was now quite dark, but Captain Gronow, sticking to his forlorn hope, remained alone on board the *Vinovia*, and continued to steer her and attend to the ropes. By half-past seven, he noticed that she appeared to be making no headway, and groping forward by means of the rails, he found the forecastle deck already submerged four feet. He also discovered that the tug had slipped the

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

wire. In making his way back again, he was so severely struck by a piece of wreckage that for a time he remained unconscious.

On recovering he made his way to the bridge and put on a life-jacket. Here he remained until, at eight o'clock, five miles from land and in pitch darkness, the *Vinovia* sank under his feet, and he was thrown into the water. He succeeded however, in supporting himself on some wreckage, to which as it happened the ship's bell was attached; and it was this little fact that in the end proved his salvation. Attracted by the ringing of the bell, a small patrol boat the next morning decided to investigate the wreckage, and there Captain Gronow was found lying unconscious. Unhappily his vessel, with her valuable cargo, of 9,000 tons was lost, but in endeavouring to save the *Vinovia*, Captain Gronow had provided yet another illustrious example for his successors at sea, and happily survived to receive from the Cunard Directors a handsome inscribed silver vase, together with a certificate, a silver medal and a monetary gift from Lloyds.

Twice it has been our duty to record the torpedoing of vessels under the command of the



CUSARD NATIONAL AEROPLANE FACTORY



### *The Toll of the Submarines*

gallant Captain J. A. Wolfe, but he underwent this ordeal three times. He was in command of the *Volodia* on the 21st of August, 1917, when, at half-past seven in the morning she was torpedoed and sunk some 300 miles from land. As was usual, there had been no warning, and the *Volodia* was struck amidships, several of her engine-room crew, mostly Chinamen, being killed by the explosion. In addition, before she sank, the *Volodia* was also shelled by the attacking submarine. Captain Wolfe, with the survivors of the crew, had, however, succeeded before this in getting away in three boats, in charge respectively of Captain Wolfe himself, the Chief Officer, and the Second Officer, and these boats were chased by the submarine. On catching up with the Second Officer's boat, the submarine commander enquired for the Captain. He was told by the Second Officer that his last sight of Captain Wolfe was on the bridge of the torpedoed vessel. The Second Officer was then taken on board the submarine and questioned, but was subsequently allowed to return to his boat.

Captain Wolfe then gave sailing directions, and the three boats kept together until nightfall, by which time the wind had increased to the violence

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

of a gale. During the night the three boats became separated, and it was only the magnificent seamanship of Captain Wolfe and the two other Officers, together with the splendid endurance and courage of the crews, that succeeded in bringing any of them to safety. For three days they were adrift in the open Atlantic, rations being reduced to one biscuit and one dipper of water a day. The Captain and Chief Engineer were actually on one occasion washed out of their little boat. It was in the Captain's boat that the sea-anchors and rudders were carried away, and Captain Wolfe then improvised a sea-anchor out of some canvass, sewing it with his penknife and rope-yarn, and putting in it the last three remaining seven-pound tins of meat, the only articles of weight left in the boat. This contrivance he lashed to the broken rudder, and by this means was enabled to weather the breaking seas. How well to the course the vessel was kept can be gathered from the fact that when she was picked up by a destroyer, she was within 30 miles of the Lizard, having sailed 300 miles without seeing a ship. Both the other boats had similar adventures, but both were at last found and their exhausted and almost helpless crews brought safely to land.

### *The Toll of the Submarines*

Thus ends a record, perhaps equalled, but certainly not excelled, by any other of the great Mercantile Marine Companies, upon whose unsung exertions our success both on land and sea was primarily founded. The list which appears on the next page, in tabular form, summarises in brief the losses sustained by the Cunard Company during this, the severest ordeal, that any maritime nation has ever undergone.

From this it will be seen that vessels amounting to over 205,000 gross tonnage were lost by the Company, and this does not include the *Campania*, which had just passed from the Company's service, or two further losses, that of the *Ascania* and the *Valeria*, which were wrecked by stranding during 1918, and which added to the total another 14,985 tons. In all, more than 56 per cent. of the Company's gross tonnage was sacrificed in the performance of services of the highest importance to the nation in the hour of its greatest jeopardy.

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

NAME OF SHIP.	Tonnage (Gross).	Total Tonnage.	Date Lost.
LUSITANIA .. ..	30,395		7 May 1915.
CARIA .. ..	3,032		6 Nov. "
VERIA .. ..	3,228	36,655	Dec. "
FRANCONIA .. ..	18,149		4 Oct. 1916.
ALAUNIA .. ..	13,404	31,553	19 " "
IVERNIA .. ..	14,278		1 Jan., 1917.
LYCIA .. ..	2,715		11 Feb. "
LACONIA .. ..	18,098		25 " "
FOLIA .. ..	6,704		11 Mar. "
THRACIA .. ..	2,891		17 " "
VALACIA (towed into port)	6,526		1 Apl. "
FELTRIA .. ..	5,253		5 May "
AUSONIA (towed into port but sunk the following year)	8,152		11 June "
ULTONIA .. ..	10,402		27 " "
VOLODIA .. ..	5,689		21 Aug. "
VINOVI A .. ..	5,503	71,533	19 Dec. "
ANDANIA .. ..	13,404		27 Jan., 1918.
AURANIA .. ..	13,936		4 Feb. "
AUSONIA .. ..	8,152		30 May "
VANDALIA .. ..	7,333		9 June "
CARPATHIA .. ..	13,603		17 July "
FLAVIA .. ..	9,291		24 Aug. "
CAMPANIA (turned into seaplane carrier)	12,884	78,603	Nov. "





INTERIOR OF THE AEROPLANE  
FACTORY (i)



INTERIOR OF THE AEROPLANE  
FACTORY (ii)



## CHAPTER VI

# Shore Work for the Services

*Here stand we ; naught else can we do !  
Take us, all that we have, all we are !  
We bide by the issue with you,  
And this is our war !*

MARGARETTA BYRDE.

ENOUGH, perhaps, has already been written to show how intimately the Cunard Company was bound up with every phase, not only of our mercantile, but our naval effort at sea ; how its long experience of maritime organisation, placed unreservedly at the country's disposal, became an asset in the hands of the Government of almost incalculable importance, and how, in the course of its everyday unadvertised duties, it lost more than half its tonnage. It was not only at sea, however, and not wholly in connection with the problems of transport that the Cunard Company rendered such yeoman service.

The possessors of highly efficient repairing shops, engine works, furnishing departments, and laundries, these also were at once mobilised at the outbreak of war, and put to the most various and vital purposes.

## *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Some of these, of course, were congruous with its useful efforts as a marine concern. Thus, amongst much other work of a similar nature, we find, for instance, that H.S. Sloops *Buttercup* and *Gladiolus* were refitted, their engines over-hauled, and their hull and deck plating repaired, while they were also provided with hydraulic release triggers in order to enable depth charges to be released from the bridge.

H.M. ships *Riviera* and *Empress* were fitted out as sea-plane carriers by the Company at Liverpool. The after-decks of both vessels were stripped and hangars, capable of accommodating about six sea-planes, were built on them. A mechanics' repair shop was also installed and special cranes, for lifting sea-planes out of the water, were fitted.

The *Campania*, converted as we have seen into a sea-plane carrier, was re-fitted in 1916, a thorough overhaul being carried out, including the fitting of a new crank shaft, and the examination of, and repairs to, her hull and engines. In 1917, H.M.S. *Scotia*, the well-known Holyhead mail boat of the London and North Western Railway, was reconditioned, after having been in Admiralty



INTERIOR OF THE AEROPLANE  
FACTORY (iii)



RUSSIAN REFUGEES ON THE "PHRYGIA" IN THE  
BLACK SEA, SPRING, 1919



### *Shore Work for the Services*

employment, and all necessary repairs carried out in respect of her hull and engines. H.M.S. *Berwick* was also partially refitted in the same year. No less than 3,200 Plunger control valve keys and retarding rams for 12-pound and naval guns were made at the Company's works; and a large amount of work was also undertaken in connection with the fitting of submarines and mines.

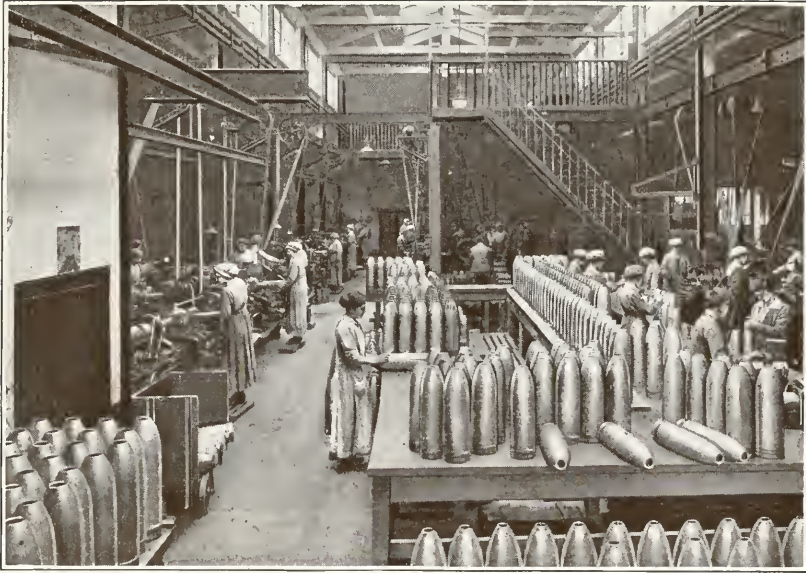
This included, as regarded submarines, the provision of 520 Oilers for exhaust valve boxes, 40 tail-end shafts, 20 complete thrust blocks, and the machining and complete fitting of four tail-end intermediate shafts. At the same time 456 save-alls for oil fuel were designed and provided—the pattern of these save-alls being afterwards adopted as the standard pattern for the Navy. Nineteen thousand, eight hundred manganese bronze spindles for mines were turned out, as well as 1,000 mine mechanism plates. When the Admiralty decided to fit naval and merchant ships with the paravane contrivance, as a protection against mines, the Cunard Company manufactured for them 5,728 sets of wires for this gear. All this work was, of course, carried out in addition to the ordinary routine of overhauling the Company's own fleet.

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

This sort of work, however, valuable as it was, was perhaps only to be expected of a large marine Company, so efficiently organised for many years as the Cunard Company had been. But in addition, a large amount of work was done for the armies in the Company's workshops, much of which required the highest degree of accuracy and extremely skilled workmanship. One of the most important of such contracts was the assembling of the 9.2 American Howitzer Equipment. These enormous guns were shipped from the United States in parts, and the work of completing, assembling, carrying out modifications in design, and getting them ready for use in France, was done entirely in the Cunard Works. Eighty-four of these equipments were dealt with, and, in addition, 100 carriages and limbers and brake gear, which were a part and parcel of the equipment, were manufactured. Owing to the fact that the firing beams, which were received from the United States, were found in practice to be insufficiently strong, the Company undertook the stripping and re-inforcing of 73 sets of these.

In the critical month of March, 1918, when the Allied armies were retreating on the Western Front,





ONE OF THE ROOMS IN THE CUNARD  
SHELL WORKS



A RECORD OF "STRIKING"  
VALUE



### *Shore Work for the Services*

and it was clear that the crucial point of the war was imminent, the Ministry of Munitions sent out urgent appeals to all Muniton Works. During the great retreat, although many of the actual guns were saved, there was no time to attempt to bring away the gun beds, and in consequence many of the larger calibre weapons were thus rendered useless. The Cunard Company was then asked to undertake to supply one hundred sets in as short a time as possible. Realising the urgency of the position, the Company succeeded in engaging the assistance of several outside firms, who carried out part of the work under Cunard supervision, with the amazing result that no less than 146 sets were finished and delivered complete within a fortnight.

But for the unremitting attention of the Company's officials and the high degree of organisation that had been attained, such a result would, of course, have been wholly impossible. The separate items manufactured by outside firms were all received and distributed from the Company's Gun Department a special chart of progress being kept for the purpose. For this great achievement the Company received a special letter of congratulation from the

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Ministry of Munitions, which in their turn they passed on to their men, who had so magnificently responded to the calls of their country in the crisis, and also to the firms who had rendered such able assistance.

Another very large contract, carried out by the Cunard Company, was the manufacture of artillery wheels. This work was distributed between the Company's various establishments, the metal work being done by the Cunard's Engine Works, and the wood work at the Furnishing Departments in Liverpool and London; in order to provide the the necessary material, the Company's timber experts had to make enormous purchases, not only having to buy complete cargoes, but in many instances, having to buy the timber before the trees were felled, and it cannot be denied that the Government was extremely fortunate in having the advantage of their great experience and wise advice. The metal parts provided consisted of pipe boxes, nots and naves, all of these being made of manganese bronze as required by the War Office, and the tyres—the wooden parts of the wheels being the spokes and felloes. Eleven hundred complete artillery wheels were thus made,



"CAMPANIA" AS  
SEAPLANE SHIP



*Shore Work for the Services*

as well as 1,400 sand tyres—a sand tyre being a contrivance fitted to the rim of the gun wheel in order to prevent it sinking into mud or sand. The reconstruction of damaged wheels was undertaken for the War Office by the Cunard Company's London works and more than 8,000 wheels were dealt with in this manner.

It is impossible to give a detailed account of the whole of the work of this nature carried out by the Cunard Company, but a general idea can be obtained from the following list of some of the most important contracts carried out at Liverpool.

- 60 Loading trays for 6 in. shells. These are the trays which guide the shell into the breech of the gun.
- 1,200 Dial sight adaptors—to render sights adaptable for guns of different calibres.
- 12,000 Copper and leather washers for recuperating gear ; and
- 12,000 Manganese Bronze Rings for supporting packing leathers in recuperating gear attached to 6 in. Howitzers. ) This recuperating gear is the mechanism used to bring the gun into firing position again after recoil.
- 5,340 Actuating Nuts and Screws for Brake gear for 13 and 18 pounder Field Guns.
- 250 Sets of Cables for electing firing gear. This is the gear attached to 6 in. and 92 in. guns, to enable them to be fired by electricity.

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

- 24 Battery Boxes in connection with above.
- 500 Sets Rings and Discs protecting obturator. This is a contrivance in the breech of a gun to prevent the escape of the gases generated in firing.
- 35 Steel Crankshafts for the Motor Boats which were used for chasing submarines.
- 36 Magazine Barrows for transporting heavy shells from Magazine to Guns on board H.M. Ships.
- 160 Breech Rings for 18 pounder guns.
- 100 Clamp Bearings.
- 14,912 Shell Nose adaptors for correcting the thread in end of shell.
- 20,300 Dummy Shells for 18 pounder Guns. These were used in training new troops to handle guns and shells. To complete this contract in 1915 the Cunard Company bought all the mangle rollers that could be obtained and converted them into dummy shells.

The Company's Laundry, which before the war dealt with all the Linen, etc., from the Company's steamers, was able during the last few years to assist many of the Military Hospitals and other institutions in the district by undertaking their Laundry work; at the same time, of course, they did whatever work was required for the Company's ships and those under their management, whether acting as troop ships or hospital ships.





A HOSPITAL WARD IN THE LOUNGE OF  
THE "MACRETANIA."



### *Shore Work for the Services*

Nor did these activities exhaust the long list of the Cunard Company's manifold contributions to the Nation's improvised war industries. In 1916, realising the urgent need for aeroplanes, the Company's Directors made certain suggestions to the Government, and placed their services at the Government's disposal in this connexion. After some months consideration a definite scheme was formulated in July, 1917, providing for the erection of a factory at the Government's expense, to be under the supervision of the Cunard Company, who would act as Managers under the Direction of the Ministry of Munitions. A site was selected near the race course at Aintree, the first sod was removed on the 4th October, 1917, and within less than nine months the factory was completed, many of the shops having been working at full pressure very much earlier than this. Although the Cunard Company had had no experience of aircraft work, and could not, of course, spare sufficient staff to man the factory, the arrangement of the various shops, and the selection of the machinery to be installed rested in their hands, and a certain number of the Company's own officials were subsequently employed there.

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Even under normal conditions, the construction and fitting out of this the largest aeroplane factory in the country would have been a herculean task, but in war time, with the resultant difficulties to be encountered in obtaining the necessary material, the undertaking might well have baffled even the most enterprising brains. That it was accomplished at all is, perhaps, the best proof of the enormous reserve of initiative and capability that had been accumulated by the Company during the long years of its previous expansion; and some idea of what was achieved can perhaps be more easily obtained when it is remembered that the largest shop measured not less than 700 by 500 feet, and that there were several other shops each of which were about half this size; that for the necessary electrical power a cable had to be laid for a distance of six miles from the Lister Drive generating station; that, the local water and gas supply being totally inadequate, a supply well had to be sunk to a depth of 370 feet, thus providing the factory's own water supply; that a special gas main had to be laid for a considerable distance; that a new siding from the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway had to be constructed, the line



THE "AQUITANIA'S" LOUNGE (Once a hospital ward, it was used subsequent to the Armistice as an orderly room)



OFFICERS' WARD IN THE SMOKING ROOM OF THE "AQUITANIA"



### *Shore Work for the Services*

running right into the factory's grounds; that the machinery and equipment had to be assembled not only from every part of the United Kingdom, but from the United States of America; that several of the most essential machines, which had been specially made, were lost in transit owing to the action of enemy submarines, so that new machines had to be made in their place; and that a canteen had to be provided, fully equipped with the latest cooking utensils and labour saving devices, which would accommodate at two sittings no less than 5,000 people.

In spite of all this, however, the first complete aeroplane was turned out on June 7th, 1918, just eight months after the commencement, while within four or five months after this, the factory was in a position to turn out no less than 100 aeroplanes a month. Before this, however, the Ministry of Munitions had appointed a controller of National Aircraft Factories, so that on the 17th of October, 1918, the factory was handed over to the Government in full working order, another concrete instance of the organising skill and versatility of this great Mercantile Marine Company.

## *A Merchant Fleet at War*

Long before this the Cunard Company had embarked upon yet another subsidiary enterprise in the establishment of a factory for the manufacture of shells. This factory, which came to be known as the Cunard National Shell Factory, was established at Bootle, the building having before been used as a store for the fittings and furniture taken from such of the Cunard Company's vessels as had been used as armed cruisers and in various other capacities. A new floor was built and the roof trusses were strengthened in order to carry shafting. Most of the lathes and other machine tools installed in the factory were of the type suitable for marine work, and therefore, special fittings were necessary in order to convert them into lathes suitable for the production of 4 in., 5 in., 6 in. and 8 in. shells; and these special fittings were designed and made by the Cunard's Staff Engineers. The boring bars used for the 8 in. shells were made from the piston rods of the old Cunard liner *Lucania*, sister ship to the *Campania*, the vessel, as we have seen, on which Signor Marconi carried out some of his most important wireless experiments. The ingenuity displayed in this won a tribute of admiration from



### *Shore Work for the Services*

all the engineering experts who were brought in touch with it; and the proof of their success is to be found in the fact that the shells, ranging up to 6 in. and 8 in. diameter, were entirely completed by female labour.

The Cunard National Shell Factory was, indeed, the first factory in Great Britain to produce 6 in. and 8 in. shells with female labour, and was thus the pioneer in the employment of women on shells of large calibre. In order that the women might be able to handle these heavy shells great attention had, of course, to be paid to the lifting appliances; and it may, perhaps, here be mentioned that one of the women operators worked throughout the whole period from October, 1915, to November, 1918, without the loss of a single minute of time, probably creating a record. To this factory also several of the retired engineering officers of the Cunard Company's ships returned to work in order to assist their country in increasing the output of shells, while the factory was self-contained in that it manufactured all its own tools, jigs, and other necessary appliances.

In this factory work was continuous, being carried out in three shifts, one working from seven

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

in the morning till three in the afternoon, the next from three in the afternoon till ten at night, and the third from ten p.m. until seven next morning; while on Saturdays one shift worked from seven a.m. till noon, and another from noon till five p.m.

In 1916 the Bottle Nosing Plant for the large shells was instituted—a plant that turned out to be a great success, while at the same time a system for the mixing of gas and air to enable a furnace temperature of 1,400 degrees centigrade to be maintained was also installed—a contrivance that resulted in a very considerable saving both in upkeep and expenditure.

On an average about 1,000 people were employed in this factory, of whom 80 to 90 per cent. were women. The factory contained excellent kitchens and dining rooms, so that hot meals could be served both for the day and night shifts. The welfare of the workers was scrupulously attended to; and a recreation room fitted with a theatrical stage and all accessories was very popular with the workers in their spare time.

When on November 11th, 1918, hostilities ceased, upon the acceptance by the enemy of the Armistice terms, work on shell production was



MEN'S WARD IN THE LOUNGE OF  
THE "AQUITANIA"



### *Shore Work for the Services*

stopped. The factory being closed down on Saturday, November 16th, each operator was presented on leaving with a 4.5 in. shell as a souvenir, together with a letter of appreciation signed by the Chairman and General Manager of the Company. A total of 410,302 shells of various calibres was turned out during the months through which the factory worked. Out of every 500 shells made, one was selected by the Government to be fired as a test, and of the shells manufactured at the Cunard Factory not a single one failed to pass.

Lastly should be mentioned one of the most beneficent minor activities initiated by the Cunard Staff in the provision of entertainments for wounded soldiers. It was in 1916, after the Company moved into their great new building, that the staff first approached the Management with a view to obtaining permission to hold a concert for wounded soldiers in one of the new and spacious rooms. The suggestion was readily agreed to, and the Company undertook to bear the cost, the staff doing the work. So successful was this concert that a second entertainment was given, this being followed by a third, until these concerts became a regular institution through the winters of 1916-1917,

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

1917-1918, and 1918-1919. In all about 20 concerts were given, at which more than 7,000 wounded soldiers were entertained and provided with refreshment. A first-class orchestra of 20 performers was created, as well as a chorus that would have done credit to any London stage; and it is safe to say that these Cunard concerts were eagerly looked forward to by every Military Hospital in the district.

During the summer months also the Company lent their tender, the *Skirmisher*, for river cruises; and more than 6,400 wounded men were thus provided with yet another means of recreation. A similar trip was organised in 1918 by the Cunard Company's Bristol Staff, while the Liverpool Office Concert Party was indefatigable in attending at various hospitals, munition works, and camps in order to provide additional entertainment to their wounded brothers. The Britannia Rooms were also used for dances and receptions for American Officers and American Red Cross Units, and when on Independence Day, July 4th, 1918, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool entertained 4,000 American Troops, the whole of the catering arrangements were carried out by the Cunard line.

### *Shore Work for the Services*

Now to have initiated, organised, and won success in departments of service so various and vital would not, of course, have been possible without the unanimous and unremitting personal devotion of every Director and member of this great Company; and it cannot be denied that the Government paid them the compliment of using their activities to the very highest degree. The Chairman, Sir Alfred Booth, in addition to the enormous responsibilities resting upon him in virtue of his executive position, acted also as Chairman of the North Atlantic Committee, appointed under the Liner Requisitioning Scheme, while he also served on several Royal Commissions dealing with questions of urgent national importance in relation to reconstruction and other post-war problems; and, at the same time, he had many calls upon him owing to his connexion with the Employers' Federation, the War Risks, and Liverpool Steam Ship Owners' Associations.

The Deputy Chairman, Sir Thomas Royden, acted as Deputy Shipping Controller, where his wide experience of shipping affairs was invaluable, Sir Thomas being frequently entrusted with foreign missions requiring the greatest tact and ability.

*A Merchant Fleet at War*

Early in the war he went to Mudros in order to organise the transport arrangements in connexion with the Gallipoli campaign, and at a later date he was in Washington discussing the international shipping problems that arose when the United States cast her lot with the Allies. He organised the shipment of American and Colonial troops to the various theatres of war, and was selected to represent the Shipping Controller on the Peace Conference.

Sir Percy Bates, Sir Aubrey Brocklebank, and Mr. Walter Tyser all occupied administrative positions at the Ministry of Shipping, and Mr. A. C. F. Henderson was selected to represent the Ministry at one of the chief Mediterranean ports. Sir Ashley Sparks, one of the Company's Directors, and its New York Agent, was appointed direct representative of the Ministry of Shipping at Washington, soon after the United States came into the war, and was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in January, 1919, in recognition of his great services. No less responsible and intricate were the duties devolving upon the General Manager, Mr. A. D. Mearns, and the other managers, Mr. S. J. Lister





THE "FRANCONIA" SINKING, WATCHED BY  
SURVIVORS FROM THE BOATS



*Shore Work for the Services*

and Mr. F. Litchfield—Mr. Mearns being elected to a seat on the Board of Directors in 1918.

Many of the Company's officials and technical experts were frequently called upon to render assistance to various Government Departments, and it is deeply to be regretted that the Cunard Company's loved and respected Marine Superintendent, Captain G. H. Dodd, lost his life at sea through a torpedo attack whilst on an important Government mission.

We have already referred to the mobilisation on the outbreak of war of a very large proportion of the Company's navigating officers, and it is estimated that at least 1,500 sailors, firemen, and stewards joined the colours, of whom 88 were killed or drowned. Nor was the clerical staff behind them in its eagerness to serve the country in a combatant capacity. When a brigade of business men was formed in Liverpool, in 1914, not less than 120 Cunarders from the Liverpool staffs enlisted on the first day, while from the clerical staffs alone of the principal Cunard Offices in Great Britain, 387 men joined the Army, besides 65 who joined from the Canadian and American Offices—a total of 452. Of these 53 lost their

### *A Merchant Fleet at War*

lives in the service of their country, while a large proportion received more or less serious wounds, several being permanently disabled.

Many distinctions and honours were gained both on the field of battle and at sea, to be engraved upon the Company's records as one of their proudest trophies. They include a Victoria Cross and, in numerous cases, the D.S.O., D.S.C., M.C., M.M., etc. Various members of the staff have received other British, and also French, Belgian, Russian and United States, decorations and medals.

Such then in brief were the war activities of one of our chief Mercantile Marine Companies, and it is surely a record of which the whole Empire, not less than every member and employee of the Cunard Company itself, may well be proud. In the study of it we have perhaps been able to perceive, as in a wider survey of a larger number of units might have been less possible, something of the peculiar genius for organisation and adaptation that, in spite of so much ignorant criticism, our race possesses. It is at any rate an indication that the sea instinct that has been our inheritance for so many centuries is as strong to-day as

*Shore Work for the Services*

ever, and a happy augury for the future of a country, whose very breath of life depends upon its maintenance of Admiralty, in the widest sense of the word.

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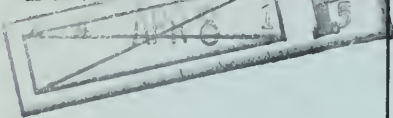
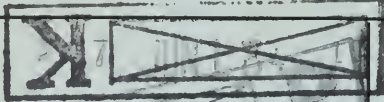
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